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T. J. Horsley Curties and Royalist Gothic: The Case of *The Monk of Udolpho* (1807)

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> "[T]here is no author more Gothic, more romantic than he."
> (Montague Summers on T. J. Horsley Curties(1)

One of the greatest sources of pleasure for any scholar of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Gothic writing must surely be the extraordinary potential that the field bears for acts of literary-critical exhumation. Indeed, if the corpus of early Gothic fiction is metaphorically conceived as a grave-yard, then so much scholarly, editorial and critical activity in this, our critical Gothic hey-day, amounts to a plundering of its dusty tombs, a stealthy opening up of its crypts and a wilful conjuring of its most elusive ghosts. As if under the powers of a strange Frankensteinean compulsion, small, independent publishing houses—Valancourt Books; (2) Zittaw Press (3) —seek to reassemble, piecemeal, the early canon's lost body-parts and set the lumbering Gothic monster back in motion; extensive data-bases of rare Gothic material— Eighteenth-Century Collections Online; (4) Adam Matthew microfilms of the Sadleir-Black collection (5) —lend to largely obscure and forgotten texts and writers a ghostly digital presence. And yet, the spoils of Gothic grave-robbing are often meagre, frequently bringing to light so many second-rate romances, dramas and chapbooks that seem more to confirm than seriously challenge critical assumptions regarding the aesthetic and generic ascendancy of Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Gregory Lewis in the period. To this state of affairs, however, the work of T. J. Horsley Curties is a welcome exception, especially when perceived through the contemporary perceptions of the writer disclosed in a review of his Gothic romance *St. Botolph's Priory; or the Sable Mask* (1806) published in the influential journal *The Flowers of Literature for 1806*:

> Mr. Curteis [*sic*] having gained much celebrity by his former romances, has now become one of the most indefatigable of our literati in that department of writing. He deserves no small credit from [sic] his ability to keep up an extraordinary degree of interest throughout five ponderous volumes, and at the same time to preserve a sufficient degree of consistency in his plot. These objects he has attained in the novel before us.(6)

Fitting of its time in 1806 this assessment of Horsley Curties certainly was. As Michael Gamer has argued, Matthew Gregory Lewis, in the wake of the controversies surrounding the publication of *The Monk* in 1796, had effected a marked retreat from the vexed subject-position of "Gothic author" in order to engage in the altogether less contentions literary endeavours of collaborative dramatic production and German/English translation.(7) Though never one to court literary publicity and fame, Ann Radcliffe, too, had disappeared from the literary scene into veritable obscurity after the publication of *The Italian* in 1798, to the extent that rumours of her madness and even death abounded. But by 1806, Horsley Curties had sufficiently occupied the gap in lower-end literary celebrity culture as to be perceived by this anonymous reviewer as one of the most popular and prolific writers of Gothic fiction of his day—an ambiguous, double-edged compliment, to be sure. An advertisement published in the *Preston Chronicle* on Saturday 29 September 1832 indicates that the author's fame extended well beyond the publication of his last novel in 1807: "New editions of the following esteemed Romances, by T. J. Horsley Curties, Esq., which have long been out of print, are now ready for delivery." With the distance between him and his precursors Radcliffe and Lewis safely assured, Horsley Curties could take up the poisoned chalice of the

nation's foremost Gothic romancer. The irony here, of course, is that *The Monk of Udolpho*, the work for which he would become most famous, was, as the title clearly suggests, a sustained tribute to his two literary forbearers.

Apart from the series of fashionable London addresses—No. 1 Bury Street, Bloomsbury; Vale Park, Hammersmith; Chelsea Park, Little Chelsea— disclosed in the Prefaces and Dedications of his various fictions, very little has been known hitherto about the life of T. J. Horsley Curties. In a letter published in *Notes and Queries* on 5 April 1924, Gothic bibliophile Montague Summers issued a plea for any insights into the writer and his works that the journal's bookish, erudite readership might have been able to offer:

> T. J. Horseley Curteis [*sic*].—For any information concerning this writer I shall be exceedingly grateful. At present I have obtained only a few details. In October, 1805, he was living at Vale Place, Hammersmith Road. He is the author of the following novels: 'Ancient Records, or, The Abbey of St. Oswyth'; 'The Monk of Udolpho' (1805–6); 'St. Botolph's Priory, or The Sable Mask' (1806); 'Ethelwina, or, The House of Fitz-Auburne.' Most of these romances were published by J. F. Hughes, Wigmore Street. They seem to have been very popular; and several, probably all, were translated into French. There is a laughing allusion to "that eminent antiquary," Mr. Horseley Curteis, in 'The Spectre of Tappington' ('Ingoldsby Legends').(8)

The response to Summers's request was rather disappointing. John Patching replied to the letter in a small entry in the journal two weeks later, claiming that "In addition to the novels named [in Summers's original query] this writer was the author, according to the 'Dictionary of Living Authors' (1814), of 'The Scottish Legend,' 1802, and 'The Watch Tower,' 1804" (294).(9) If, by the 'Dictionary of Living Authors' Patching meant *A Biographical Dictionary of the Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland [. . .]* (1816), the entry on "Curteis [*sic*], T. J. Horsely" is brief and biographically uninformative, citing him merely as the author of the novels *Ethelwina*, *Ancient Records*, *The Scottish Legend*, *The Watch Tower*, *St Botolph's Tower* [*sic*] and *The Monk of Udolpho*.(10) Consequently, by the time of the publication of his monumental *The Gothic Quest* in 1938, Summers's account of the writer still has very little to offer by way of biographical certainty, claiming that "Of his life, practically nothing is known."(11) Matters are no more certain almost four decades later when Devendra P. Varma and Mary Muriel Tarr write their respective Foreword and Introduction to the Arno facsimile of *The Monk of Udolpho* in 1977. The opening lines of Varma's Foreword are suitably wistful: "If the cobbled stones of No. 1, Bury Street, Bloomsbury Square, London, were to unfold the scenes of the lodger who lived there in January 1801, and if those narrow, deserted, moon-blanch'd pavements could now whisper the tales of long ago, surely we would be able to reconstruct the life of T. J. Horsley Curties, the gothic novelist."(12) Apparently beyond the bounds of discovery by even the most indefatigable of Gothic ghost-hunters, Horsley Curties has long defied the work of authorial biography.

Senior Exon of Yeomen of the Guard

However, the key to the author's identity lies, perhaps, in Montague Summers's spelling of the author's name as "Horseley Curteis" in his earlier letter to *Notes and Queries*, in marked distinction from the "T. J. Horsley" of the title page of his first novel *Ethelwina* and the "T. J. Horsley Curties, ESQ. Author of The Sable Mask, The Watch Tower, Scottish Legends, Ancient Records, and Ethelwina" of his final fiction, *The Monk of Udolpho* (1807). Names and naming practices had occasioned particular attention in Horsley Curties's *oeuvre* from the outset. As he confesses in the Preface to his second romance *Ancient*

Records, Horsley Curties deliberately omitted his surname from the title page of his first publication *Ethelwina*, nervously casting the text "into the world as an orphan, whose father feared to acknowledge it, and under his *Christian* appellation of HORSLEY. The public have fostered it; and now, with some degree of pride, he can claim it as his own by his surname of Curties."(13) Consistent with Summers's later spelling of the writer's last name, the following obituary for one Sir Thomas Isaac Horsley Curteis [sic] appeared in the Irish newspaper *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* on Saturday 8th January 1859:

> The death of Sir Thomas Isaac Horsley Curteis, K. B., is announced. Sir Thomas was 81 years of age, and was unmarried. He was the author of the "Watch Tower," the "Scottish Legend," the "Sable Mask," "Monk of Udolpho," "Ethelvia" [*sic*], "St. Botolph's Priory," and several other works. Sir Thomas died at his residence, Twyford Villa, Norfolk.

External records confirm the details of this report: the death of a Sir Thomas Wortley [*sic*] Curties in the registration district of Mitford, Norfolk, is listed in the *Death Index for England and Wales, 1837–1983* during the period October–December 1858, that is, shortly before the reportage of the death in newspapers in early January 1859. The announcement of the death of one Sir Thomas Curteis in the "Births, Deaths, Marriages and Obituaries" column of The London newspaper *The Examiner* on Saturday 8 January 1859 replicates much of the information included in the obituary in *Freeman's*, though not without the inclusion of a few vital details: "He was thirty-four years a member of the Royal household, as Senior Exon of the Yeomen of the Guard, and was knighted by William IV in consideration of his lengthened period of service." His literary publications are listed here as 'Watch Tower,' the Scottish Legend,' the 'Sable Mask, 'Monk of Udolpho,' 'Ethelvina' [*sic*],'St Botolph's Priory,' and several other works.'" The two different orthographic renditions of the surname as "Curties" or "Curteis" seemingly point to two acceptable variations on the same family name; the only anomaly that remains is the provenance of the letter "J" in the commonly assumed authorial name of T. J. Horsley Curties. Given renditions of the author's name elsewhere, it is not inconceivable that the "J" is a misprint or misrepresentation of the initial "I" for "Isaac," a printing or orthographic error initially appearing on the title page of *Ethelwina*, the first novel of Thomas Isaac Horsley Curties, and possibly repeated for the sake of consistency across his next five fictions. Records in the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle, however, continuously cite him as Sir Thomas J. H. Curteis.(14) Another obituary for Sir Thomas Isaac Horsley Curteis, K. B. published in the *Caledonian Mercury* on Saturday 8th January 1859 included the observation that "Sir Thomas retired in 1839" and, while attached to the Royal Household, "he attended no less than three coronations." Similar, often verbatim repetitions of these reports in *The Derby Mercury* and *Jackson's Oxford Journal* in early 1859 have nothing more to add to the emerging picture.

If these newspaper entries are accurate and reliable, we can infer that Thomas Isaac Horsley Curteis (or Curties) was born in or around 1777, making him approximately twenty-two years of age at the time of the publication of his first Gothic romance *Ethelwina* in 1799. Norfolk, as much as the London of Summers's conjecturing, seems a possible place of birth, not only because Curties was sufficiently connected with Norfolk so as eventually to return there after a lengthy career in London, dying at Twyford Villa in late 1858, but also because he appears to have had connections with Norfolk much earlier on in his life: his fourth fiction, *The Watch Tower; Or, The Sons of Ulthona: An Historic Romance* (1804), is dedicated to a literary patron, one C. H. Elcock Brown, Esq., of North-Walsham, Norfolk. This form of financial backing would have made the writing career of Horsley Curties an exception from the start, the market for Gothic romance in this period being dominated, as it was, by women writers striving to keep the spectre of poverty at bay. The Last Will and Testament of a certain Thomas Curties, a Yeoman of

Thornage, dated 11 December 1846 indicates not only the Curties family's relation to the land-owning classes—"yeoman" in this context probably refers to an owner of property and land—but also T. J. Horsley Curties's personal familial connections with Norfolk: in this will, the paternal uncle bequeaths to "Sir Thomas ostler / Curties of Righburgh in the said county [of Norfolk] Knight my two / windsor chairs."(15) Righburgh is probably a variant spelling of Ryburgh, Great Ryburgh being a village in the county of Norfolk. By 1846, then, it appears that Sir Horsley Curties, the writer and one-time Yeoman of the Guard, had retired from Royal service in London in order to settle in Norfolk, where he worked as an ostler in his old age. Whatever his precise place and date of birth, we can safely assume that Horsley Curties was socially and financially well connected, since without a clear affiliation to the upper gentry, his accession to the post of Yeoman of the Guard, the prestigious office of Body Guards of the British Sovereign formed by Henry VII in 1485, would have been almost impossible: at this time, officers' appointments were purchased by wealthy civilians rather than awarded to military men of distinction. In fact, the last occasion on which Yeomen of the Guard had performed their primary military function as the King's Body Guard was in Dettingen, Germany, in 1743, when King George II led his army in battle against the French in the War of Austrian Succession. During the remainder of the eighteenth century, the need for trained soldiers in the Guard diminished, and gradually their positions came to be filled by civilian Yeomen, without any formal military credentials, who bought and sold their appointments accordingly. This state of affairs would continue until the conclusion of the Peninsular and Waterloo campaigns, by which time the Duke of Wellington and the future King William IV felt that only deserving veterans should fill the Guard's positions. The first soldier was appointed in 1823, and a mix of former soldiers and civilians continued to fill the ranks until the admission of the last civilian in 1834. Thereafter, only former soldiers and marines were appointed to the Guard; T. J. Horsley Curties's civilian post would have been bought out by the government upon his retirement in 1839.(16)

As Thomas Preston describes it in *The Yeomen of the Guard: Their History from 1485–1885* (1885), the Exons were a particular office of the Yeomen, fifth in the ranks beneath those of Captain; Lieutenant; Ensign and Clerk of the Cheque respectively.(17) According to information gleaned from Preston's study, a certain Isaac Housley Curteis [sic] was one of the four Exons in employment in 1805, alongside the better known Roger Monk Esq. His name appears twice in Colonel Sir Reginald Hennell's *The History of the King's Body Guard of the Yeomen of the Guard*, firstly as "Issac Housley Curties, Esq. Appointed Exon vice Remnant May 31st, 1805; re-appointed at the Coronation, 1831, and Knighted" and secondly "Issac Housley Curties, Esq. Re-appointed Corporal April 4th, 1831; knighted at the Coronation. 1831."(18) Reasons for what appears to be a break in Royal service followed by a reappointment in 1831 are unclear. He is also listed in *The Royal Kalendar, and Court and City register [. . .]* for 1817. Consistent with the deployment of the title "K.B" (Knight Bachelor) in the obituaries, William Arthur Shaw's exhaustive *The Knights of England [. . .]*(1906) notes that Thomas Horsley Curteis [sic], senior Exon of the Yeomen of the Guard, was Knighted at St. James's on 27 June 1833,(19) six years before his assumed retirement in 1839 at the approximate age of 62, and after what the entry in the *Caledonian Mercury* notes to have been a total of 34 years of Royal service. Thus, in accordance with the claim in the report in the *Caledonian Mercury* that "he attended no less than three coronations," Horsley Curties, in Royal service at least since 31 May 1805, would have been present at the coronations of three British Monarchs: George IV, William IV and even Queen Victoria in June 1838, a year before his retirement from the Yeomen of the Guard in 1839. The lengthy description of William IV's coronation published in *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* in September 1831 makes mention of the presence Horseley Curties, esq [sic] as an Exon of the Yeomen of the Guard, alongside one Henry Cipriani, esq.(20) A highly descriptive account of the Queen's State Ball at St. James's Palace published in The Morning Chronicle on Monday 12 May 1834 notes that "The Yeomen Guard were on

duty in the Guard Room and the corridors, through which the company passed. The party were commanded by Sir Thomas Horsley Curties, the Exon in Waiting; the other Exons were Mr. Charles Hancock and Mr. Pearson." On Friday 29th May 1835, the same newspaper describes the presence of the Yeoman Guard at the Queen's Levee (a formal reception of guests by a distinguished person) to mark the birthday of the King, with "Sir Thomas Horsley Curties and Messrs. Charles and Samuel Hancock" listed as Exons. At another formal reception held by the Queen (certainly by this time the only recently crowned Queen Victoria) described in The Morning Chronicle on Thursday 19 July 1838 lists "Sir Thomas Horsley Curties" as an Exon of the Yeomen Guard, while, in the same newspaper on Wednesday 30 January 1839, "Sir Thomas Horsley Curties, exon (of the Yeomen Guard)" is reported as one of the many persons in attendance of Queen Victoria's visit to Drury Lane Theatre to see a performance of Balfe's opera, *The Maid of Artois*.

Joining the Yeomen of the Guard in or around May 1805, Horsley Curties would continue to write until his apparent abandonment of the large-scale literary endeavours of his twenties in 1807. Perhaps the unprecedented appearance of the appended title "ESQ" on the title of *St. Botolph's Priory* in 1806 is attributable to the social preferment that his accession to the role of Exon would have constituted; prior to this, the title pages of his second, third and fourth romances sought to distinguish their author not socially but only through reference to the other titles he had penned. More crucially, though, the dates point to a curious over-lapping, over a period of at least two years, of what we might be inclined to think of as two entirely incompatible if not mutually exclusive activities: a professional commitment to the Hanoverian Monarchy, on the one hand, and a semi-professional dabbling in the subversive ways of Gothic romance, on the other. Perhaps the conflict was too much to bear, for after 1807, Curties, at least at first glance, appears to have abandoned novel writing in order to devote himself to full-time professional service of the monarch. His name only appears again in 1815 through his association with the book entitled *Select and Entertaining Stories [. . .] for the Juvenile; or, Child's Library, Vol. I*, published by J. Marshall, London. However, this might be only one of many yet-to-be-rediscovered novels by Horsley Curties vaguely gestured towards in at least two of his obituaries. If he continued to write Gothic fiction after the publication of *The Monk of Udolpho*, it is likely that he perceived no conflict between the roles of Gothic romancer and servant in the Royal household at all. Indeed, in keeping with the political affiliations necessarily attendant upon such a career, his fiction seems more intent upon conserving the patriarchal institutions of fatherhood and sovereign power than subverting them in the tradition of countless, more radical Gothic romances of the 1790s.

Romancer in the Spirit of Radcliffe

As Montague Summers's comprehensive *A Gothic Bibliography* indicates, Horsley Curties's literary activities spanned the years 1799–1807.(21) *Ethelwina; or, The House of Fitz-Auburne* (3 vols; 1799) was followed by the four-volume *Ancient Records; or, The Abbey of St. Oswythe* in 1801; both fictions were published by William Lane's Minerva Press, and both (perhaps unsurprisingly, given the publisher) drew heavily upon a decidedly Radcliffean aesthetic. Horsley Curties deferentially acknowledges his debt to Radcliffe in his Preface to *Ancient Records*, attributing the origins of this his second fiction to "a love of Romance, caught from an enthusiastic admiration of *Udolpho*'s unrivalled Foundress.— He follows her through all the venerable gloom of horrors, not as a kindred spirit, but contented, as a shadow, in attending her footsteps" (vol. I: vi). Though couched in the modest language of a Radcliffean tribute, Horsley Curties, in a significant act of cross-gendered identification, styles himself at once as Radcliffe's literary successor and her ghostly handmaiden. In this act of self-stylization, the review of *St. Botolph's Priory* in 1806 cited above was altogether complicit. For his next two fictions, Horsley Curties turned his

hand to the contemporary vogue for fictional romances set in the sublime landscapes of ancient Scotland, penning two extraordinary yet hitherto critically neglected examples of what we might today term 'Scottish Gothic' in *The Scottish Legend; or, The Isle of St. Clothair* (William Lane; 4 vols; 1802) and *The Watch Tower; or, The Sons of Ulthona* (P. Norbury; 5 vols; 1804). Set in early fourteenth-century Scotland, *The Watch Tower* self-consciously situates itself in an Ossianic tradition, and makes considerable use of the sub-Walpolean convention of the serendipitously discovered but only partially legible ancient manuscript. With the publication of the five-volume *St. Botolph's Priory; or, The Sable Mask* in 1806, Horsley Curties exploited the contemporary taste for tales of Catholic hypocrisy and deception for which J. F. Hughes, the text's publisher, was rapidly becoming renowned. As Peter Garside has pointed out, Hughes's publishing catalogue between the years 1803 and 1810 had flagrantly traded in sensationalism through such attention-grabbing titles as the *LEGENDS of the NUNNERY* (1807) by the pseudonymous Edward Montague, Esq.; *MONTONI; or, the CONFESSIONS of a MONK* by the pseudonymous Edward Mortimer, Esq.; Sarah Wilkinson's *Fugitive Countess; or, Convent of St. Ursula* (1807) and *Convent of Grey Penitents; or, the Apostate Nun* (1810) and Rosa Matilda/Charlotte Dacre's *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer* (1805).(22) Similar titles from Hughes's catalogue in the period include *The Monk and His Daughter; or, The Intrigues of Amand*a (1802); Mary Anne Radcliffe's *Manfroné: or, The One-Handed Monk* (1809); and *The Monk of Hennares* (1817). Still, the issue of a literary text's title only really comes to the fore with the publication *The Monk of Udolpho; A Romance*, Horsley Curties's final Gothic romance published by J. F. Hughes in London in 1807.

For all its shameless plagiarism of two of the most iconic titles of 1790s Gothic romance, the Preface to *The Monk of Udolpho* takes great care not only to apologise to Ann Radcliffe, "that Mighty Magician," for its indiscreet infringement of literary property, but also defensively to explain the provenance of the fiction's title.(23) J. F. Hughes, Horsley Curties informs his readers, had long advertised a romance entitled *Monk Udolpho* [*sic*]. As Garside has observed, the forthcoming publication of "THE MONK OF UDOLPHO" was first announced in *Rosa; or, the Child of the Abbey* in 1805, and then later in *Feudal Tyrants* of 1806, Matthew Lewis's novel published by Hughes a year after his publication of Lewis's translation, *The Bravo of Venice*.(24) By 15 October 1806, *The Monk of Udolpho* by J. Horsley Curtis [*sic*] was already being billed in The Morning Chronicle as being "Published this day," despite the publication date of 1807 on the title page of the first edition; the misspelling of the author's name in this advertisement, though, might indicate that the writer was acting more on the anticipation of the book's imminent appearance than first-hand experience of its physical presence. Irrespective of these details, the Preface to Curties's romance continues to note how the intended author of this advertised title died prior to the delivery of the manuscript or even so much as an outline of its plot. Consequently, Hughes invited Horsley Curties to submit a romance under the pre-existent title, while making allowance for him to disclaim all responsibility for his fiction's egregious plagiarisms in a prefatory address to its readers. Thus "prevailed upon to soar once more into the regions of fancy and the dark mysteries of romance" (I: vii), Horsley Curties proffers to his readers *The Monk of Udolpho*, though not without an insistence that it be read and appreciated according to 'its more legitimate appellation of "Filial Piety"' (I: vii).

Filial Piety/Royalist Gothic

A lengthy treatise upon the uneasy paths of filial piety *The Monk of Udolpho* certainly is. If, as Caroline Gonda has argued, early Gothic writing involves a sustained schooling of the heroine in the appropriate modes of heterosexual desiring in and through her complex relationship with her father, Horsley Curties's romance is no exception.(25) The narrative opens with the supposed suicide by poisoning of the heroine Hersilia's father Angelo, Duke of Placenza, the gaming habits of whom have led him to financial disaster

and personal ruin. Sworn into the defence and preservation of her late father's memory, Hersilia, apparently in accordance with his expressed will, is handed over to the dubious guardianship of her father's long-standing rival Cosmo, Prince of Parma, and the eponymous Monk of Udolpho himself. While rationally she might question the paternal injunctions that run contrary to her knowledge of her late father's character, she nonetheless submits herself to the surrogate paternal powers invested in the Monk, albeit ultimately only in the name of obedience to her dead father. From the moment of his first appearance in the text, the description of Udolpho owes much to Lewis's characterisation of Father Ambrosio in *The Monk*. Renowned by most inhabitants of the Castle Placenza for his "pious self-denial," his "exterior of great humility" and his "extreme abstinence from all mundane enjoyments" (vol. I: 21), Udolpho shrouds himself with a dark cowl; when his hood gapes, it reveals only a ghastly countenance and a tightly bound forehead cloth upon which is displayed "the ghastly grinning ensign of a Death's head" (vol. I: 23), the insignia of the monkish order which Udolpho claims to have founded.

From the outset of the narrative, however, the Monk is not without his rivals, not least of all in the figure of the hero, Lorenzo Val-Ambrosio of Guestella. Like any romantic coupling in early Gothic fiction, Hersilia and Lorenzo are initially yoked to one another in an attitude of "mutual affection" (vol. I: 54). It thus comes as a particular blow to the young lovers when they learn that, despite their long-standing commitment to one another, Lorenzo's father, the Compte of Guestella, has suddenly and quite inexplicably prohibited their imminent marriage, believing that "'honour's sacred attributes submit not to an union with the daughter of a suicide, nor must a son of mine ally himself to that ignominy which he also will have to endure the shame of'" (vol. I: 194–95). Guestella manipulates the old Walpolean formula to particularly powerful effect: "'Unhappy indeed are the children of such parents; for on them is visited the sins of their fathers; on their guiltless heads must fall the ignominy which the gamester and the suicide is only screened from by that dishonoured grave'" (vol. II: 12–13). Although Hersilia and Lorenzo plan a clandestine marriage and elopement, their plans are thwarted when the Compte hastily sends his son off to war against the Venetians. Forcefully denied the romantic union she so fondly anticipates, Hersilia enters into the first stage of what figures as the gruelling textual dramatisation of her subjective eclipse, erasure and annihilation. While, by her own admission, her life may be rendered variously a "blank" (vol. I: 143) and a "dark void" (vol. I: 231) during this process's most excruciating moments, the possibility of Hersilia's resistance to stern and unyielding patriarchal authority is precluded by her commitment to her late father's legacy. Uncomfortably caught between honour and passion, compliance with surrogate paternal authority and the threatened exposure of her father's shameful gaming and death-by-suicide, she repeatedly opts for the former in this uncompromising distribution of terms. As the powers that threaten her grow in intensity, so self-sacrifice and submission to filial piety increasingly become the governing principles of her action. Her sole source of resistance is a quiet, unspoken refusal to relinquish the mental image of her lover, a form of defiance which ostensibly creates for the heroine a private internal theatre of "mental freedom" (vol. II: 63). However, this provides scant defence against the numerous acts of material and physical violation that await her. Threatened by Cosmo, Duke of Parma's attack of her paternal home at Placenza, she agrees to a relocation to what she believes to be the inalienable maternal space of the Castello di Albori, the castle that runs in her late mother's female line of inheritance. But in place of the security that her mother's family residence promises, Hersilia, in a symbolic form of live burial, is imprisoned within Udolpho's Castello di Ubaldi, and subjected here to the unwelcome sexual advances of Sanguedoni, the supposed nephew of the Duke of Parma who has long nurtured an attraction to her. If the Monk of Udolpho is a version of Lewis's Ambrosio, Sanguedoni is an avatar of Radcliffe's Father Schedoni from *The Italian*; like Udolpho, though, Sanguedoni "set no limits to his wishes, no bounds to their enjoyment: every right that opposed him was broken down; religion, justice, truth, were violated, or rendered subservient to his purposes" (vol. II: 148). Sexual desire

becomes in *The Monk of Udolpho* a thoroughly complex and unruly entity: while both Sanguedoni and Cosmo crave the realisation of their fantasies regarding the sexual possession of the heroine, the figure of Hortensia, a version of Lewis's passionate demon Matilda, expresses her life-long desire for the absent hero Lorenzo. Narrowly avoiding rape and violent attack by Sanguedoni, Hersilia "was become every way the victim of filial piety, but yet she repined not" (vol. II: 231). A commitment to her father manifests itself as a troubling paralysis in the face of adversity. The timely intervention of a female ghost during another tense moment of near-rape only adds to the narrative an atmosphere of Radcliffean terror. Firm in the belief that her commitment to filial piety far outweighs the pain of her suffering, Hersilia's pose is one of stolid endurance throughout.

The systematic assault upon Hersilia is brought to a climax when Sanguedoni and Father Udolpho are revealed to be not two, but one: while Lewis's Ambrosio may surprise his readers with his duality and his double-dealing hypocrisy, Curties's Udolpho is remarkably unitary, superficial and one-dimensional in nature. With this disclosure, though, comes a slight remission of the heroine's agony, as the narrative, in accordance with the conventionalised endings of fictional romance, gradually makes its way towards a felicitous conclusion. It is thus not long before it is revealed that Sanguedoni/Udolpho was deliberately responsible for the ruin of Angelo at the gaming table, and that while Angelo did indeed make a potentially fatal attempt on his own life, it was Sanguedoni's refusal to provide an antidote to the poison more than the poison itself that was the real cause of his death. The shame of the father's suicide is thus rapidly converted into murder, shifting the responsibility from Angelo to Father Sanguedoni in the process. The will of the father, too, is eventually revealed to be a forgery, an act of counterfeiting deliberately resorted to by the Monk with a knowledge of the vast extent of Hersilia's filial piety in mind. In a turn patently influenced by the Radcliffean technique of the explained supernatural, the female spectre that has haunted Hersilia from the narrative's earliest moments is revealed to be none other than her half-sister Eloisa, the offspring of Angelo's affair with another passionate woman who, like her daughter, has been forced to endure another form of live burial in a convent, and who, like Lewis's cross-dressing Rosario, has served her beloved sister throughout the fiction in the masculine disguise of Astolpho the minstrel. Hortensia meets an untimely death, and Sanguedoni, during an unexpected turn in the proceedings of an Inquisition-like tribunal, re-enacts the opening scene of immolation, albeit this time upon himself. With all spectres banished and the iniquitous duly punished, Hersilia and Lorenzo, newly restored to one another, are free to marry.

If this synopsis reads as a synthesis of what critics have subsequently come to identify as the "male" and "female" strands in late eighteenth-century Gothic writing, it is an inevitability suggested by the title of the fiction itself. Neither strictly male nor strictly female Gothic, Horsley Curties's *The Monk of Udolpho* is as androgynous as the cross-dressing Eloisa/Astolpho. However, in the writer's own terms, his text ought to be read more as a masculine disciplining and vanquishing of the feminine than any fictional hybrid transgressively formed by the suturing of the two gendered modes. Having identified himself as Ann Radcliffe's heir and shadow in his Preface to *Ancient Records* (1801), Horsley Curties, as if suddenly self-conscious of the feminising of his own authorial persona that this identification effects, turns to address the long-debated critical differences between the novel and romance forms:

> As this species of writing has of late been feebly attacked, I will venture a few observations on the subject. —Authors of Novels are nearly allied to those of Romance—are twin-sisters, and should be equally allied in affection; but as sisters will sometimes envy and disagree when the one has been more admired than the other, so the Writers of Novels, jealous of us humble

> architects, will not suffer us to build our airy castles, nor mine our subterranean caverns unmolested. (vol I: vi)

The romance and the novel are so indistinguishable from one another as to render them "twin-sisters." Challenging the long-standing critical tendency to gender the novel as masculine and the romance as its weaker feminine counterpart, Horsley Curties somewhat radically characterises both literary forms as a pair of bickering, mutually jealous sisters. Again, however, the implications that this rhetorical move bears for the gendering of his own authorial subject-position seems too much to countenance, and lest he persist in styling himself as the feminised ghost of Ann Radcliffe working on the equally feminine old maid of romance, Horsley Curties ends his Preface with a conservative retreat into conventional gendered positions. Despite the imperative to display in their works a comprehensive knowledge of human nature, female writers of both novels and romances, he claims, ought never to compromise their innocence and modesty with fictional representations of vice: "Ought she to describe scenes which bashful modesty would blush to conceive an idea, much less avow a knowledge of?—Oh no! let the chaste pen of female delicacy disdain such unworthy subjects" (vol. I: vii). Literary renditions of baseness, Horsley Curties insists, ought to be the exclusive preserve of male writers such as himself, for "when female invention will employ itself in images of the grosser sort, it is a fatal prediction of relaxed morals, and a species of—at least—LITERARY PROSTITUTION" (vol. I: viii). Having initially feminised himself as the ghostly writer of feminine romance in the tradition of Ann Radcliffe, Horsley Curties, through aspersions of fictional whoring, seeks to render the writing of Gothic an exclusively masculine prerogative.

This formal marginalisation of the feminine is not too dissimilar to the moral structures set in place at the end of *The Monk of Udolpho*. For all the rewards of life-long contentment and bliss bestowed upon Hersilia at the narrative's close, the lessons taught by the text are decidedly conservative, for in line with the major tenets of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century patriarchal discourse—Filmer; Fleetwood; Delany; Fielding; Hardwicke; Blackstone—this fiction preaches nothing if not the virtues of an unquestioning obedience to the will of the father, however dire the consequences and however averse to one's well-being his inscrutable injunctions may initially seem. Hersilia is rewarded at the fiction's close, we recall, for her unswaying obedience to a paternal will that, in the end, turns out to have been the product of a counterfeiting. But this, the text suggests, provides no justification for the shirking of a daughter's filial responsibilities. Clearly, this moral dimension to the fiction was something that Horsley Curties directed at his ideal readership, the problematic and often anxiously policed category of the young female romance reader tirelessly invoked in contemporary reviews of the Gothic. In characteristic fashion, *The Monk of Udolpho* was reviewed twice by Francis William Blagdon in *The Flowers of Literature for 1806*, despite his expressed documentation of the fiction's publication in 1807. The first of these reviews indicates that early nineteenth-century readers would not have missed Horsley Curties's direction of the novel at a young, largely female readership: "This romance is well calculated to please those who delight in horrors. The Monk as usual is a most diabolical character, and meets with his deserts. The terrors of the banditti and the inquisition are each of them introduced, and will not fail to harrow up the feelings of susceptible females."(26) But as Blagdon's other review of the novel in the same publication makes clear, the ideals instilled in the female readers of this particular fiction are more useful than they are dangerous: "Mr Curtis's Monk of Udolpoh [*sic*] is deserving of association with most of that gentleman's other performances. The interesting Hersilia exhibits one of the finest patterns of filial piety we have ever seen pourtrayed [*sic*] in a novel" (lxxviii). In the gentlemanly hands of Horsley Curties, the "susceptibility" of the female reader is more a boon than a hindrance.

It is difficult not to read in this fictional defence of unswaying filial obedience a disguised but by no means less effective treatise on sovereignty. As Lynn Hunt has argued, political discourse of late eighteenth-century Europe was marked by a curious superimpositioning of fatherhood and kingship.(27) Michel Foucault has argued a similar point by way of his account of the conceptual proximity between parricide and regicide in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: to kill the king was also to effect an assault upon the nation's father.(28) In terms more peculiar to Britain of the period, Edmund Burke had read the public world of politics through the metaphorical model of the family in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). And as Linda Colley has pointed out, King George III, the sovereign in power at the time of the publication of *The Monk of Udolpho* in 1807, was often subject to cultural representation in terms more applicable to a sentimental construction of the father.(29) To preach fidelity to the father was thus inevitably to make certain political pronouncements on the importance of loyalty and obedience to the sovereign—an ideological position utterly in keeping with a writer who, by all accounts, spent no less than three-and-a-half decades of his life in dutiful service to the Hanoverian monarchy. In his study *Contesting the Gothic* of 1999, James Watt coined the phrase "loyalist Gothic" to describe the fidelity to certain cherished British institutions, values and class structures displayed in Gothic fictions written in the tradition of Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777/8).(30) While the use of the term in other contexts might misleadingly conjure up expectations of sovereign allegiance in a form of writing that is for the most part infused with a revolutionary Republican spirit, it is, where Horsely Curties is concerned, certainly no misnomer. In fact, pushing beyond a mere lip-service to the values modern British life, Horsley Curties's *The Monk of Udolpho*, in its splendid display of the binding power of the father/king, might best be described as an instance of "Royalist Gothic." By 1807, such pressing realities as the Napoleonic Wars had rendered the political ambivalences and undecided allegiances of Gothic writing of the previous decade a veritable impossibility. Forced either into a position of Shelleyan radicalism or a royalist support for the king, the Gothic had to take political sides. It is in the work of T. J. Horsley Curties, perhaps, that the products of this process, at least in their conservative manifestations, are most tangible: he who would later be described as the "old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king"(31) metaphorically figures in *The Monk of Udolpho* as the sovereign object of ultimate reverence and obedience, even at the cost of the Royalist subject's unbearable suffering and near death.

1. Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* (London: Fortune Press, 1938), 333.
2. See the website for Valancourt books at http://www.valancourtbooks.com/
3. See the website for Zittaw press at http://www.zittaw.com/
4. See http://www.gale.cengage.com/DigitalCollections/products/ecco/index.htm
5. See http://www.adam-matthew-publications.co.uk/digital_guides/gothic_fiction/Contents.aspx
6. Rev. of *St. Botolph's Priory; or the Sable Mask, The Flowers of Literature for 1806*, 513–14.
7. See Michael Gamer, 'Authors in Effect: Lewis, Scott, and the Gothic Drama', *ELH* 66.4 (Winter 1999): 831–61.
8. Montague Summers, 'T. J. HORSELEY CURTEIS', *Notes and Queries* April 5 (1924): 250.
9. John Patching, 'T. J. HORSLEY CURTEIS (cxlvi. 193, 259)', *Notes and Queries* April 19 (1924): 294.
10. *A Biographical Dictionary of the Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland [. . .]* (London: Henry Colburn, 1816).
11. *The Gothic Quest*, 333.
12. Devendra P. Varma, 'Foreword', *The Monk of Udolpho; A Romance*, 4 vols, by Horsley Curties, ESQ, 1807 (New York: Arno Press, 1977), v.
13. T. J. Horsley Curties, *Ancient Records, or, The Abbey of Saint Oswythe. A Romance*, 4 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1801), I: v. All further references will be cited by volume and page number in the body of the text.
14. I am grateful to Paul Denny, retired army officer and currently Yeoman Bed Hanger in the Body Guard, for generously sharing with me the fruits of his research on the Yeomen of the Guard in the Royal Archives, Windsor.
15. National Archives, Catalogue Reference PROB 11/2046
16. Once again, I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to Paul Denny for his insights into these matters.
17. Thomas Preston, *The Yeomen of the Guard: Their History from 1485 to 1885. And A Concise Account of the Tower Warders* (London, 1885).
18. Colonel Sir Reginald Hennell, *The History of the King's Body Guard of the Yeomen of the Guard* (Westminster, 1904), 245, 246.
19. William Arthur Shaw, *The Knights of England [. . .]*, 2 vols (London, 1906), vol. II: 334.
20. Anon, "The Coronation of Their Majesties William IV. and Queen Adelaide', *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* September 1831, 226.
21. Montague Summers, *A Gothic Bibliography* (London: Fortune Press, 1938).
22. Peter Garside, 'J. F. Hughes and the Publication of Popular Fiction, 1803–1810', *The Library: Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 9.3 (1987): 240–58.
23. T. J. Horsley Curties, *The Monk of Udolpho; A Romance. In Four Volumes.* London: J. F. Hughes, 1807, I: v. All further references will be cited by volume and page number in the body of the text.
24. Peter Garside, 'J. F. Hughes and the Publication of Popular Fiction, 1803–1810', 247.
25. Caroline Gonda, *Reading Daughters' Fictions, 1709–1834: Novels and Society from Manley to Edgeworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996).
26. Francis William Blagdon, Rev. of *The Monk of Udolpho*, *The Flowers of Literature for 1806*, 507. All further references will be cited by page number in the body of the text.
27. See Lynn Hunt's reading of Louis XVI and the metaphors of fatherhood in *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1992).
28. See Michel Foucault's discussion of the metaphorical superimpositioning of fatherhood and kingship in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century conceptualisations of parricide in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991) and *I, Pierre Rivière, having*

slaughtered my mother, my sister and my brother…: A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).

29. Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty, and the British Nation', *Past and Present* 102 (Feb. 1984): 94–129.

30. James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764–1832.* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).

31. The reference is taken from P. B. Shelley's description of King George III in his sonnet "England in 1819" (composed in 1819; published in 1839).

No Trespassing: The post-millennial road-horror movie

Finn Ballard

Since the turn of the century, there has been released throughout America and Europe a spate of films unified by the same basic plotline: a group of teenagers go road-tripping into the wilderness, and are summarily slaughtered by locals. These films may collectively be termed 'road-horror', due to their blurring of the aesthetic of the road movie with the tension and gore of horror cinema. The thematic of this subgenre has long been established in fiction; from the earliest oral lore, there has been evident a preoccupation with the potential terror of inadvertently trespassing into a hostile environment. This was a particular concern of the folkloric *Warnmärchen* or 'warning tale' of medieval Europe, which educated both children and adults of the dangers of straying into the wilderness. Pioneers carried such tales to the fledging United States, but in a nation conceptualised by progress, by the shining of light upon darkness and the pushing back of frontiers, the fear of the wilderness was diminished in impact. In more recent history, the development of the automobile consolidated the joint American traditions of mobility and discovery, as the leisure activity of the road trip became popular. The wilderness therefore became a source of fascination rather than fear, and the road trip became a transcendental voyage of discovery and of escape from the urban, made fashionable by writers such as Jack Kerouac and by those filmmakers such as Dennis Hopper (*Easy Rider*, 1969) who influenced the evolution of the American road movie. The road-horror subgenre effectively reverses this triumph over the wilderness, giving the lie to the American myth of conquest, and revitalising folklore's terror of unknown space. Within the wilderness territory of the subgenre live groups of hostile antagonists, often in family clans, who have been left behind by progress. Living in the former mines, ghost towns, and other spaces abandoned by modern Americans, these malefactors take vengeance upon those who trespass into their homeland. Although exclusively white, the road-horror's antagonists seem to represent a culmination of all of those oppressed in the name of the United States' progress; the Native American, the African-American, and the white poor. The road-horror dramatises the fantasy of retribution by that which America has tried hardest to repress; the primal wilderness, and its impoverished and isolated citizens. The subgenre therefore fulfils something of the role previously held by folklore; both are strongly moralistic media, which warn of the consequences of trespassing, and both delineate the rural environment and its inhabitants as bloodthirsty, dangerous, and to be avoided at all costs.

Conflation and scavenging: the generic history of the road-horror

The road-horror was originally made manifest during the 1970s, and since the turn of the twenty-first century has been experiencing a resurgence. The nascence of the subgenre can be dated to the 1974 release of Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, and subsequently Wes Craven's *The Hills Have Eyes*, released in 1977. Although a similar storyline of trespassing and violence had previously been depicted by thrillers such as *Deliverance* (1972), it was not until the release of Hooper's film that this narrative was propelled into the realms of the horror cinema, becoming awash with the extreme violence by which the road-horror has subsequently been characterised. Hooper and Craven's work consolidated the elements which would become characteristic of the road-horror: the centralisation of a group of generally young protagonists; the journey of this group into an unknown and hostile location, and its resulting encounter with a murderous, perverse and often interrelated clan of killers, preceding violent and gory consequence. In Hooper's film, the protagonists are young road-trippers expounding upon astrological signifiers as they travel deep into the heart of Texas; in Craven's film, the lead family are cosseted suburbanites, crossing sun-bleached New Mexico on their journey West to California. The antagonists of both films are implicitly coded as 'rednecks' or as 'hillbillies' respectively, as perverse

dwellers of the rural, isolated wildernesses of the Southern American states, which are unnavigable to their victims. Similar tropes were articulated by a number of even lower-budget imitators which soon succeeded Hooper and Craven's films, such as *Just Before Dawn*, *Don't Go in the Woods* (both 1981), and *The Forest* (1982). After the two directors provided sequels for their respective films, both *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *The Hills Have Eyes* developed into franchises, being adopted by other filmmakers.(1) Established at an early stage, therefore, was the trend which has proven characteristic of the subgenre; that of revision and emulation, often undertaken by directors other than the original creators.

The post-millennial revival of the road-horror can be traced to the 2001 release of Victor Salva's *Jeepers Creepers*, the tale of a brother and sister who meet a killer on their journey through a rural backwater on the way home from college. Although reminiscent of the work of Hooper and Craven, Salva's film added a new element to the road-horror by attributing to its antagonist, an ancient demon in human disguise, a range of superhuman abilities, including near-immortality and an imperviousness to pain. Following the success of this production, there was released a spate of road-horrors in a more traditional mould, exclusively featuring antagonists who were human, though often so grotesquely deformed as to be barely recognisable as such. This group included *Wrong Turn*, *House of 1,000 Corpses* (2003) and its 2005 sequel *The Devil's Rejects*; the remake of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (both 2003), and that of *The Hills Have Eyes* (2006), as well as an assortment of prequels and sequels. Reminiscent of the 1970s cycle was the subsequent release of numerous 'B'-class horrors with similar plotlines, but with lower budgets and production values; these included Monster Man, Cannibal Detour (both 2003), *Hoboken Hollow*, *2001 Maniacs* and *The Curse of El Charro* (all 2005). During this period, the road-horror also infiltrated various national cinemas external to North America; from Britain came *This is Not a Love Song* (2002) and *Straightheads* (2007); from France, *Deep in the Woods* (2000), *Dead End* and *Switchblade Romance* (both 2003); from Belgium, *Calvaire* (2004); from New Zealand, *The Locals* (2003); and from Australia, in 2005, came one of the subgenre's most notorious and harrowing releases, *Wolf Creek*.

By the close of 2006, the subgenre seemed to have somewhat deflated, being subsequently associated less with new material than with sequels and prequels, such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* (2006), *The Hills Have Eyes 2* and *Wrong Turn 2: Dead End* (both 2007). This brief period of relative success, followed by a quick decline, seems analogous with current trends in much contemporary horror cinema. A similar example could be found, for instance, in the trend for Hollywood remakes of Japanese horror films; the group which encompassed *The Ring* (2002), *Dark Water* (2005), *The Grudge* (2004) and its 2006 sequel was chronologically synonymous with the road-horror. By the law of diminishing returns, the impact of the road-horror's initial releases has not been matched by its more recent output; the subgenre has followed the trend of horror cinema to descend into remakes, pastiches and parodies. This could be considered indicative of the postmodernism of contemporary horror, which is heavily derivative and self-consciously referential; either in a bid to provide audiences with the pleasure of recognition, or due to laziness or a lack of imagination on the part of filmmakers. Modern horror cinema seems, therefore, to embody the consummation of anxiety articulated by Walter Benjamin(2), Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer(3), each of whom feared that mass production would cause cultural output to decline in quality and originality.

Being demonstratively influenced by its 1970s predecessors, and postdating not only the extreme reflexivity of releases such as *Scream* (1996) and *The Faculty* (1998) but the parody-of-pastiche *Scary Movie* series (2000-), the road-horror shows no shame about its status as a subgenre of bricolage. Rather, a few films of the subgenre are unabashedly referential, the dialogue of sceptical characters reinforcing

the sentiment of cineliterate viewers, whilst providing the genre-savvy audience with something of a pleasurable jolt of recognition. Certain protagonists act as choruses, commentating on the unfolding action by relating their predicament to that of filmic predecessors; in *Wrong Turn*, for instance, one sceptic quips to his companions, 'Must I remind you of a little movie called Deliverance?' Immediately preceding a reckless action by her brother, Darry (Justin Long), which catalyses the film's chaotic and violent events, *Jeepers Creepers*' Trish (Gina Philips) sighs, 'You know the part in horror movies when somebody does something really stupid, and everybody hates him for it? This is it.' Such techniques may be successful if audiences continue to suspend their disbelief, reinforcing identification with a cynical lead, or such self-consciousness can instead cause the estrangement of viewers irritated by such reminders of fictionality.

Due to its referentiality, the road-horror could be regarded as a subgenre which holds particular attraction for movie buffs, particularly young horror fans, who are its primary, though rarely cine-literate, defenders on resources such as the message boards provided by the Internet Movie DataBase(4). By contrast, the subgenre has few defenders among mainstream critics, most of whom have reprimanded the road-horror for its derivativeness. Although largely derided on original release, it seems that the primary road-horror duo, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *The Hills Have Eyes*, have been subsequently immortalised as 'cult' classics. As a result the originals are fiercely defended by some contemporary critics, so that the modern road-horror cycle stands little of a chance to be perceived as more than a poor echo of its predecessor; which is especially ironic in consideration of the condemnation suffered by the original duo on first release. Reviewers of Marcus Nispel's 2003 remake of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* advised viewers '[j]ust go rent the original again'(5) ; Alexandre Aja's 2006 remake of *The Hills Have Eyes* was condemned as 'pointless'(6), *Jeepers Creepers* (Victor Salva, 2001) as 'derivative crap'(7), and *Wolf Creek* as 'pointless, nauseating cinema.'(8) Reviews of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* asked 'do we really need another film… in the saga of Leatherface?'(9) and assured 'you've seen it all before.'(10)

Gore and explicitness: the problem of violence

The imitative nature of the road-horror is not the first object of condemnation by its critics, many of whom have been appalled by the levels of violence characteristic of the subgenre. The prevalence of violence throughout the road-horror seemingly negates the willingness or ability of critics to further explore the potential meanings of the subgenre, instead dismissing it under the general consensus of 'a sickening orgy of torture imagery and graphic physical mutilation.'(11) The infamously disturbing content of Hooper's original *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* led it to be banned in many countries for several years, despite the fact that much like Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) it contained very little explicit gore; the subgenre has therefore been associated with ultra-violence since its nascent period. More recently, that reputation seems better deserved, as the modern road-horror cycle takes advantage of technology and dwindling censorship to maximise its explicit content, both violent and sexual. Roger Ebert, commentator on the original *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, has been a particularly vocal detractor of the road-horror's modern manifestation, even suggesting that a viewer who derives pleasure from such films must be psychologically unstable. Describing Nispel's remake of Hooper's work as '[a] contemptible film: vile, ugly and brutal', Ebert warned: 'There is not a shred of a reason to see it. Those who defend it will have to dance through mental hoops of their own devising […] Don't let it kill 98 minutes of your life.'(12) *Wolf Creek* fared little better, Ebert claiming: 'If anyone you know says this is the one they want to see, my advice is: Don't know that person no more.'(13) Other reviewers concur; commenting on *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning*, Maryann Johnson states that the film 'makes you question the mental well-being of the filmmakers…and their intended audience.'(14) In a review of *Wolf Creek*, Tyler

Hanley claimed that anyone who wished to see the film would be in need of 'some serious introspection.'(15) The modern road-horror movie has therefore been received with considerable distaste and even with virulent disgust; although it is perhaps appropriate that this set of films should attract a body of criticism which, like the texts themselves, is filled with hyperbole, bombast, repetition and derivation.

Several critics have somewhat erroneously amalgamated the road-horror with other subgenres. In the understanding of many, the road-horror has been conflated with so-called 'torture porn' or 'gorenography', the post-millennial subgenre preoccupied by depictions of extreme violence and degradation. The article by David Edelstein, generally attributed with coining the term 'torture porn', cited road-horrors *Wolf Creek* and *The Devil's Rejects* as part of the defining group of this newly violent subgenre. (16) Similarly, reviewer Linda Cook describes *Wolf Creek*, *The Devil's Rejects* and French road-horror *Switchblade Romance* (aka *Haute Tension*) as 'so-called horror films that are thinly disguised snuff pictures that border on porn.' (17) The road-horror movie can be distinguished from the 'torture porn', however, in that the latter usually depicts a more rational antagonist, who kidnaps his victims often for the purpose of profit; for instance, by allowing them to be human game as in the *Hostel* series (2005-2007), or harvesting their organs as in *Paradise Lost* (2006), which depicts the fate of a group of tourists in Brazil. By contrast, the villain of the road-horror is motivated primarily by bloodlust, and enacts the logic of the teen horror by dispatching those victims who commit misdemeanours by initiating sexual contact, consuming alcohol or drugs. Both road-horror and 'torture porn', however, are saturated in the explicit, and both share the tenets of postmodernism as described by genre critic Barry Keith Grant in embodying the hypothesis that '[i]n the postmodern procession of simulacra, traditional images of violence have lost their affective power.'(18)

Certainly, it is often difficult to distinguish the many strands of contemporary horror from one another, to establish the differences between the road-horror and, for instance, the 'slasher' film and what has become known as the 'torture porn' (which also involves high levels of gore), the 'motel-room horror'(19) (which also precedes violence by a journey into a hostile environment) and the road-horror. The road-horror is demonstratively influenced by several other ancestral and contemporary subgenres. It has inherited a preoccupation with violence from the 'splatter' film, the roots of which are detected by John McCarty(20) in the *Grand Guignol* theatres of Paris and London. As a cinematic subgenre, 'splatter' was consolidated on the fringes of Hollywood with such releases as *Blood Feast* (1963), Night of the Living Dead (1968), and *The Evil Dead* (1981). During the same era, Italian 'Mondo films', such as *Mondo Cane* (1962) and *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980) depicted images of violence and often cannibalism in remote areas of Africa or South America; all of which reinforced racist fantasies of tribal culture. Both subgenres could be classed under the banner of 'grindhouse' or 'exploitation' film, which represented controversial imagery and was characterised by low budgets and an often purposefully poor quality. Hooper's low-budget *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* engaged with the aesthetics of 'grindhouse', and most notably the misogynistic violence with which that cinema was most associated; tropes recently reiterated by Tarantino's *Death Proof* and Robert Rodriguez's *Planet Terror* (both 2007).

Despite its tendency to assimilate elements of other subgenres, the road-horror manifests its own uniqueness, which no theorist has yet suitably determined. Both Carol Clover(21) and Nicole Rafter(22) consider Hooper's *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* to be the major antecedent of the 'slasher'; whilst such a statement obscures the road-horror's uniqueness, it is a pertinent statement of the two subgenres' conflation. The road-horror certainly derives much of its influence from the 'slasher', which dramatises the dispatching of numerous young, and mostly female, victims by a psychopathic male killer. This

subgenre was originally popularised during the 1970s and 1980s by films such as *Black Christmas* (1974), *Halloween* (1978), *Friday the Thirteenth* (1980), and Wes Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). Clover, an early theoretical defender of the 'slasher', claimed that it had been considered 'beyond the purview of respectable criticism'(23); much like the road-horror, which has not yet been deemed suitable for serious or sustained academic analysis.

Clover defines the essential elements of the 'slasher' as encapsulated by what she posits to be the 'immediate ancestor' of the subgenre, Hitchcock's *Psycho*: 'the killer is the psychotic product of a sick family, but still recognisably human; the victim is a beautiful, sexually active woman; the location is not-home, at a Terrible Place; the weapon is something other than a gun; the attack is registered from the victim's point of view and comes with shocking suddenness.'(24) Clover's description in fact adheres less closely to the 'slasher', at least in its contemporary manifestation, than to the road-horror, a subgenre of which *Psycho* is certainly an antecedent. However, the terror of the 'slasher' film is that of being estranged from one's own familiar environment, which is breached by a murderous psychopath; such as *Halloween*'s Michael Myers, who preys on heroine Laurie Strode from within her own neighbourhood. By contrast, the road-horror dramatises the potential repercussions of trespassing into an alien environment. The 'slasher', therefore, is preoccupied with the fear of invasion; the road-horror, with that of the consequences of invading.

Before the popularisation of the 'slasher', narratives of the dire consequence of trespassing, such as *Psycho*, tended less toward the graphically violent than would the road-horror, and such films also tended to feature older characters. Pre-dating Hooper's and Craven's notoriously violent releases, for example, was 1972's *Deliverance*, based on the novel of the same title by poet James Dickey. *Deliverance* features a group of city businessmen, in their mid-thirties, who are pursued and attacked by local people, characterised as 'hillbillies', during a weekend canoeing trip. As evidenced by *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, released two years later, creators of the road-horror soon realised a greater potential for revenue by appealing to the youth audience who, it was becoming quickly apparent, formed the main demographic for horror cinema. As dawned the appeal of the 'slasher' cinema, which was as much preoccupied with sex as with violence, the groupings of protagonists in the road-horror quickly morphed into the younger, mixed-gender, more highly-sexed groups associated with the modern incarnation of the road-horror.

The road-horror also capitalised on the popularity of the 'slasher' by vastly increasing its violent content. During the earlier cycle, antagonists quickly became less recognisably human and more grotesque, their bloodlust dramatically accelerating and their means of torture and murder becoming ever more innovatively violent. Numbers of victims quickly grew, culminating in the twenty-first century cycle with the release of *Jeepers Creepers 2* (2003), in which an entire busload of college students is dispatched by the killer. Therefore, the road-horror may be considered part of the 'bodycount' strand of cinema, which also encompasses the 'torture porn'. This strand is preoccupied with depictions of the killing of as many victims as possible in the film's running time, and which may therefore be distinguished from 'psychological' horror, which privileges tension over gore.

Woodlands and wolves: the folkloric prehistory of the road-horror

Although it shares many elements with other strands of horror cinema, the uniqueness of the road-horror must be determined. The subgenre has maintained its own, unique story type, that of a group of young people taking a journey into a remote location and there encountering human antagonists. The genesis of this narrative form is the folklore of the European Middle Ages, and specifically the tale type known as

the *Warnmärchen*, which encompasses those stories that involve an act of transgression followed by a delineation of consequences. The progenitor of the road-horror is the central *Warnmärchen* described by folklorist Jack Zipes; that of a child threatened by an ogre, man-eater, or wild animal in the forest or wilderness.(25) Much like the road-horror, the *Warnmärchen* is characterised by revision and imitation; Zipes counts thirty-five different versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* (26), and traces the geneses of these to locations spanning the globe. The subgenre is demonstrative of its links to such lore; visual references to folk and fairy tales can be found in abundance, from the red (riding) hood(ie) sported by a character in Aja's *The Hills Have Eyes* to the discovery by *Wrong Turn*'s protagonist of an abandoned, steaming pot of meat, reminiscent of that spotted by Goldilocks prior to her encounter with the 'three bears'. The road-horror has unabashedly appropriated the narrative logic of the *Warnmärchen*; both are retellings of the archetypal tale of a young trespasser, in a threatening and disconcerting location, whose moral fortitude determines whether he or she will succeed in defeating a malevolent predator. Both narrative forms are keen to maximise their impact on listener and viewer respectively, and so both have an ambivalent relationship with their fictionality, attempting to impart 'true story' status on their tales, no matter how far-fetched.

Although the road-horror is saturated by visual and thematic references to folklore, the subgenre's creators have rarely acknowledged the influence of older narratives. The European road-horror tends to be more conspicuous about the homage which it makes to such narratives; *Deep in the Woods*, one of France's contributions to the subgenre, shows a character reading aloud from *Little Red Riding Hood*, and features a young troupe of travelling actors who are performing a revisionist version of the story. By comparison, admittance of folklore's influence upon the American road-horror by its creators is rare; during a documentary visible on the film's DVD edition (27), the creators of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* reference the folkloric trope of the 'bloody chamber', transmuted into the subgenre's macabre interior locations, but there are few similar cases of acknowledgement. Nevertheless, it is possible to posit that folklore, and specifically the *Warnmärchen*, has been sufficiently assimilated into the collective psyche that it may have a tangible influence upon the road-horror, even if its creators negate this fact. In Jungian terms (28), the characters, events and tropes of the *Warnmärchen* have become archetypal, its dissemination sufficient to be familiar to the producers and recipients of the road-horror; even if such a familiarity may not immediately be manifested beyond the unconscious.

The most well-known and enduring *Warnmärchen* is probably *Little Red Riding Hood*, which is also the text from which the road-horror derives most inspiration. *Little Red Riding Hood* is an early articulation of the elements present in the subgenre; namely, the centralisation of a strong female protagonist, her entering into danger by straying from the path into the woods, and her resultant encounter with an antagonistic force, the wolf. This story developed as a means by which to mythologise the dangers of becoming lost in an unnavigable forest and meeting a wild animal; both very real dangers for rural citizens of the European Middle Ages; it was an attempt to warn people, particularly children, of the literal dangers of straying from the path. To achieve its intended affect upon its original audience, the *Warnmärchen* was necessarily based in a narrative world in cohesion with the reality familiar to listeners, for whom dangerous, dark woods and man-eating animals were not mere fantasies. Such fears are no longer felt by a contemporary audience, and so the road-horror must articulate new terror; the devouring wolf of folklore has been replaced by the murderous, rural-dwelling human. For the British road-horror such as *Straightheads*, a sylvan setting is still a source of terror; in America, much woodland has been eradicated or contained within the boundaries of national parks, and the desert and ghost town have emerged in its place as the key locations of fear. For the Australian road-horror such as *Wolf Creek*, terror is to be found in the scorching, flat bushland which seemingly collaborates with the film's antagonist to

keep his victims disoriented and vulnerable. Generally, the terror of the road-horror is not that of finding oneself in a labyrinthine wood, but rather that of finding oneself in an utterly open, vast, and unnavigable environment without recourse to modernity, technology or logic.

Both *Warnmärchen* and road-horror are keen to maximise their impact on listener and viewer respectively, and so both have an ambivalent relationship with their fictionality, making a somewhat tongue-in-cheek attempt to impart 'true story' status on their tales, no matter how far-fetched. The first potential connection, therefore, between the *Warnmärchen* and road-horror is that despite their mutual fantastical elements, both are characterised by an attempt to locate themselves within an environment made all the more frightening by the fact that it is recognisably real. In its various transcriptions by Charles Perrault (29), the brothers Grimm (30), and others, European folklore obtained a pseudo-factual status with the adoption of the standard introduction 'Once upon a time'; a promise that the story to come is grounded in some reality, but will not be bound by logic or verisimilitude. This prefix acts as a sort of disclaimer to guarantee that the events about to be depicted have truly occurred; and, therefore, that the lesson provided by the story is to be heeded. The road-horror utilises an equivalent strategy; numerous members of the subgenre, including *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Wolf Creek*, make the dubious claim to be 'based on a true story', a manipulative technique intended to provoke a more dramatically fearful reaction from an audience.

The title sequences of road-horror films often begin with text detailing statistics of deaths and disappearances in the area of the film's setting, in an attempt to make the viewer believe that what they are watching is a fictionalised retelling of real events. Perhaps the most notable example of this technique within the road-horror is that of the subgenre's landmark text, Hooper's original *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. Even before cinemagoers watched the first reel of Hooper's film, they were enticed by the prospect that they were watching a fictionalised depiction of real events – 'America's most bizarre and brutal crimes!'; the tagline of theatrical posters promised, 'What happened is true. Now the motion picture that's just as real.' Nispel's 2003 remake furthers this technique by inserting a section of black-and-white 'police walk-through' footage, replete with the filmic scratches and frame judders intended as an aesthetic guarantee of authenticity. Ironically, this immediately renders the sequence less believable, especially as the aesthetic aped is anachronistic to the film's 1973 setting. This 'mockumentary' footage ends with the apparent attack and murder of the police officer and cameraman by the film's villain, 'Leatherface', after which overlaying narration informs us that the killer still remains at large. Similar techniques are used in several other road-horrors, including *Jeepers Creepers*, *Wrong Turn*, *House of 1,000 Corpses*, *The Hills Have Eyes* and its sequel, the antagonists of which outlast the final credits. This narrative device, whilst compounding the films' potential for fear and their pseudo-factual quality, also has intimations of folkloric tales which warn that the monsters that they depict are still living and still, therefore, a potential threat to the reader or listener; a technique often used to conclude folk stories about the Devil and other terrifying, supernatural entities.

Evidently, the claim originally made by Hooper is false; there is not, and has never been, a killer synonymous to Leatherface. However, the real-life killer who did inspire *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and, by extension, the road-horror subgenre, was Ed Gein, of Plainfield, Wisconsin. Gein, who also inspired Robert Bloch's 1959 novel *Psycho* and Hitchcock's subsequent film adaptation in 1960, committed two known murders, but achieved true notoriety for his grave-robbing and the creation of items of furniture and clothing from corpses; pursuits also followed by the family of 'Leatherface' in Hooper's film. McLean's *Wolf Creek* also proclaims its veracity, with the tagline 'Based on a true story', and two killers are thought to have inspired the film; Ivan Milat, who was convicted of the murders of

several backpackers in Australia during the 1980s-90s, and Bradley John Murdoch, convicted for the murder of British tourist Peter Falconio and for an assault on his girlfriend, Joanne Lees. Although the director has never confirmed which 'true story' inspired his film, the Australian release of *Wolf Creek* was delayed to avoid influencing the trial of Murdoch, who was convicted in 2005.

The impact of the road-horror's claims of authenticity is heightened by its attempts to reflect its audience in the characterisation of its protagonists, who are universally depicted as homogenous, white, middle-class travellers searching not for transcendental freedom but for a simple good time, and suffering from an extreme spell of bad luck. The typicality of their situations theoretically aids audience identification with characters, and thereby increases both the road-horror's potential for terror and the fortitude by which its warning is articulated. The depiction of protagonists as 'everymen' is an inheritance from *Deliverance*, an early cinematic version of the narrative appropriated by the road-horror, the tagline of which reads, 'This is the weekend they didn't play golf'. Several texts of the modern road-horror subgenre attempt to compound this audience empathy by a unique strategy of transposition. Rather than focusing upon the tribulations of 'them', as in the films' characters, the road-horror attempts to convince an audience that the experiences depicted will vicariously be theirs. This strategy is evident in the taglines of various releases, which are reproduced on theatrical posters and on DVD covers. *Jeepers Creepers* utilises the tagline, 'Evil is right behind you', its sequel, 'He can taste your fear'; *Wrong Turn* proclaims, 'It [this journey] is the last one you'll ever take'; New Zealand road-horror *The Locals* warns of its antagonists, 'They're dying to meet you'; and *House of 1,000 Corpses* asks, 'Dare you enter?' This strategy of integrating an audience into the narrative, and of furthering their potential identification by reflecting viewers in the characters depicted onscreen, is reminiscent of one utilised by tellers of folklore. Some contemporary Irish storytellers in particular may often begin a tale with the standard introduction of 'once upon a time, there was a boy' – and here a member of the audience will be identified – 'who was around your age, and in fact who looked a lot like you'. The name this listener may be ascertained and attributed to the story's hero, to further the enjoyment (or the fear) of the audience. By depicting the fate which befalls groups of young adults, the primary demographic to which the road-horror appeals, the subgenre similarly ensures maximum impact upon its audience.

The secondary protagonists of the road-horror are easily recognisable as stock types inherited from teen cinema; jocks, stoners, nerds, oversexed couples and so on, many of whom may be dispatched quickly and with little consequence to the narrative. These characters commit the deadly crimes known to all horror movie fans; having sex, taking drugs, drinking alcohol; what Randy Meeks in *Scream* terms 'the sin factor' which invites violent punishment. With these horror movie 'rules' in mind, it is often possible to delineate from the groups of youths who will die first, and who will die most graphically. However, it is also often possible to detect a female character unique to horror cinema; the virtuous, most moralistic member of the group whom Clover has famously termed the 'Final Girl', claiming 'she is the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril; who is chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise and scream again. She is abject terror personified.'(31) Clover claimed that 'Final Girls' such as Sally Hardesty in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* were established as the intended point of identification for the audience, therefore reversing the gender bias observed by Laura Mulvey (32), who had posited that viewer identification with a masculine protagonist would relegate female characters to objects of this protagonist's 'gaze'. According to Clover, horror cinema engages the viewer not in the gratification of the bloodthirsty male, but in the plight of the female victim. Therefore, Clover suggests, an audience does not celebrate the subjugation of the female, but her triumph, which is often manifest in a climactic moment of victory during which she outwits or overpowers her enemy. This central, triumphant female character is

reminiscent of the strong and moral heroines, such as 'Goldilocks' and 'Little Red Riding Hood', who are amongst the most memorable and enduring figures of folk and fairy lore.

It is often possible to detect the 'Final Girl' within moments of the road-horror film's opening. As in folklore, the surviving heroine is conspicuous by her ethical fortitude, which distinguishes her from her fellow travellers. Erin (Jessica Biel) and Jessie (Eliza Dushku), the respective protagonists of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Wrong Turn*, embody the characteristics which, by the logic of the road-horror, indicate survival: rationality, resourcefulness, moral upstanding, especially by comparison to the libertinous friends alongside whom they travel; and, in terms of physical appearance, neither overt femininity nor androgyny. The two actresses share a number of physical similarities, both having athletic physiques and long, dark hair (as opposed to the blonde hair which is often aligned with immorality in the subgenre's female characters). Both characters sport an item of clothing which, like Little Red's 'riding hood', has become a visual signifier of 'Final Girl' status: the tight white vest or T-shirt, an image of masculine strength previously associated with the prowess of Marlon Brando and James Dean, or the dynamic 'Die-Hard' heroism of Bruce Willis. The opening sequence of Nispel's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* clearly isolates Erin from her companions; her enduring, monogamous relationship with her boyfriend distinguishes her from the new couple making love behind her as they drive, and she is singled out as the only character to express consternation at the drug usage of the others.

As the road-horror's female characters develop a conspicuous animus, the strength of their male counterparts ebbs away. Indications of the decline of masculine power in the subgenre are apparent in the naming and the physical representation of certain male protagonists. Whilst few, with the possible exception of Morgan in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, have names which are entirely androgynous, many of the male characters are given diminutives with a '-y' suffix normally associated with female names, such as Darry (*Jeepers Creepers*) and Scotty *(Jeepers Creepers 2*). For the most part, the male protagonists are not aesthetically emasculated, the muscularity of their bodies being particularly emphasised. Nevertheless, this very eroticisation of the male body suggests an enforced passivity, as male characters become 'objects of the gaze', adopting a position traditionally associated with femininity under Mulvey's terms.(33)

Male characters are rendered passive through the protracted mutilation of their bodies, lingered upon with a voyeurism previously reserved by the horror genre for previously reserved with beautiful female victims. In this respect, a marked development can be detected by comparing the original version of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* with its remake. Hooper's film allows male characters quick deaths, which often occur in darkness or off-screen, whereas female victims undergo prolonged ordeals. In Nispel's remake, male protagonists are subject to pursuit, flaying and all manner of tortures. The ambiguity of the male protagonist in the modern road-horror is encapsulated by Nispel's Andy (Mike Vogel), whose eroticised body is emphasised through lighting tailored to the contours of his muscles, but which undergoes protracted dismemberment and torture. Andy is apprehended by 'Leatherface' after a tense sequence during which he is chased through a constricting web of sheets hung out in the sun; in one of the film's many ironic touches appreciable by cineliterate audiences, this is an inversion of a sequence in Hooper's original version, in which it is Sally to whom 'Leatherface' gives chase through branches equally as claustrophobic as the sheets. Hints of Andy's enforced feminisation are compounded by his mutilation; his leg is severed by the chainsaw, a wound which is immediately interpretable as a symbolic castration. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that Andy is punished for his overt sexuality, a transgression for which it is more traditionally a female character who would be cinematically castigated. Wounds are suffered by the protagonists of *Deliverance*, who are punished for their attempts to prove their primal

masculinity through conquering nature on a dangerous canoe expedition, and it is the most overtly masculine character, Lewis (Burt Reynolds) who is similarly crippled with a leg injury. *Wolf Creek*'s male lead, Ben (Nathan Phillips) is removed from the film's action at an early stage, rendered literally passive by his nailing to a makeshift crucifix. Also, as is more traditionally the case with female characters, the violence inflicted upon road-horror males is prolonged and calculated; Andy's wound is salted by 'Leatherface', who also impales him upon a meat-hook, penetrating him in an act connotes sexual violation, and rendering him powerless to retaliate; a fate suffered by a female character in Hooper's original. After his grotesque torture, Andy's death is delayed until he begs a weeping Erin to kill him from mercy; a mortal blow which is dealt with the penetration of a knife, a phallic symbol if ever there was one in the horror genre. By contrast, Kemper (Eric Balfour), the driver of the group's van, is the most traditionally masculine of the group, his moustache, lacquered hair and costuming in a workshirt and dark jeans having connotations of mid-century machismo. Kemper is dispatched with a blow to the head, a quick means of death for male characters reiterated throughout the horror genre, and he does not suffer the torture normally reserved for female, or feminised characters, although his body is defiled after death. Morgan (Jonathan Tucker), another member of the film's trio of males, is more explicitly emasculated; the only character in the group without romantic attachment, his nervous verbosity and tendency toward panic compound the relative femininity of his appearance by comparison to the other males. His masculinity is continually undermined; he is left behind with the female characters as Andy and Kemper attempt to seek help, and is mocked as a 'faggot' by Sheriff Hoyt (R. Lee Ermey), the adoptive father of 'Leatherface'. In a neat, dual metaphor of both his sexual passivity and impotence, Morgan is forced to take Hoyt's gun into his mouth; and, when he eventually manages to turn the weapon onto the Sheriff, he finds the barrel empty. Morgan's literal castration by 'Leatherface', whose chainsaw slices him in half from the groin upwards, renders him a physical and psychological embodiment of Corrigan's theory that the road movie, ancestor of the road-horror, is preoccupied with 'the fracturing of the male subject.'(34)

Few male protagonists in the road-horror are furnished with the ability to comprehend and thus survive their situations, and in several instances this causes the downfall of their entire group of friends. For instance, it is the failure of Dean in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* to fulfil his masculine 'duty', by submitting to the draft which calls him to Vietnam, which indirectly results in his demise after Sheriff Hoyt becomes enraged by the sight of his destroyed draft card. The insistence by overbearing fathers upon taking shortcuts in both *The Hills Have Eyes* and French made but American-set road-horror *Dead End* leads to violence and murder, and in recent British road-horror *Straightheads*, perhaps the subgenre's most explicit depiction of male incapability and female power, the recklessness of a callow young man sets in motion a series of vengeful and violent acts. The road-horror's construction of gender difference is, therefore, reminiscent of the folkloric *Warnmärchen*, which is full of examples of strong heroines; for example, in the case of the story of Hansel and Gretel, in which there is a brother-sister pairing as in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *Jeepers Creepers*, Gretel rescues her brother, who has been incapacitated by being fattened by a witch who has kidnapped them, as a precursor to her dining on him. Gretel releases her brother from his cage and murders the witch, allowing them both to flee.

Rednecks and hillbillies: the villains of the road-horror

Having unwittingly trespassed into the environment of the antagonist, often against the better judgement of the 'Final Girl', it is not long before the hapless protagonists suffer recrimination, just as in the *Warnmärchen*. In the American road-horror, the executor of such punishment is most frequently characterised as an impoverished, white inhabitant of the rural South; either a 'hillbilly' or 'mountain man' associated with the Appalachian area, or a 'redneck', associated with the Southern flatlands. The subgenre's antagonists are predominantly male, and there is often a sexual motivation, expressed

implicitly or explicitly, to their pursuit of their female victims. The road-horror makes the poor, white male a scapegoat by its propagation of stereotypes inherited from earlier cinema; 'white trash' serial killers had already sated their bloodlust in such films as *Kalifornia* (1993), *Natural Born Killers* (1994), and *Copycat* (1995). Both *Wrong Turn* and *The Hills Have Eyes* make it apparent that antagonists are seeking female victims with whom to breed, in a bid to further their increasingly-degenerate line; the subgenre's fear of the 'redneck' or 'hillbilly' male is therefore culminated by the danger of contamination. The proliferation of such character types in successful cinema seems to suggest that there is a marketable credibility in representing 'rednecks' or 'hillbillies' as deformed, inbred monsters, which must be symptomatic of a fear which exists in real life, not only in cinema, as suggested by Robin Wood's claim that 'the true subject of the horror genre is the struggle for recognition of all that our civilization represses.'(35) It seems, therefore, that the 'redneck' is the last remaining stereotype upon which American media can call, without fear of repercussion. Jim Goad compounds this, claiming that '[t]he trailer park has become the media's cultural toilet, the only acceptable place to dump one's racist inclinations.'(36)

The antagonists of both Hooper and Craven's productions are members of families within which the lineage is difficult to determine, are partakers in cannibalism, and suffer grotesque physical deformities; all of which are features characteristic of the killers who haunt the twenty-first century road-horror. Thus, the road-horror's representations contribute a great deal to the denigration of the 'redneck'; whilst also dramatising the fantasy of retribution, as such a figure takes revenge through violence. The 'redneck' of the American road-horror is someone left behind by progress, by the onslaught of modernity and capitalism, as is evidenced by *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, in which the antagonists have become a horrible parody of the working, successful American family; they maintain a maternal figure in the shape of a preserved corpse, and treat murder as a job synonymous with their previous work at a slaughterhouse. Therefore, the road-horror's 'redneck' gives the lie to the 'American Dream', by showing that the rural poor have been concisely excluded from it, and largely obliterated from American history. The antagonists of *The Hills Have Eyes* have been left behind by progress; their homes have been eradicated to make way for a nuclear testing facility, which has left them physically deformed, bestial and vengeful. The three villains of *Wrong Turn* are left-over pioneers; adept with a bow and arrow, they inhabit a woodland cabin, and defend their territory with the ferocity of their ancestors.

Several theorists have commentated upon the estrangement of 'rednecks' from dominant American society. That America has maintained a 'deep-seated cleavage between urban and rural life'(37) has historical precedence in anthropological writing; an 1847 magazine article described poor whites as 'as distinct a race as the Indian'(38), and upon an expedition to the rural South during the 1950s, John Dollard commented, '[t]hese white people down here […] seem very much like the psychotics one sometimes meets in a mental hospital. […] One has exactly the sense of a whole society with a psychotic spot, an irrational, heavily protected sore through which all manner of venomous hatreds and irrational lusts may pour.'(39) Surveys of the genesis of 'poor white' stereotypes have been completed by several theorists; Anthony Harkins describes the means by which the image of the 'hillbilly' has changed from 'slightly isolated but generally unremarkable folk' to 'picturesque survivors of an earlier era' to 'dangerous moonshining and feuding savages.'(40) Henry D. Shapiro discusses the configuration of the 'redneck' as an 'other' reminiscent of earlier anthropological discourse; mountain life, Shapiro argues, had to be represented as 'squalid and degenerate' in order to justify missionary expeditions to the Appalachian region. (41)

The punishment suffered by the road-horror's 'Final Girl' and her compatriots represents the dramatisation of a fantasy recurrent to the subgenre, that of the return of the repressed rural poor. The attribution to the 'poor white' antagonist of tendencies of extreme violence and cannibalism is reminiscent of anthropological discourse which, as hypothesised by Arens (42) and Obeyeskere, was frequently exaggerated as it tantalised what Obeyeskere terms 'the European dread of being eaten by savages.'(43) Arens claims that reports of cannibalism amongst remote tribes were often exaggerated, as a means by which to justify violent repression. The antagonists of *Wrong Turn*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *The Hills Have Eyes* are all explicitly coded as cannibals; strips of indefinable meat hang from the ceilings of their homes and boil in grimy pots, and human body parts are stored in refrigerators and preserved in jars. If 'civilization is based on the permanent subjugation of the human instincts'(44) , the road-horror antagonist embodies the refusal to sacrifice the cannibalistic impulse which Freud attributes to childhood (45); the 'redneck' represents the triumph of the unregulated id.

After suffering the violence of the 'redneck' antagonist, and witnessing the demise of her companions, the lucky 'Final Girl' will, most usually, succeed in making her escape. However, this standard road-horror conclusion does not obliterate the nihilism embodied by the subgenre, nor is it a simple resolution; by contrast, it is unlikely that the surviving heroine will ever recover from her experiences. Again, the two versions of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* demonstrate difference; Hooper's film ends with the manic laughter of Sally as she is driven by a terrified, passing motorist from her ordeal, 'Leatherface' left behind, waving his chainsaw in frustration. Nispel's version, however, follows Erin past the conclusion of the narrative; a deleted sequence visible on the film's DVD edition shows that she has been institutionalised, presumably maddened by her experiences. This trajectory toward more explicit nihilism culminated with *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning*, in which apparent 'Final Girl' Chrissie (Jordana Brewster) makes her escape in a hijacked car, and almost reaches the closing credits before 'Leatherface' emerges from the rear seat to dispatch her. *Wolf Creek* has a similarly grim conclusion, with both likely 'Final Girl' candidates Liz and Kristy abruptly and shockingly dispatched. This pessimism, coupled with the road-horror's tendency toward explicit depiction of violence, has propelled the subgenre firmly into the realms of postmodern horror as defined by Tudor, who has claimed that the genre is now characterised by 'blurred boundaries and endemic danger; rationality questioned and authority undermined; rejection of narrative closure [and] extreme violence.'(46)

The road-horror subgenre, which by its nature is sufficiently malleable to allow for sequels, prequels and remakes of all forms, and within various national contexts, is universally characterised by its resistance to closure. The subgenre propagates the reactionary myth, as did the *Warnmärchen*, that travel and trespass bring punishment; and it specifically locates its environment of terror in the rural American South. The road-horror has isolated the 'poor white' as the last remaining constitutor of 'otherness' in post-millennial America. The ultimate fear for contemporary cinemagoers is not that of discovering a refined psychopath living next door, but of being utterly isolated in an unnavigable environment, without recourse to rationality and to the tenets of modernity. The road-horror dramatises the perverse prolongation of America's pioneering past, previously a source of Transcendental awe for writers such as Henry David Thoreau, who privileged the wilderness as the source of enlightenment, with wonder remarking 'Our ancestors were savages'.(47) The savages of the road-horror are not reduced to the ancestral, but are contemporary and invincible, roaming the vanquished wilderness behind the border posited by Frederick Jackson Turner, 'the meeting point between savagery and civilization.'(48) For contemporary urban America, evidently, there is terror to be derived from the potential of an unconquered, unsafe wilderness representative of ancient chaos. Although its violence and nihilism have propelled it toward postmodernism, the road-horror is a conservative subgenre; even its violence is by no means a new

invention, Zipes having claimed that the endurance of the *Little Red Riding Hood* tale is partially due to its privileging of 'rape and violence.'(49) Much like the *Warnmärchen*, which in the transcriptions of Perrault would be concluded with a moralistic phrase or couplet, the road-horror reaffirms and modernises a conservative and defiantly antiquated warning: that of the dire consequences of straying from the path.

1. *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* series includes Hooper's 1974 original; *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (Hooper, 1986); *Leatherface: Texas Chainsaw Massacre III* (Jeff Burr, 1990); *The Return of the Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Kim Henkel, 1994); *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Marcus Nispel, 2003); *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* (Jonathan Liebesman, 2006). *The Hills Have Eyes* series includes Craven's 1977 original; *The Hills Have Eyes Part II* (Craven, 1985); *The Hills Have Eyes 3* (Joe Gayton, 1995); *The Hills Have Eyes* (Alexandre Aja, 2006) and *The Hills Have Eyes II* (Martin Weisz 2007).
2. Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations*, trans. by H. Zohn, ed. with intro. by Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969).
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6. Tilly, Chris, *The Hills Have Eyes* review (March, 2006):
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8. Hanley, Tyler, *Wolf Creek* review (date unknown):
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14. Johnson, Maryann, ibid.
15. Hanley, Tyler, ibid.
16. Edelstein, David, 'Torture Porn: The Sadistic Movie Trend', *New York Magazine* (28 January, 2006):
http://nymag.com/movies/features/15622/
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Irish Gothic Revisited

Jarlath Killeen

It is always something of a shock to realise that something you wrote, submitted, and have tried to forget about, has actually been published, read by someone else, and provoked a reaction. In opening the new journal with a brief survey of some theoretical approaches to Irish Gothic writing, I expected to do nothing more than alert whatever reader happened to stumble upon the article to a body of critical material that had built up over the last twenty years in Irish Studies (and try to sneak in a few of my own views under cover of night). When Richard Haslam responded with a lengthy article disagreeing with practically everything I argued (and even some things I didn't) I was both flattered and rather provoked. Haslam does agree with a couple of my suggestions, but he aggravatingly relegates these to a footnote (number 117 no less!), and this agreement is limited to my 'highly pertinent' raising of the Huguenot ancestry of Charles Robert Maturin and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. This is rather cold comfort since Haslam himself was one of the first to point to the importance of the Calvinist theology of the Huguenots to Maturin in an article published in 1994, 'Maturin and the "Calvinist Sublime"'.[1] However, since I am a needy critic, I am willing to take praise where it comes, and will respond in kind: I found Haslam's riposte stimulating and important for bringing to the fore a number of important issues, some of which help to define the way in which the body of material called 'Irish Gothic' should be spoken. I also accept, as he pointed out, that I neglected to highlight a use of folklore as a distinguishing feature of the Irish Gothic.[2] Readers of 'responses-to-responses', however, have not come to hear about agreements, and although I could claim to be motivated by the high-minded desire to continue a fruitful dialogue and merely draw attention to some of the difficulties in Haslam's approach to Irish Gothic, being a straight-up kind of guy I admit I am just defending my own honour – well, no one else is going to do it.

Haslam disagrees with me in so many areas that it is difficult to know quite where to begin, so let me start with a relatively minor issue. My initial article started with a brief summary of W. J. McCormack's initial canonising and later 'cashiering' of the Irish Gothic tradition, first in his article 'Irish Gothic and After' (1991), in Volume Two of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, and then subsequently in *Dissolute Characters* (1993). Haslam disapprovingly insists that 'Killeen implies that McCormack's apparent reconsideration stemmed from negative criticism of the *Anthology*'s supposed political tendentiousness' and counters that 'reservations' with the Gothic canon are already made explicit within his 'Irish Gothic and After' article and 'arise primarily from dissatisfaction with earlier critical incorporations of Le Fanu into an Irish Gothic'.[3] However, and crucially, it is simply not the case that McCormack is primarily motivated in his dismantling of the Irish Gothic canon by his belief that Le Fanu's reputation is suffering from association with writers of less literary distinction (Maturin and Bram Stoker). McCormack's main difficulty, as I outlined in my original article, is indeed with the political and historical implications of the entangled concepts of 'canon' and 'tradition' in the writing of Irish literary history. He is not simply uncomfortable with the 'Irish Gothic canon/tradition', but with canons and traditions as constructed by literary historians with ideological agendas to sell. Indeed, 'Cashiering the Gothic Canon' begins with what might be construed as a polemic against previous literary historians who have constructed Irish literary history from an Irish nationalist perspective (precisely the argument used against the *Field Day*

[1] Richard Haslam, 'Maturin and the Calvinist Sublime', *Gothick Origins and Innovations*, eds. Allan Lloyd Smith and Victor Sage (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 44-56.
[2] Richard Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* 2 (2007), 2.
[3] Ibid 2.

Anthology in the first place). Although he surprisingly exempts Seamus Deane's *A Short History of Irish Literature* (1986) from a shame list of 'literary chroniclers',[4] he singles out versions of Irish literary history which canonise in order to promote a 'patriotic' view of Irish writing. He complains, for example, that 'the Jonathan Swift whom editors know' (and whom, it is implied, gains McCormack's approbation) 'is scarcely recognisable as the figure of similar name recurring as a patriot in the literary histories'. Indeed, 'the chroniclers inhabit a last ditch of cultural nationalism'.[5] That McCormack emphatically includes the Field Day school in his disapprobation is clear from a reference in *From Burke to Beckett* (1994) in which he argues that 'much of what declares itself post-colonialist in its concerns is readily detectible as Irish nationalism, unreconstructed yet occasionally garnished with the origami of notable house-Trotskyites in the Dublin newspaper world'.[6]

Although McCormack is, as Haslam notes, very dissatisfied with Le Fanu being uncritically linked to writers such as Stoker and Maturin, the position of Le Fanu is merely a local and restricted example of the tendentiousness of canon making and tradition drawing in general which he has spent a great deal of his critical career undermining. It is the political implications of canon making and the ideological connotations of a certain view of an Irish literary tradition, as well as the historical simplifications involved in constructing Irish literary and Gothic traditions, that occupy McCormack's destructive focus. In *Dissolute Characters* he declares it his 'modest' aim to so problematize Le Fanu's relationship with the 'so-called' and 'doubtful' Irish Gothic tradition, that it would be impossible to fit him in to prevailing models, but it is clear that in doing this McCormack wants to add to the growing problematization of the ideas of canon and tradition in Irish literature itself.[7]

Tradition á la Mode.

This neatly brings us to the problem of the continued use of the terms 'tradition' and 'canon', not only in referencing the Irish Gothic, but, as McCormack highlights, Irish literature as a whole. Like McCormack, Haslam is very ill-at-ease with the concept of 'tradition' and wants the term retired to make way for what he believes to be a much more useful one, 'mode'. McCormack's objections to the concept of 'tradition' were voiced strongly in *Ascendancy and Tradition* (1985) and re-articulated in *From Burke to Beckett*. He complains that 'the notion of Anglo-Irish literature is given an excessive stability by the acceptance of tradition as accumulated and accumulative succession'[8]; notes that 'in its Yeatsian form' the assertion of a tradition is 'a statement of certain continuities'[9]; tradition, he later opines 'is frequently identified with a conservative literary history'[10]; his book is all about 'unmask[ing] the Yeatsian tradition'[11]; he is sympathetic to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger's view of tradition as 'cousin-germane to ideology'[12]. It turns out that this is what Haslam thinks of tradition as well. He contends that:

> '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.

[4] W. J. McCormack, *Dissolute Characters: Irish Literary History through Balzac, Sheridan Le Fanu, Yeats, and Bowen* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 2.
[5] Ibid, 2.
[6] W. J. McCormack, *From Burke to Beckett: Ascendancy, Tradition and Betrayal in Literary History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1994), 14.
[7] McCormack, *Dissolute Characters*, 3.
[8] McCormack, *From Burke to Beckett*, 12.
[9] Ibid, 12.
[10] Ibid, 303.
[11] Ibid, 305.
[12] Ibid, 306.

> 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…It may now be time to … [retire] 'the Irish Gothic *tradition*' and [replace] it with 'the Irish Gothic *mode*'.[13]

In a previous article on James Clarence Mangan, Haslam has called for support for this terminological substitution from Robert Hume and, significantly, Fred Botting, one of the most important critics writing on the Gothic.[14]

Of course, a problem with relying on Botting to back up this dismantling of 'tradition' in favour of 'mode' is that Botting actually uses both terms fairly inconsistently throughout his study of Gothic (1996).[15] Indeed, to suggest that he favours a shift from 'tradition' to 'mode' is to misrepresent his view. Botting's argument is that given the sheer diffusion of 'Gothic forms and figures over more than two centuries', it is difficult to define Gothic as 'a homogenous generic category'; as a 'mode' it exceeds 'genre and categories'.[16] There is certainly no rejection of the notion of a 'Gothic tradition' here since in the same paragraph he writes:

> While certain devices and plots, what might be called the staples of the Gothic, are clearly identifiable in early Gothic texts, the *tradition* draws on medieval romances, supernatural, Faustian and fairy tales, Renaissance drama, sentimental, picaresque and confessional narratives as well as the ruins, tombs and nocturnal speculations that fascinated Graveyard poets (my italics).[17]

A page and a half later, discussing American Gothic, Botting claims that in the United States 'the literary *canon* is composed of works in which the influence of romances and Gothic novels is far more overt', so that American literature seems 'virtually an effect of a Gothic *tradition*. Gothic can perhaps be called the only true literary *tradition*' (my italics).[18] He afterwards points to Horace Walpole as the founder of 'the Gothic *tradition*' (my italics)[19]; argues that Charles Brockden Brown was a negotiator of 'European and American Gothic *traditions*' (my italics)[20]; and considers that David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986) absorbs 'the American Gothic *tradition*' (my italics).[21] The term 'tradition' is indeed a problematic and sometimes distorting one in literary critical history, but if we were to retire all terms which were problematic and distorting we would be left with a much denuded and even more distorting view, in which 'mode' does not help one bit.[22]

An important objection to Haslam's attempt to delete the term from our critical vocabulary when discussing Irish Gothic is that 'tradition' is a much more polyvalent term than he allows. Indeed, W. J. McCormack makes it clear that he objects only to a specific formulation of tradition, tradition 'in its

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[13] Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', 2.
[14] Richard Haslam, '"Broad Farce and Thrilling Tragedy": Mangan's Fiction and Irish Gothic', *Éire-Ireland* 41: 3 and 4 (Fall/Winter 2007), footnote 17.
[15] Indeed, bizarrely, Haslam points out that McCormack himself uses both terms 'mode' and 'tradition' in his studies and I would point out that almost every writer on the Gothic that I have consulted does exactly the same – i.e., they do not see a conflict between the terms.
[16] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), 14.
[17] Ibid, 14.
[18] Ibid, 16.
[19] Ibid, 21.
[20] Ibid, 115.
[21] Ibid, 175.
[22] Romanticism would have to go for a start, followed closely by realism.

Yeatsian form'[23] – the view of 'tradition' articulated by the modernists. Yet, modernist views of tradition are not the only ones, even if they have been allowed to dominate discussion. While McCormack wants to 'cashier' the monologic, modernist view of tradition, he reminds us that it is perfectly possible to 'consider tradition historically as the (sometimes contradictory and violent) convergence of readings, not of texts'.[24] He urges his readers not to mistake tradition for its objects (the components of the canon), and instead recognise it as 'the social and cultural dynamics of the process of handing down, and the place of this in the modes of production of the period and the historical character of that period'.[25] Accepting this view of tradition as a very complex, contradictory, 'violent' process of textual production and cultural interpretation, critical responses to the use of Gothic themes and tropes would in fact constitute part of the Irish Gothic tradition, a tradition in which no one single ideological or political affiliation is discernible. Indeed, such a tradition would look rather like that image I invoked in my original essay: an Irish Gothic tradition which resembles a 'Gothic edifice, full of suggestive gaps, obscure corners, imposing promontories (the "great" works), fractures, fragments' (2), a view Haslam dismisses as 'picturesque' (and we know what he means by that).[26]

Once we move outside the sometimes narrow confines of literary history, we find that 'tradition' has been used in this much more complicated way as including both actual works and the processes involved in interpreting and transmitting these works. For example (one that might not gain me very many friends), the Catholic Church in the *Dogmatic Constitution of Divine Revelation*, debated at the Second Vatican Council in 1962, problematized an old-fashioned view of Catholic tradition as simply referring to the deposit of faith and redefined it as 'the whole process by which the Church "hands on"…its faith to each new generation'.[27] The relationship between Irish Gothic texts – or Irish texts that employ Gothic tropes and themes – and the process of reception and interpretation of these texts is (hesitatingly and in a limited way) analogous to the relationship between scripture and interpretation in the Catholic tradition: 'Tradition comes before and during and not just after, the writing of Sacred Scripture'.[28] Haslam's invocation of the term 'mode' is certainly useful, but it is rather strange to think that its use requires the 'retirement' of the term 'tradition'. To invoke a more theological discourse, I would suggest that the Irish Gothic mode *subsists in* the Irish Gothic tradition, and that this tradition includes all articulations of the Gothic mode (including all critical refection on it) that have any relationship to the subject matter of 'Ireland', as broadly conceived as that can be. In this way 'tradition' can be reconceived, in Paul Ricoeur's words, *not* as 'the inert transmission of some dead deposit of material but …the living transmission of an innovation always capable of being reactivated by a return to the most creative moments of poetic activity'.[29]

Haslam's (ideological?) unease is reminiscent of the furore which greeted the Richard Kearney edited study of *The Irish Mind* in 1985. As he puts it in a recent response to the controversy the volume

[23] McCormack, *Burke to Beckett* 12.
[24] Ibid, 12.
[25] Ibid 303. This is hardly an unusual critical position. Harold Bloom, a critic who spent the early years of his career disputing the Eliotian view of tradition has not simply abandoned the term as somehow indissolubly connected to a stultifying conservatism, and in *Anxiety of Influence* (1973) famously devised a tradition of radically personal 'influence' where one great writer struggles with the modes he 'inherits' from a 'strong' precursor, a version of tradition as a highly contentious and even violently aggressive form of misreading.
[26] Jarlath Killeen, 'Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction', *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* 1 (2006), 1.
[27] Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), 62-3.
[28] Ibid, 62.
[29] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 68.

generated, Kearney posited that on the whole, 'Irish intellectual traditions represent something of a counter-movement to the mainstream of hegemonic rationalism…In contradistinction to the orthodox dualist logic of *either/or*, the Irish mind may be seen to favour a more dialectical logic of *both/and*: an intellectual ability to hold the traditional oppositions of classical reason together in creative confluence'.[30] It was partly this formulation that encouraged Terry Eagleton to see much of Irish intellectual and literary history as doggedly opposed to a representational epistemology, from the calligraphy of the *Book of Kells*, to the negative theology of John Scottus Eriugena, to Burke's sublime, and also the Gothic novel.[31] Some reviewers argued that Kearney, in the cause of Irish nationalism, had essentialized Irishness and simply reversed the usual colonial claims that Ireland was full of people who simply couldn't think straight, privileging this inability as an 'alternative system of thought'. Kearney has since emphasised that the phenomenon of the 'Irish mind' be 'understood as a *cultural* phenomenon that develops and alters as history progresses, and *not* as some innate ethnic characteristic'.[32] If the Irish Gothic tradition be included as representative of the cultural phenomenon of the 'Irish mind', the complexity of its intellectual and aesthetic contribution to Irish history can begin to be mapped.

Allegory or Allegoresis?

Haslam's second major bone of contention focuses on what he sees as the most important interpretive error that can be found in my reading of particular texts in the Irish Gothic tradition and which can be extended to include my understanding of the tradition in its entirety. He argues that my 'psychoanalytically-inflected reading of Irish history shapes [my] reading of an Irish story' (particularly *Melmoth the Wanderer*), and that I always tend to see Gothic texts as commenting in some way on 'the burden of colonial history', as commentaries on the anxieties of the Anglo-Irish in general, so that in my analysis, Irish Gothic is one specific means by which Protestant Anglo-Irish writers reflected on their place in Ireland and articulated the psychological conundrums which that position imposed.[33] Luckily, I am not alone in making such an egregious blunder, and Haslam sees Julian Moynahan, Joseph Spence and Terry Eagleton as my brothers-in-error. Apparently we all make the same interpretive mistake:

> 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.[34]

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[30] Richard Kearney, 'The Irish Mind Debate', *Navigations: Collected Irish Essays 1976-2006* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2006), 19.

[31] Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995), 50-1, 188-9.

[32] Kearney, 'The Irish Mind Debate', 21. In an earlier article Haslam approvingly cites Conor Cruise O' Brien's negative review of Kearney's collection as useful for problematising notions of 'the Irish Mind' ('A Race Bashed in the Face' 20).

[33] Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', 3.He also argues that I claim 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' (3). However, I made it clear in my original article that this was a view put forward by Roy Foster in his article on 'Protestant Magic' (1995), and it was a view with which I did not entirely agree. Indeed, I argued that Irish Protestants did not simply 'lose power' in real terms in nineteenth-century Ireland and that 'we must remember that the Protestant writers of Gothic in Ireland formed a part of the (relatively) powerful rather than the powerless, and it doesn't really make sense to view them as marginalized in anything other than purely psychological terms' (4).

[34] Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', 3.

Of course, the term 'allegory' did not arise once in my original article, although it does occur in Terry Eagleton's suggestion that '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'.[35]

Does seeing *Melmoth the Wanderer* as a commentary on the Irish Protestant mentality or Irish history and politics amount to *allegoresis*, an uncalled-for, unprovoked, unnecessary imposition on an unwilling text, a breach of hermeneutical decorum, and ultimately a complete misrepresentation of both a text and the Irish Gothic tradition itself? Northrop Frye had a neat line in responding to accusations of allegoresis. In his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) he explicitly warned that 'All commentary is allegorical interpretation'.[36] I too would hesitatingly suggest that all accounts of Maturin's tale which relate something other than simply the plot are open to the accusation of allegoresis. Frye's point is that all readings which assess the way a text 'says one thing but means another' are necessarily implicated in the mode of allegorical interpretation. As Morton Bloomfield explains, 'except for textual scholars who attempt to preserve and protect the verbal surface of a work…we may put all interpreters into the general category of allegorists'.[37] Haslam is concerned that Moynahan, Eagleton, Spence and myself are involved in subordinating both the text and the author to the critic, to seeing in the text what we want to see in it. To counter this he answers my specific readings of *Melmoth the Wanderer* and *Ennui* (1809) with textual detail of his own, but he does this primarily to re-establish what he sees as the proper relationship between a text, an author and a critic in which the critic should not set out to make the text say things that the author did not intend. Since, he argues, Maturin did not intend *Melmoth* to amount to a consideration of the Protestant Irish position in Ireland, or the politics of Ireland at the time, it is unfair – indeed, illegitimate – of me to claim that this is what the novel does. That kind of interpretation 'makes itself a little too much *at home* in the text' and ends up imposing an allegorical reading which is simply not there; he cautions that hesitancy in interpretation rather than allegoresis should take precedence.[38]

Personally speaking, I feel that I could hardly have made much more of tentativeness if I tried: the main point of my original argument, after all, was to point out that Tzvetan Todorov's association of the Gothic with a psychological 'hesitancy' between a supernatural and a natural understanding of the plot can be linked to the cultural hesitancy of the Protestant Irish:

> There were no greater cultural hesitators in the British Isles than the 'Anglo-Irish'; so deep was their sense of cultural ambiguity that Julian Moynahan has rightly called them a "hyphenated culture". As hybrid figures the Anglo-Irish were in a perfect position to develop an important tradition in a literature that emphasises hesitancy over certainty, and which refuses to dissolve binaries such as living/dead, inside/outside, friend/enemy, desire/disgust'.[39]

It was no part of my general plan to argue that we should calcify the hesitators and their texts into a very specifically drawn out allegory. I also endorsed Moynahan's view that Gothic often violates the 'official best intentions' of its authors so that, while it may or may not be true that Maturin did not intend an allegorical reading of *Melmoth*, this does not necessarily mean that the novel he produced does not

[35] Eagleton, *Heathcliff*, 190, quoted in Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', 3
[36] Northrop Frye, *An Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 89.
[37] Morton Bloomfield, 'Allegory as Interpretation', *New Literary History* 3 (1972), 302.
[38] Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics', 4.
[39] Killeen, 'Irish Gothic', 6; see Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Case Western Reserve University, 1973), 25.

include such an allegory.[40] Haslam is deeply suspicious of psychoanalysis as a tool of interpretation considering it a cheap way to incorporate readings that a particular critic wishes to propound under the cover of either the personal, political or cultural unconscious (he includes a long footnote disputing Fredrick Jameson's conceptualisation of the 'political unconscious'[41]), but while critics (including myself) should perhaps be more hesitant in employing such models to literary analysis, it is important to recognise that what Haslam is trying to do is to close down analysis by effectively outlawing modes of interpretation with which he does not agree. Hence, in his brief article on the 'Irish Gothic' for the *Routledge Companion* (2007) he suggests that psychoanalysis itself is an outmoded discourse – thus implying that any application of its terminology automatically renders that interpretation illegitimate.[42]

There is no space here to replay Jacques Derrida's argument that once a text leaves the author she cannot control the ways it can interpreted[43]; or to re-emphasise the now surely uncontested view that an author is not in complete control of what meanings a text contains. I am not here arguing that authorial intention is unimportant or to be dismissed,[44] simply insisting that there may be more to a text than an author assumes or would recognise. Baldly speaking, even if Maturin was not *intentionally* commenting on the 'Irish Protestant mentality', he ended up doing so anyway. It is difficult to see why any literary critic would want to disagree with this position. Moreover, it is not, in fact, necessary to invoke the notion of allegory to defend this view. Indeed, we can bring into play another term put forward by Northrop Frye. In his analysis of romance Frye posits that, by its structures and conventions, romance always provokes alternative meanings, and argues 'it seems to me that the word allegory here is misleading: I should prefer some such phrase as "symbolic spread", the sense that a work of literature is expanding into insights and experiences beyond itself'.[45] The eminent Gothic critic Anne Williams has also preferred the term 'symbolic spread' to 'allegory' in analysing the Gothic.[46] In my own study of eighteenth-century Irish Gothic I endorsed 'the New Historicist notion that texts and the histories in which they are imbedded are mutually productive processes'[47]; the term 'symbolic spread' usefully describes the means by which this mutual production of interpretation takes place.

As a contemporary and very obvious example of 'symbolic spread' I would cite John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978) which soon after its release came to be seen as a quasi-conservative (perhaps ultra-conservative) commentary on the sexual revolution of the 1960s and a warning that sexual promiscuity equals death. In the film all the teenagers who have sex are brutally murdered with a phallic-like knife by the deranged Michael Myers who appears to be engaging in not-so-subtle

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[40] Killeen, 'Irish Gothic', 3; Julian Moynahan, 'The Politics of Anglo-Irish Gothic: Charles Robert Maturin, Sheridan Le Fanu, and the Return of the Repressed', *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination of a Hyphenated Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 111.

[41] Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', footnote 60; see also Haslam's complaint that despite 'the growing number of historical, philosophical and scientific studies implacably establishing the fraudulent origins and flawed procedures of psychoanalysis, widespread recognition of its pseudoscientific status has been long delayed within European and American intellectual communities whose various schools from the post-structural to the post-colonial remain heavily indebted to the idiom of Freud and his epigones' ('A Race Bashed in the Face' 12).

[42] This is clearly why Haslam gives such a sympathetic reception to the work of Frederick Crews.

[43] Jacques Derrida, 'Signature Event Context', *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 313.

[44] Neither, of course, did Derrida.

[45] Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1976), 59.

[46] Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 81-2.

[47] Jarlath Killeen, *Gothic Ireland: Horror and the Irish Anglican Imagination in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 25.

reinforcement of family values. Carpenter later expressed shock that his film could be read as an endorsement of abstention and insisted that it was not his intention to bring an end to the sexual revolution.[48] However, it would be bizarre to argue that, simply because there was no conscious intention on Carpenter's part, the film should not be read as containing a commentary on sexual behaviour.[49] Similarly, Haslam's approach would appear to render illegitimate readings of *Dracula* (1897) which see in the staking of Lucy Westenra a reinscription of patriarchal values on a sexually-transgressing woman simply because such an interpretation was probably not consciously meant by Stoker.

Part of Haslam's discomfort with my 'symbolically spread' analysis is due to his deep suspicion of any attempt to describe the Irish Protestant mind in general terms:

> …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 prosopoœia (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.[50]

In his article on 'Irish Gothic' in the *Routledge Companion*, Haslam likewise accuses me of 'hypostasizing' 'the Irish Anglican Imagination' in my book on the subject, although he does admit that I am partly redeemable since I accept that such terms are open to challenge.[51] Let me acknowledge that there is a genuine problem in attempting to generalise and articulate a view about the mentalité and psychology, but also the general characteristics, of a given culture, and that it is impossible in the strictest sense to essentialize any given set of people because there will always be exceptions, and differing versions of the same community. It is strictly true to say that 'the Irish mind', or 'the Protestant imagination', or 'the English personality' does not exist except in the most hypothetical and abstract terms. There are a few more points to be made in respect to this, however, the first being the rather obvious one that substituting the prefix 'an', or 'one version of', for the definite article, does not really help matters, and that qualifications while useful can not only be cumbersome but also very misleading. For example, Marianne Elliott's *The Catholics of Ulster* (2000) purports to trace the history of one specific culture from Cú Chulainn to the second millennium and strongly asserts that a 'regional identity' can be identified for this group. By Haslam's strict logic Elliott's book should be called 'a version of some Catholics of Ulster: A Partial History', but I think that this might blunt some of the rhetorical force of her analyses and also suggest that she is not, however provisionally, really trying to describe a discernible community.

Likewise, by the strict logic of Haslam's argument, a book such as Oliver Macdonagh's brilliant *States of Mind: Two Centuries of Anglo-Irish Conflict, 1780-1980* (1983) would not be possible, not least because in it he ascribes very different views of time and space to two different communities living in Ireland, although qualifying this with the insistence that he does not mean 'to suggest that the respective common

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[48] Darryl Jones, *Horror: A Thematic History in Fiction and Film* (London: Arnold, 2002), 117.
[49] Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chain Saws* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 167.
[50] Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', 3.
[51] Haslam, 'Irish Gothic', in *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, eds. Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (London: Routledge, 2007), 88-9.

historical assumptions of the two peoples were, or are, either innate or universal'.[52] MacDonagh's discussion of such things as 'the Ulster Protestant sense of territoriality',[53] 'the Irish nationalist...concept of space'[54], 'the peasant's view of property'[55], would all be outlawed. In his seminal study of competing Irish cultures F. S. L. Lyons argued that much of the conflict in Irish history could be put down to the fact that different communities understood the world in such different ways so that they became 'seemingly irreconcilable cultures, unable to live together or to live apart, caught inextricably in the web of their tragic history'.[56] However much Lyons' view has been challenged, he is surely correct to discern that these communities understand themselves as possessing different world-views. When Terry Eagleton argues that 'the Anglo-Irish mind was gripped by a ferocious Oedipal aggression towards its paternal superiors at Westminster, a hostility which, like the Oedipal child, it sought often enough to displace and disavow',[57] he is guilty of a myriad sins from Haslam's perspective, not only generalising but also psychoanalysing an entire group of people. Eagleton is, however, one of the worst examples Haslam could have chosen to berate since, throughout his many studies of Irish culture he constantly qualifies such generalisations. However, he also insists that although the Protestant Irish were hardly a wholly unified group in social terms their internal 'differences are…less important than their shared political and religious ideology'.[58] So, although we can easily concede the point that '*the* Irish Protestant mind' does not exist, it is perfectly possible to discuss 'the Irish Protestant mind' – in other words, Haslam is the one adding the italics to the definitive article, rather than any of the rest of us.

My book on 'the Irish Anglican Imagination' was an attempt at a study of 'social memory' as theorised by Steve Connerton, a memory which involves folklore, mythology, traditions, and literature, and was as far from deterministic as I could make it. In his study of 'collective memory' Maurice Halbwachs insists that individual memory is best seen through the prism of collective memory since the individual constantly depends on her version of the past being reflected and corroborated by the community to which she belongs. We remember the past not merely as individuals but as parts of a collective and community – 'knowable communities' have memories, and one way of getting at these memories is through an analysis of the literature that the community has produced. While, again, it is perfectly correct to argue that Halbwachs rode rather roughshod over the individual inflection of collective memory so that individual idiosyncrasy was almost lost in his argument, in my own work I have consistently tried to emphasise the individual differences (between, for example, Sir John Temple and Jonathan Swift) as well as the similarities in the Irish Protestant community. However, the positive aspects of Halbwachs must not be ignored and discussing collective memory or group identity should not be dismissed as some kind of historical or psychoanalytical slight-of-hand. The Irish Gothic tradition is one, very telling, way to tell us about the community that (generally) produced it: the Irish Protestant community.

When George Orwell discussed the class differences within Britain as an objection to attempts to claim any kind of homogeneity in British culture he noted that internal divisions 'fade away the moment any two Britons are confronted by a European' and that 'even the distinction between rich and poor dwindles

[52] Oliver MacDonagh, *States of Mind: Two Centuries of Anglo-Irish Conflict, 1780-1980* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 11.
[53] Ibid, 19.
[54] Ibid, 23.
[55] Ibid, 37.
[56] F. S. L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 117.
[57] Eagleton, *Heathcliff*, 71.
[58] Ibid, 43.

somewhat when one regards the nation from the outside'.[59] Any study of a collective will be more likely to emphasise the cultural commonalities rather than internal divisions. In her (possibly hypostasizing) account of the 'forging' of collective British identity in the eighteenth century, Linda Colley points out that while 'there were always dissenting voices: and it is right and proper that they should emerge loud and clear from the historical record and that we acknowledge them…we should not let them drown out the other, *apparently* more conventional voices'.[60] The search for the underlying patterns of cultural codification in any given group or collectivity is not a quest for the holy grail – and given that some of these patterns are indeed underlying or latent rather than manifest, it is surely not illegitimate to invoke and utilise a discourse which is calibrated to uncovering latencies often undetectable to insiders, the discourse of psychoanalysis.[61]

Protestant Gothic/Catholic Gothic.

Another of Haslam's disagreements with me (and this time, also with McCormack), concerns the claim that 'Irish Gothic writing' is 'distinctly protestant'.[62] Haslam rightly protests that there is a substantial body of Gothic writing composed by Irish Catholics, including John Banim, Michael Banim, William Carleton (though, of course, Carelton did convert to Protestantism), James Clarence Mangan, John Banville, Neil Jordan and Seamus Deane – to which list I would add Oscar Wilde (but then, I would, wouldn't I), and James Joyce – there are distinctly Gothic elements to stories like 'The Sisters' (1904) and 'The Dead' (1914), as well as the Circe episode of *Ulysses*. Indeed, I would be willing to go much further than this kind of listing and agree with Vera Kreilkamp who, in a review of Margot Gayle Bakus' *The Gothic Family Romance* (1999) noted that the 'marginalised Gothic mode [Bakus] examines permeates virtually all Irish writing'.[63] Indeed, Kreilkamp suggests that far from existing as a separate tradition in Irish writing, it is the *only* tradition of Irish writing – the realist novel, she points out, did not really exist in a pure form in Ireland. None of this, however, negates the original point made by McCormack, and rearticulated by myself, which is that Irish Gothic is a Protestant mode because Gothic itself is a Protestant mode. The point being made here is not that Irish Gothic was written only by Irish Protestants (though it mostly was), but that the form itself is Protestant.

The relationship between Catholicism and modern forms of literature has been fraught. In an essay on 'Catholic Literature in the English Tongue, 1854-8', delivered in 1859, John Henry Newman claimed that, in terms of modern English writing, 'we have…a Protestant literature'.[64] Newman obviously went too far in this declaration since, as he observed, William Shakespeare could be considered a Catholic writer, and the canon of modern English literature would have to include Richard Crashaw, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson. If he had contented himself with reference to the novel form, however, Newman would have been on much more solid ground. After all, literary historians have been keen to stress not

[59] George Orwell, 'The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius', *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (London: Penguin, 1970), vol. 2, 83.
[60] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 4.
[61] Here is not the place to launch a full-scale defence of psychoanalysis as a mode of inquiry, and I am not qualified to do so, anyway. For a start of such a defence against the onslaughts of numerous debunkers such as Jeffrey Masson and Frederick Crews, see John Forrester, *Dispatches from the Freud Wars: Psychoanalysis and its Passions* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
[62] Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', 5; McCormack, 5; 'Irish Gothic and After', 837.
[63] Vera Kreilkamp, 'Review', Margot Gayle Bakus, *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child-Sacrifice and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1999), *Victorian Studies* 43: 4 (2001), 248.
[64] John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, ed. I. T. Ker (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 262.

just that the Gothic is essentially Protestant, but that the novel itself is Protestant, and that Catholics who write novels are interlopers in an alien tradition.[65] Newman was echoed, though from a less sympathetic position, by George Orwell in the twentieth century who asked contentiously: 'How many Roman Catholics have been good novelists? Even the handful one could name have usually been bad Catholics. The novel is practically a Protestant form of art; it is a product of the free mind, of the autonomous individual'.[66] You need not necessarily agree with Orwell's association of freedom with Protestantism to endorse his central intuition that the novel and Protestantism are deeply connected – indeed, so closely connected that a claim that the novel is interpellated by Protestantism may not be an overstatement.

In her article on 'The Englishness of the English Novel' (1980), Q. D. Leavis argued that 'the glories of English literature are innately Protestant in character' and that 'the English novel owes more than anything else to the fact that it has traditionally been the product of an essentially Protestant culture'.[67] Newman's, Orwell's, and Leavis' claims have largely been supported by over a century of literary scholarship. Ian Watt's seminal *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) contended that 'It is…likely that the Puritan conception of the dignity of labour helped to bring into being the novel's general premise that the individual's daily life is of sufficient importance and interest to be the proper subject of literature'.[68] This was echoed by Michael McKeown's *The Origins of the English Novel* (1987), endorsing a connection between the 'Protestant mind' and the form of the novel.[69] Clearly, this is not all that needs to be said, and the relationship between the novel and Protestantism would have to be qualified by its simultaneous connection with the romance. However, it is probably best to articulate the relationship between the novel and the romance as one of critical dependency (in the same way that Protestantism, being a belated Christian denomination, depends on Catholicism as a way to define itself). Something very similar might be said of Gothic fiction which is both driven by Catholophobia – it is a form which is inextricably bound up in, one of whose major functions is, attacking Catholicism – and yet also displays constant and repeated Catholophilia, a desire for that which has been rejected, a point I tried to demonstrate in detail in my study of eighteenth-century Irish Gothic. Critics much more able than I, including Victor Sage, Cannon Schmitt and Patrick O' Malley, have done much to elucidate this disgust-desire dichotomy driving the Gothic forward.

In the 1960s Maurice Levy argued that the Glorious Revolution leading to the Protestant Settlement was of basic importance to Gothic writers, and Victor Sage has supported this, insisting that 'the penetration of Protestant theology into every aspect of English culture since the Settlement acts as a most intimate, and at the same time a most objective, conditioning factor in both popular belief and literary culture'.[70] The Gothic tradition is formed partly from the images of horror abstracted from that great founding text, John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (Book of Martyrs) (1563), whose raison d'être is precisely the demonstration of Catholic monstrosity and, as John Henry Newman pointed out in his 'Lectures on the Present

[65] I would suggest that the term 'Protestant novel' is a tautology, while 'Catholic novel' makes a great deal of sense.
[66] George Orwell, 'Inside the Whale', *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (London: Penguin, 1970), vol. 1, 515.
[67] Q. D. Leavis, 'The Englishness of the English Novel', *Collected Essays*, ed. G. Singh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), vol. 1, 318.
[68] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (1957; London: Chatto and Windus, 1963), 74.
[69] Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1660-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987), 337.
[70] Victor Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), xiii.

Condition of Catholics in England' (1850), versions of Catholics-as-monsters pervaded English culture as a long and pernicious tradition:

> this Tradition does not flow from the mouths of the half-dozen wise or philosophic, or learned men who can be summoned in its support, but is a tradition of nursery stories, school stories, public-house stories, club-house stories, drawing-room stories, platform stories, pulpit stories; - a tradition of newspapers, magazines, reviews, pamphlets, romances, novels, poems, and light literature of all kind, literature of the day; - a tradition of selection from the English classics, bits of poetry, passages of history, sermons, chance essays, extracts from books of travel, anonymous anecdotes, lectures on prophecy, statements and arguments of polemical writers made up into small octavos for class-books and into pretty miniatures for presents; a tradition floating in the air.[71]

Patrick O' Malley insists that 'in its ideological structure, the English Gothic novel, though it typically represents Catholicism, is fundamentally a Protestant genre',[72] while Cannon Schmitt emphasises that 'On the one hand, Gothics pose as semi-ethnographic texts in their representation of Catholic, Continental Europe or the Far East as fundamentally un-English, the site of depravity. On the other, a notion of Englishness is itself constructed in the novels', an Englishness dependent upon the negation of Catholicism.[73]

It is rather too easy to compile a list of prominent Catholic novelists as a way to refute the thesis that the novel is a Protestant form but such an approach would completely miss the point, and this can be said for the Gothic also. Although it would be far too complex to demonstrate completely here, it should be noted that many twentieth-century Irish Catholic writers who use Gothic motifs in their work adopt almost wholesale the monstrous version of Catholicism basic to the Gothic novel – a claim ably demonstrated by the depiction of the 1950s as a Gothic horror story by some Catholic writers and filmmakers in the latter half of the twentieth century. Of course, another use by Catholic writers of Gothic motifs and tropes is in a mode of writing back, a kind of reverse Gothic. The most obvious example of this is in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) where he takes the prevailing Catholic demonology of the Gothic and overturns it so that the Gordon rioters of 1780 take on the imagery normally ascribed to Spanish Inquisition monks and Continental nuns and priests by Hugh Walpole, Ann Radcliffe and 'Monk' Lewis. As Luke Gibbons perceptively notes, in Burke's writing as a whole, 'the brutality of British colonialism in India, and the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, meant that [a] new form of state terrorism was now unleashed upon the world, driven by a form of zealotry and intolerance which Burke, in the *Reflections*, traced back to the Cromwellian period'.[74] In this way the Irish Gothic is bound up in the depiction of Irish Catholics as monstrous Others; when Catholic writers adopt the Gothic they are essentially attempting to appropriate an alien form.

Reading Maturin and Edgeworth (again).

A complete justification of the readings of *Melmoth the Wanderer* and *Ennui* put forward in my original article would require more space than I have at my disposal, but what I can do here is gesture towards

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[71] Quoted in Sage, *Horror Fiction*, 27.
[72] Patrick O' Malley*, Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 32.
[73] Cannon Schmitt, *Alien Nation: Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fictions and English Nationality* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 2.
[74] Luke Gibbons, 'The Mirror and the Vamp: Reflections on the Act of Union', *Hearts and Mind: Irish Culture and Society under the Act of Union*, ed. Bruce Stewart (Monaco: Princess Grace Irish Library, 2002), 24.

how such a justification would proceed. Haslam's main difficulty with my reading of *Melmoth the Wanderer* and *Ennui* stems from his suspicion of my tendency to assume 'unproblematic exchanges between texts and contexts' and read latent and unconscious elements beneath the manifest and conscious. [75] Having addressed this difficulty above, I can now move to his textually-based refutation. My original essay claimed that the eponymous Melmoth the Wanderer 'has been dispossessed by his Cromwellian brother'[76]; Haslam asks pertinently: 'is there any evidence for this radical claim?' His answer is emphatic: no, not a jot.[77] This allows him to argue that my general association between the Wanderer and the Catholic landowners dispossessed by incoming Protestants who were granted land in payment for services rendered during the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland is simply another interpretive mistake in what is by now a long and wearying list. It suits my psychoanalytically-inflected reading of Irish history to see Melmoth in this way, and therefore I see Melmoth in this way: not so much exegesis as eisegesis: 'there is no evidence', Haslam insists, and argues that a critic should be much more hesitant when positing a relationship between this novel and the situation of Ireland. This is, however, a novel which takes place entirely in Ireland. Although much of the plot's actions occur elsewhere (Civil War England, Inquisition Spain, an Indian island), these events are narrated by Monçada to John Melmoth while they sit in what turns out to be the room in which Melmoth the Wanderer claims to have been born, in a Big House in Co. Wicklow. This detail alone suggests that we should be very hesitant when dismissing Ireland from the analytic equation.

Haslam is perfectly correct to highlight the apparent contradiction between the references to the Wanderer being born in Ireland in this Big House ('In this apartment…I first drew breath, in this I must perhaps resign it'[78]), and Biddy Brannigan's claim that the Melmoth family took hold of the house when it was confiscated from an Irish Royalist (presumably also Catholic) family and given to the Wanderer's younger brother who had fought in Cromwell's army.[79] How can the Wanderer have been born in the house before his *younger* brother gained possession of it? Haslam puts this down to an authorial error – Maturin simply lost control of his text and could not always keep things consistent.[80] The historically-aware reader, however, must note that such confusion over origin is peculiarly consonant with that of the Irish Protestant culture of which Maturin himself was a part. As has been exhaustively set out by a number of historians, Protestants who had settled in Ireland after the Cromwellian and Williamite settlements were deeply ambivalent when it came to fixing their nationality; many continued to call themselves English, while others came to denote themselves Irish as they developed an increasing connection with the country in which they lived.[81] In other words, Melmoth's ambiguous origin *resonates* with that of Maturin's social and religious culture (this is where terms like 'symbolic spread' are useful).

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[75] Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', 3.
[76] Killeen, 'Irish Gothic', 5.
[77] Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', 4.
[78] Charles Robert Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, ed. Douglas Grant, intro. Chris Baldick (Buckinghamshire: Oxford University Press, 1989), 540.
[79] Ibid, 26.
[80] Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', 4.
[81] See Ian MacBride, '"The common name of Irishman": Protestantism and patriotism in eighteenth-century Ireland,' *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650-c. 1850*, eds. Tony Claydon and Ian MacBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 236-261; Toby Barnard, 'Protestantism, Ethnicity and Irish Identities, 1660-1760', *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650- c. 1850*, eds Tony Claydon and Ian MacBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 206-235; Nicholas Canny, 'Identity formation in Ireland: the Emergence of the Anglo-Irish', *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, eds Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 159-212.

Moreover, a general sense of 'up-rootedness' is basic to the plot of *Melmoth*. Let us take as probable some initial displacement, transplantation, of Irish Catholic Royalists to make way for the Cromwellian Protestant Melmoths, or at least admit that it is difficult to dispel this image once Biddy Brannigan has narrated her tale. Similar displacements take place everywhere in this novel, displacements generally linked to a loss of inheritance of money or land. 'The Story of the Parricide' concerns a man who has killed his father so to 'inherit' wealth sooner rather than later; this parricide tells a tale of a young lover, forced into a monastery and disinherited because he wanted to marry a woman of inferior descent; the parricide's role in the monastery is to help its officials lure aristocrats into taking vows and thus disinheriting themselves; this story is related to John Melmoth by Monçada, another disinherited aristocrat, who has been superseded by his younger brother. 'The Tale of Guzman's Family' also concerns disinheritance. Guzman, a pious Catholic who has no heir, summons his married sister Ines Walberg and her family to Spain to be close to him in his twilight years. When he dies, however, they find themselves disinherited and the estate passes to the Spanish Church, leaving them in poverty and destruction.

In a novel where disinheritance is such a recurrent theme, the invidious position of Melmoth the Wanderer comes to the fore: why did he sell his soul to Satan? He calls himself at one point a 'disinherited child of nature',[82] but the exact nature of that disinheritance is not made clear.[83] However, that he claims to have been 'born' in a room of the estate taken-over by his younger brother who has dispossessed a Catholic family, is surely suggestive. The title, 'disinherited child of nature', does at least serve to connect the Wanderer to the host of other characters and marginal figures (including the displaced Catholic Royalists) who have also found themselves dispossessed, and it was this connection that led me to argue that the dispossessed Melmoth 'might stand for all those demonic figures now also complaining of dispossession'.[84]

The Irish Catholics – both Royalists and 'nationalists' – who were dispossessed by the incoming Protestant Cromwellians were commonly talked of in terms of the monstrous and the demonic, as agents of Satan, and also as malicious wanderers of the night. In his seminal *The Irish Rebellion* (1646), Sir John Temple insisted that Irish rebels were not simply discontented subjects but 'inhuman monsters' in league with the devil (149), and that 'the malignant impressions of irreligion and barbarism, transmitted down, whether by infusion from their ancestors, or natural generation, had irrefragably stiffened their necks, and harrowed their hearts' (17).[85] In the aftermath of the Cromwellian conquest and confiscations, an anonymous Irish officer in the French army explained that one outcome of the conflict was that many Irish Catholics were condemned to wander through Europe in exile:

> See you not the kindly countenanced, unhappy Gaels,
> the war dogs who yielded naught to their opponents,
> scattered in troops through Europe?[86]

The Commissioners for the Administration of the Affairs of the Commonwealth of England in Ireland (established in 1653) also commented upon the amount of Catholic displacement that had occurred due to the conquest, 'the multitude of persons, especially women and children wandering up and down the

[82] Maturin, *Melmoth* 319.
[83] That Melmoth has been disinherited from his heavenly home is certainly implied here.
[84] Killeen, 'Irish Gothic', 5.
[85] Sir John Temple, *The Irish Rebellion: or an history of the beginning and the first progress of the generall rebellion raised within the kingdome of Ireland upon the three and twentieth day of October in the year 1641* (London, 1646), 149, 17.
[86] Quoted in Peter Beresford Ellis, *Hell or Connaught! The Cromwellian Colonisation of Ireland, 1652-1660* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), 43.

country, that daily perish in ditches, and are starved for want of relief'.[87] These examples could be multiplied many times over. To argue, then, that a heretical, dispossessed, wandering, 'Irish' agent of Satan can be seen as a figure who 'might stand for' heretical, dispossessed, wandering, Irish agents of Satan, hardly seems like a stretch of credibility.

There is, moreover, enough textual evidence to indicate that whatever about the legal niceties, it is precisely the Big House he claims to have been born *in* which Melmoth believes he was dispossessed *of*. After all, the entire plot revolves around the transfer of this property to the young John Melmoth, and Biddy Brannigan insists that the Wanderer 'had been frequently seen in Ireland even to the present century' at the death of family members – i.e., at the moment of property transfer to the next generation.[88] It is surely relevant that Melmoth feels interested enough to witness the generational transfer of this property. The house to which he feels a peculiar link, even claiming he was born there despite the probability that he originated in England, is the one he returns to constantly with an almost proprietorial interest. A conviction that he has been immorally dispossessed would also explain his vituperative account of European colonialism, which he depicts as a history where rightful owners were disinherited in favour of usurping marauders.[89] A belief that property which was rightfully his has been taken from him, would also explain the vehemence of his complaint to Immalee:

> you might starve for this day's meal, while proving your right to a property which must incontestably be yours, on the condition of your being able to fast on a few years, and survive to enjoy it – and that, finally, with the sentiments of all upright men, the opinions and judges of the land, and the fullest conviction of your own conscience in your favour, you cannot obtain the possession of what you and all feel to be your own, while your antagonist can start an objection, purchase a fraud, or invent a lie. So pleadings go on, and years are wasted, and property consumed, and hearts broken.[90]

This harangue is so intimate and detailed as to amount to a personal history.[91]

Haslam also objects to my interpretation of Maria Edgeworth's *Ennui*, although there is far more agreement between us here than difference. We both agree that this is a realist novel and is, probably, best read as an anti-Gothic narrative. My original essay contended that 'The ideological weight of the novel appears to … [suggest] that the spectre of the Gothic can be banished [from Ireland] given enough [agricultural, educational, social, political, and economic] reforms and patient application of reason and technology', and I accepted that 'Edgeworth may be intellectually on the side of English reform' of Ireland and its translation from Gothic mess to realist order.[92] As far as I can tell, Haslam agrees with this but objects to my qualification concerning the ultimate success of this anti-Gothic strategy. I suggested that although the novel is intended as a realist response to Gothic Ireland, the 'energies' of the novel finally lie on the side of the Gothic since '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

[87] Quoted in Ellis, *Hell or Connaught*, 83.
[88] Maturin, *Melmoth*, 26.
[89] Ibid, 300-01.
[90] Ibid, 306.
[91] For an interesting and provocative reading of the novel along these lines, though with an emphasis on primogeniture as a cannibalistic practice, see Julia M. Wright, 'Devouring the Disinherited: Familial Cannibalism in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*', *Eating Their Words: Cannibalism and the Boundaries of Cultural Identity*, ed. Kristen Guest (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 79-106.
[92] Killeen, 'Irish Gothic', 7.

Ireland and confronts its Gothic scenery and meets its Gothic cast list, and almost becomes involved in the 1798 Rebellion'.[93] Haslam counters that, on the contrary, although Edgeworth's novel sometimes raises a 'Gothic tone' this tone is almost always immediately deflated to dissuade the reader from partaking in any such Gothic energy. He gives as a good example of this strategy the scene where Glenthorn arrives at his Irish castle. Glenthorn exclaims that he found his 'state tower' bedroom in his Irish castle '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'.[94] This might appear to raise the spectre of the Gothic but the sentence immediately following it dispels such ghosts: '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'.[95] Haslam insists that 'By adopting a mildly parodic tone…Edgeworth deftly subverts any incipient Gothic mood and thereby reassures rather than unsettles her early nineteenth-century reader',[96] and accuses me of suffering from the old 'affective fallacy' whereby the reader tends to read her own prejudices back into a work rather than take full account of the actual text in front of her eyes. I return the favour by suggesting that perhaps Haslam is suffering from a version of the 'intentional fallacy' in his search for what Maturin and Edgeworth 'really meant', and would also point out that the 'parodic' deflations of the Gothic that Haslam points to are not uttered by 'Edgeworth', but by *Glenthorn* – hardly a pedantic point given the general unreliability of this narrator.

Haslam is repeating a by now well-worn and persuasive critical position on Edgeworth, her politics, and the way her novels operate. Edgeworth has been read, fairly consistently, by critics as diverse as Tom Dunne, W. J. McCormack, Kevin Whelan and Seamus Deane, as epitomising a staunchly conservative, anti-Jacobin, Burkean, colonial intelligence whose fiction and philosophy emanated from within the safety of a Big House perspective. In her recent and compelling study, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance* (2004), Sharon Murphy argues that Edgeworth's writings have a grand 'didactic enterprise' involving the translation of abstract Enlightenment principles of rationality and progress into practical lessons for her readers – old and young: promoting values thoroughly patriarchal in their epistemology (rationalist), values (hierarchical), economics (capitalist) and politics (imperialist).[97] She further argues that Edgeworth's Irish novels are ideological narratives positing that 'the reformation of Ireland will only be accomplished once the nation's native inhabitants are brought to more nearly resemble an English form'.[98]

For these critics, *Ennui* is a didactic novel whose message is that Ireland must reject Gothic in favour of realism. However, there is another way to view Edgeworth. Marilyn Butler has suggested – in a deliciously worded analysis – that Edgeworth was far more ideologically sloppy than many of her critics have allowed, and argued that she should be thought of as politically 'bipartisan'.[99] In a more recent series of articles Butler has elaborated on this and proposed that Edgeworth may have been more sympathetic to revolutionary versions of Irish nationalism than has been noticed, and argued that her novels are in fact extraordinarily coded works of fiction through whose codes Edgeworth appeals to two distinct set of readerships, English Protestants and Irish Catholics, who pick up on different discourses mingled together within her texts. *Ennui* is a case in point. Although Haslam wants us to read with one set of eyes – where the novel always rejects Gothic in favour of realism – Butler insists we need at least two, and I would

[93] Ibid, 7.
[94] Maria Edgeworth, *Ennui*, ed. Marilyn Butler (London: Penguin, 1998), 179.
[95] Ibid, 179.
[96] Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', 5.
[97] Sharon Murphy, *Maria Edgeworth and Romance* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 43.
[98] Ibid, 138.
[99] Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 124.

contend that these correspond (loosely) to the realist and Gothic energies of the text. The nexus of the discourse appealing to Irish Catholic nationalists is, according to Butler, the passages where Ellinor recounts tales of Irish legend, myth and history to Glenthorn while he lies near death, telling him stories of Shane O' Neill the Irish rebel, 'a large assortment of fairies and shadowless witches, and banshees…legions of spirits and ghosts'.[100]

As Butler points out, encoded in Ellinor's mythological and historical stories is a grand narrative of Irish rebelliousness and ultimate English ruin,[101] a code which connects to the name of Glethorn's eventual wife. Together they invoke a hidden narrative lurking behind much of the surface significance of the novel:

> 'The O' Donoghue' is a name from the Gaelic-Irish history of County Kerry in the remote southwest – a folk hero who was an Irish counterpart of Arthur, the 'once and future King'. In old age, after a happy reign, the O' Donoghue walked out on the surface of Lake Killarney, then under the water. He had told his people that when they needed him he would return, and legend says he was occasionally seen. It can't be more clumsy plotting, it has to be after authorial deliberation that at the very end of *Ennui* a man who now thinks of himself as by descent a Gaelic Irishman, named O'Donoghue De-lamere, comes back to his own land and people near the southwest coast of Ireland, and takes up the take of bettering their conditions. Cecilia's surname Dela-mare puns ingeniously; over the sea, but also over the mere or lake. For the English reader, her (or her mother's) snobbish requirement that he adopt her name is yet another sign of Glenthorn's enslavement to a female principle. For the Irish reader, the symbolic return of the Gaelic hero is much the stronger reading.[102]

Next to this, my own claim that the Gothic interruptions of Glenthorn's putatively 'rationalist' recollections invert the apparent logic of the narrative and upend a strict realist reading, sounds rather modest. It is an interpretation, moreover, that is supported by Clíona Ó Gallchoir's argument that Edgeworth's novels constantly reveal the 'limits of realism' and, through depictions of sudden and dramatic change – such as the transformation of Glethorn into Christy O' Donoghue – operate as 'metaphors for revolution'.[103]

The possibility that there are coded versions of Gothic discontent operating below the textual surface is why we need to pay close attention to certain Gothic moments in the narrative such as when Glenthorn is driven across the Irish countryside in a ramshackle coach by an apparently mad coachman. Glenthorn tells the reader that, for the first time in his life, he was not bored: 'though I complained bitterly, and swore it

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[100] Edgeworth, *Ennui*, 160.
[101] Marilyn Butler, 'Edgeworth's Ireland: History, Popular Culture, and Secret Codes', *Novel* 34: 2 (2001), 281.
[102] Ibid. 282-3. In another article Butler asserts that 'Edgeworth offers not solutions, but a further option: an Irish future in which repossession of the land will come… [the reader] if Irish … will pick up the prophecy of a very different future'. Marilyn Butler, 'Irish Culture and Scottish Enlightenment: Maria Edgeworth's Histories of the Future', *Economy, Polity and Society: British Intellectual History, 1750-1950*, ed. Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 173.
[103] Clíona Ó Gallchoir, 'Maria Edgeworth's Revolutionary Morality and the Limits of Realism', *Colby Quarterly* 36: 2 (2000), 94. Julie Costello likewise emphasises that although one reading of the novel indeed rightly sees it as a means by which 'to validate the claims of the ruling Ascendancy over those of the displaced Irish landowners…the confusion of identities that attends this movement also helps to obscure the fact that an Irish O' Donoghoe eventually assumes control of the Glenthorn estate'. Julie Costello, 'Maria Edgeworth and the Politics of Consumption: Eating, Breastfeeding, and the Irish Wet Nurse in *Ennui*', *Inventing Maternity: Politics, Science, and Literature, 1650-1865*, eds. Susan C. Greenfield and Carol Barash (Lexington, KY: Kentucky University Press, 1999), 184.

was impractical for a gentleman to travel in Ireland; yet I never remember to have experienced, on any journey, less ennui…Upon this principle I should recommend to wealthy hypochondriacs a journey in Ireland, preferably to any country in the civilised world'.[104] As Darryl Jones points out, this is because Ireland is not part of the civilised world but is a Gothic zone,[105] and it is only a Gothic zone that can cure Glenthorn. If Ireland had possessed a more rational and efficient transport system, Glenthorn's ennui would not have been dispelled. The alternative to a Gothic Ireland is suicide. It may seem that this choice is dispensed with at the end of the novel when Glenthorn enters the rational profession of the law. However, if Butler's reading of the textual codes is correct, perhaps this is the very moment of real Gothic subversion as the past returns to disrupt the present when legendary Christ(y) O' Donoghue De-la-mere returns from the misty mythic past to take up control of his castle again, and (possibly) mount an effective sabotage of the realist discourse that is trying to contain him. Lord Glenthorn may have declined to take any part in the 1798 rebellion; as the revivified legendary rebel 'the O' Donoghue', perhaps he will lead a different kind of rebellion.

Disciplinary Spirit

Haslam ends his article summoning 'the spirit of disciplinary solidarity' as described by Frederick Crews, and points out that it is a solemn duty for colleagues to read each other's work with discrimination and air disagreements in honesty and without animosity.[106] Given that Frederick Crews himself is notorious for his rancorous disagreements with others in the intellectual community (he famously depicted Freud as a monomaniacal drug addict), he may not have been the best figure to call on in this instance. However, I share Haslam's view that it is certainly worthwhile to debate such points in a forthright and, hopefully, respectful and tone, and trust that such exchanges will encourage more research into the Irish Gothic tradition.

[104] Edgeworth, *Ennui*, 175-6.
[105] Darryl Jones, '"Distorted Nature in a Fever": *Ennui*, Irish Gothic and the 1798 Rising', *An Uncomfortable Authority: Maria Edgeworth and her Contexts*, ed. Heidi Kaufman and Chris Fauske (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 133-5.
[106] Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', 6.

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"To the Next Level": Castration in *Hostel II*

Justin Ponder

The following seeks to apply Freud's theory of castration to the castration scene in Eli Roth's *Hostel II*. Doing so, this article will explore Freudian interpretations of castration, the representation of castration in the film, and the meaning of castration in various historical contexts. Freudian theory posits castration as the ultimate loss, and this claim has, in turn, frequently, influenced the presuppositions of horror film criticism like that of Stephen Neale, Peter Hutchings, Robin Wood, and Barbara Creed.(1) Many scholars claim that horror films feature images of figurative castration, but others point out that these movies rarely depict literal castration. I will argue, however, that *Hostel II* provides an instance of literal castration full of figurative meanings. I will argue that preceding its literal castration scene, the film foregrounds the penis and relates main characters in relationship to it, but the film also stresses the difference between having a penis, in the Freudian sense, and having phallic authority, in a Lacanian sense. Eventually, the film's female protagonist, Beth, exercises phallic authority by literally castrating the already figuratively castrated male antagonist, Stuart. Climaxing the film with this scene, *Hostel II* denigrates the penis, but this is not the same as denigrating male phallic authority. In many ways, this denigration of the penis actually constructs a higher form of non-penile phallic authority venerated throughout history. I will show how ancient eunuchs, medieval celibates, and Renaissance castrati enjoyed more power than uncastrated men. Similarly, men in the Digital Age may find more phallic authority, a Lacanian type of symbolic power, in the non-penile astral body than the penised body of Freudian psychoanalysis. Likewise, men in *Hostel II* seek authority not by drawing power from their penises but by casting their penises aside. Faced with the threat of castration, they choose to figuratively castrate themselves, reject the penis' power, and search for male phallic authority through what I call a penis-less "castral body" that is uncastratable and, therefore, invincible. With these claims, the following article will argue that *Hostel II* reflects the extent to which castration may not signify ultimate loss as much as ultimate gain.

Castration Anxiety

Sigmund Freud's theory of castration anxiety has left an indelible mark upon psychoanalytic theory. He claims, "When a male child first turns his curiosity to the riddles of sexual life, he is dominated by his interest in his own genital" to such an extent that he finds it hard to "believe that it could be missing in other people whom he feels he resembles so much."(2) According to Freud, at some point children learn that boys have penises and girls do not. He claims that young males assume "little girls too had a penis, but it was cut off and in its place was left a wound."(3)

This thought fills male children with the fear that they may one day lose their penis, determining "the boy's relations to women: horror of the mutilated creature or triumphant contempt for her."(4) As the embodiment of this realization, women become a locus of fear, a castrated symbol that stirs up male castration anxieties. Conversely, Freud claimed that when girls learn that boys have a penis they lack, they experience penis envy. As such, the girl who catches a glimpse of a penis fears she has already lost hers, and "she develops, like a scar, a sense of inferiority." (5) With castration anxiety or penis envy, Freud claims both boys and girls learn their sex in relationship to castration. As such, the penis becomes the locus of identity, the source of sexual differentiation that separates boys from girls, uncastrated from castrated.

Freud's analysis of castration anxiety and differentiation has had a tremendous influence on the interpretation of horror films. In *Genre*, Stephen Neale claims monsters are the defining figures of the

horror genre, filling audiences with both pleasure and anxiety. What causes this ambivalent reaction? Neale claims that "the horror film—centrally concerned with the fact and the effects of difference—invariably involves itself in that problematic and invariably mobilises specific castration anxieties."(6) The castration anxieties that allow children to learn the difference between boys and girls also permit horror film audiences to appreciate the difference between monsters and humans. In this sense, Neale claims the monster figure taps into the castration threat "to entertain it, to produce it in the coherence of a process, as a filling in, something which, given the specific articulation of the problematic of castration, involves an equally specific set of interrelated instances of fetishism."(7) The monster's difference conjures up castration anxieties that frighten audiences, but horror films do not press this fear too far.(8) Neale claims horror films overcome the dangers monsters embody by turning them into fetishistic spectacles: the monster that represents the lack also "functions to fill the lack with its own presence, thus coming to function as a fetish."(9) Given the frequency with which horror films use the monster to both evoke and assuage castration threats, Neale claims that "the problematic of castration underpins the horror film."(10)

This claim that castration anxiety is central to horror films, however, has its critics. For example, in *The Horror Film*, Peter Hutchings bristles at the argument that "the horror genre is primarily concerned with anxieties about castration."(11) He points out, "One obvious problem with focusing on castration as horror's key problematic, the issue with which it is supposed to engage, is that, in terms of its narratives, horror is a remarkably castration-free zone."(12) While psychoanalytic scholars claim that castration is important to these movies, Hutchings insists that, "in literal terms, it is barely there at all."(13) Critics who claim otherwise substitute their lack of "literal" castration with readings of "figurative" castration, reading gruesome acts like decapitations, eye-gougings, teeth-pullings, and dismemberments as forms of figurative castration. (14) Hutchings' claims construct a dichotomy between literal and figurative castrations and side with the former, insisting that "castration *per se* is not a major feature of the horror genre."(15) Critics who analyze figurative castration, he argues, validate "the oft-repeated criticism of psychoanalytical interpretations, namely that they read too much into the films in question, manufacturing significance rather than discovering it."(16) According to Hutchings examinations of literal castration discover significance while examinations of figurative castration manufacture it, relying on psychoanalytic metaphors to insist upon something that "is barely there at all." (17)

Despite Hutchings' claims, the horror genre has provided instances in which castration is "literally there." Among them: *Last House on the Left* (1972), *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978), *Night of the Demon* (1980), *Cannibal Ferox* (1981), and *Santa Sangre* (1989). In 2007, Eli Roth provided another; writing, directing, and producing *Hostel II*. The torturous blood bath pits Beth (Lauren German), an art student traveling Europe, against Stuart (Roger Bart), an American suburbanite who travels to Slovakia to torture her. When the tables turn and Beth has the upper hand, she grabs a pair of scissors, cuts off Stuart's penis, and flings it to a pack of dogs. With this scene, *Hostel II* obviously provides an exception to Hutchings' claims. No need to resort to figurative castration here; we can discover significance instead of manufacturing it. Unlike, Hutchings, however, I do not assume analysis divides so neatly between figurative castration and literal castration. The following article will seek to reconcile these two camps. While Hutchings criticized psychoanalytic scholars for using tenuous instances of figurative castration to make arguments about the meaning of literal castration to the horror genre, the following will do the opposite, using *Hostel II* as a way to understand what literal castration means figuratively.

Hostel II

Long before this literal castration scene, the penis figures prominently throughout *Hostel II*. Prior to introducing its protagonist, the film begins with a shot displaying nothing but a penis, a frame dedicated solely to the disembodied male member that visually represents its centrality from the beginning. From this image, the film reveals the three main characters narratively and visually in relationship to the penis. As the camera widens out, revealing an art class on the streets of Rome and the nude model to whom the penis belongs, it cuts to Whitney (Bijou Phillips) barely sketching as she gazes upon the penis lustfully. Lorna (Heather Matarazzo), in a daze, does not sketch at all, gazing upon the penis adoringly. Beth, however, focuses on drawing, beyond lust and adoration, as she sketches the penis dispassionately. With this sequence, the film introduces its trio of main characters in relationship to the penis. Here, as in Freud's analysis of castration anxiety, the penis becomes a symbol of sexual differentiation, separating the male model and the female artists sexually responding to him. The penis, however, also functions to differentiate the "sexual characters" of these three women.

First, this sequence establishes Whitney's relationship to the penis. Whitney mocks Lorna for never having seen a "cock" prior to the art class. Doing so, she uses the penis as a sign of sexual differentiation that even separates women. On one side stand Whitney and all the other women who have seen a "cock." Seeing real penises authorizes them to mock women who have not. Granted authority from this relationship to the penis, Whitney becomes a flat character defined by her pursuit of heterosexual intercourse. As the stereotypical nympho, she perpetually scans the crowd for men, a reaction to the penis that makes her susceptible to danger. Flirting with a man at the spas, she lets down her guard long enough for henchmen to kidnap her, and, in the end, Whitney is tortured and killed because she responds to the penis lustfully.

Second, the initial sketching sequence establishes Lorna's relationship to the penis. Having never seen a "cock," she is subject to Whitney's insults. This scene represents her as naïve and immature. She lacks not only the model's penis but also Whitney's experience with penises. Sexually deprived, she comes to embody the introspective woman who takes more pleasure in her journal than men, the sexually repressed female who gazes lovingly at penises she does not pursue. Established as the saint of the trio, her desires become asexual. The second someone spikes her drink, however, love leaps to the surface. She immediately falls for a man who kidnaps her, and, ultimately, Lorna is tortured and killed because she responds to the penis lovingly.(18)

Unlike Whitney, Beth is not filled with lust by the penis, and, unlike Lorna, she does not become enamored with it. In the initial drawing scene, she remains focused on coldly sketching the penis like any other artistic object. The film later echoes this detachment from the penis as she perpetually steers Whitney from acting upon her lust and Lorna from pursuing love interests. As she prevents them from chasing suspicious men, Beth seems more interested in the safety of her friends than heterosexual desires. These moments represent Beth as maternal and dispassionate, but on the way to Prague she breaks character and expresses genuine rage: In a train car filled with threatening men brandishing cigarettes, knives, and sexual aggression, the girls try to back away until they are physically accosted. Wrenching free, Beth and Whitney make their escape to safety until one of the men shouts after them, "I knew you were a tease, you fucking cunt!" With nostrils flaring, Beth barges back into the danger-filled room, shouting, "What the fuck did you call me?" The trio of armed men rise, but Beth does not flinch, glaring at them with clenched fists, ready for a fight until Whitney drags her away. Retreating, Beth apologizes, blaming her uncharacteristically irrational actions on being called a "cunt." "I hate that word," she explains. But this scene suggests more of Beth's relationship to the penis. The Italians display aggressive machismo. By calling the women "cunts," they also reduce women to orifices for sexually gratifying

penises. With the word "cunt," men flaunt their uncastration, trying to remind Beth of her castration, but she refuses to venerate the penis or the men who have one and dares to fight back. In this scene and many others, Beth survives where the other women die, because she regards the penis dispassionately.(19)

The fourth relationship to the penis emerges in the figure of Stuart. While he does not appear in the sketching scene, he first enters sometime later sitting at a silent breakfast with his wife surrounded by books, a sun porch, and finger-paintings. He answers the phone to Todd (Richard Burgi), a friend and alpha-male, explaining that he has purchased Beth for Stuart to torture. As fantasies of torment whirl in Stuart's mind, his wife exits wearing a power suit. As her authoritative heels click out of the house, he dares a frightened glance in her direction before expressing joy. Able to torture another woman but unsure how to escape his wife, Stuart stammers, "I'll tell her I have to meet a client." With this sequence, the film suggests that although he has a penis, Stuart does not enjoy the power traditionally granted to subjects with one. His wife wears the business attire, she makes the money, and she is the one with the power in the relationship. He is reduced to sneaking around the world behind his wife's back, risking his finances, marriage, freedom, and safety to torture Beth. While Stuart may be literally uncastrated, he is also emasculated. In the end, he is compelled to torture and kill, because he seeks to figuratively reclaim his penis.

Phallic Authority

The opening sequences of *Hostel II* establish main characters in relationship to the penis but do not reveal these characters in relationship to phallic authority. In Freud, the penis becomes the source of authority in patriarchal society, filling women with penis envy and a sense of inferiority. In "The Meaning of the Phallus," however, Jacques Lacan claims the source of authority is not the penis but the phallus. This phallus is not a sexual organ but a signifier in the symbolic order that makes language, culture, and social interaction possible. (20) The relation of the subject to this symbol of authority is, Lacan claims, "set up regardless of that anatomical difference between the sexes."(21) While feminist theorists like Luce Irigaray have accused him of carrying the same phallocentrism as Freud, others like Judith Butler insist that in Lacanian theory, one can have phallic authority without having a penis.(22) In "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary," she claims, "The phallus symbolizes the penis; and insofar as it symbolizes the penis, retains the penis as that which it symbolizes; it is not the penis." (23) According to Deborah Luepnitz, "Lacan would always speak of the phallus not as a thing [like a penis] but as a position through which different objects circulate."(24) Following claims that the phallus is different than the penis, Robin Wood claims that phallic authority in horror films defies anatomy. In "Brian De Palma: The Politics of Castration," he claims penis-less women can become "usurpers of the phallus" through four avenues: positions of authority, the voice, the look, and, most relevant to our purposes here, money.(25)

In *Hostel II*, a film where people pay to torture and murder others without consequence, wealth becomes a signifier of phallic authority one can own irregardless of whether or not one owns a penis. Regarding the case of Stuart and Beth, the phallus of wealth becomes more authoritative than the penis as the film suggests that their genital configurations have little to do with their phallic authority. In Wood's reading of horror films, "possession of money equals possession of the phallus."(26) This seems to be the case in *Hostel II* when Whitney reveals to Lorna that Beth's mother died when she was twelve and left her everything, enough to "keep her dad on an allowance." Castrated, Beth would be doomed to subjugation, but the fortune she inherits from her mother reverses this destiny.(27) Able to keep her control not only her own money but her dad's, this castrated woman can dominate her uncastrated father. Through money, this penis-less woman can even control the man whose penis produced her. Conversely, while patriarchal

society grants uncastrated men phallic authority, Stuart defies the norm. He lives the life of an "emasculated" man, submitting to his wife's power. She has the money in the relationship, and he works for her. In this way, money becomes the phallus by which she controls Stuart. Instead of dominating his home as the owner of a penis, he is dominated by his wife, the woman who actually owns the house. To help recapture his masculinity, Todd pays for him to fly around the world for everything from brothels in Thailand to the torture chambers of Slovakia. Here, one can both lose and regain power not through the penis but the phallic authority that money provides.

Eventually, Stuart and Beth, two characters who defy anatomical relationships to phallic authority, clash. Inside the torture chamber, Stuart finds Beth semi-nude, shivering, and hooded. Slinking into the room, he scans the power tools awaiting him and sighs. He surveys a syringe and contemplates using it before removing Beth's cloak and identifying himself. He insists, amidst sweat and tears, that he will not kill Beth and that Todd pressured him into coming, but he cannot torture her. Unable to execute his cruel plans, he begins to plot their escape as he holds Beth in his arms, and she whimpers, "They think you're going to kill me, but you're not some monster." Looking into her horrified eyes, Stuart, the good suburban husband and father can only agree, repeating the cliché slogan "I'm not 'that guy'"…before punching Beth to the ground.

Beth awakens to Stuart tying her with chains. "Don't you have a family?" she pleads. "Don't you have a wife?" Stuart responds, "My wife? My wife? I'm not allowed to kill my wife." One of the Elite Hunting Group representatives interrupts to reveal that Todd could not finish torturing Whitney, and, therefore, has been killed. Stuart shrugs off his friend's death and swiftly agrees to pay extra to finish Whitney off, hacking her to death with a machete. Returning to Beth, bloody and thrilled, he barks, "Notice anything different about me. I bet you fucking do. Fucking bitch." His macho language quickly deteriorates into a series of statements addressed to Beth but directed at his wife. "Fucking respect me now. I don't fucking work for you!" he yells. "I don't work all fucking day for you to humiliate me. To tell me I'm shit. Never fuck me." The logic of Stuart's rant suggests a relationship between torture and sex: because he could not use his penis on his wife, Stuart used his phallic machete on Whitney. Deprived of penile stimulation, he prepares for the non-penile stimulation of torturing Beth.

Seeing this coming, Beth evades torture by tempting Stuart with genital gratification. Flattering his emasculated ego, she references the previous night when they crossed paths at the festival: "I was hoping you would kiss me. I wanted you to kiss me. I thought about you all night." The sexual advances seem to work as Stuart commands her to get on the floor. Here, Stuart's desire to torture turns into his desire to rape. Hovering over her, Stuart says she better be scared, and Beth claims, "I am. I like it." At the point of penetration, however, Beth fights Stuart off and when the dust settles, Beth holds a swarm of gun-wielding guards at bay with pistol pointed at them and a pair of scissors gripping Stuart's penis, a fact revealed in close-up. To end the stand-off, Sasha, the Elite Hunting Group's leader, tells his guards to shoot both Beth and Stuart. She stops him short, however, by declaring that she wants to buy her way out. The proposition captures Sasha's attention, but he quickly dismisses it, assuming the phallic authority of family riches belongs to Beth's father as he mocks, "You going to call your parents for money." To the surprise of all the henchmen in the room, she sneers, "No, motherfucker. It's my money…I have accounts in Switzerland, Luxembourg, and the Isle of Man."

Sasha agrees to the payment but insists Beth cannot leave without killing Stuart. Upon hearing these conditions, Beth reconsiders. Frozen with Stuart's penis still in her grasp, second thoughts flash across her face; that is until Stuart taunts her, "They're still gonna kill you, you fucking stupid cunt." Suddenly,

a far off stare fill Beth's eyes, the same stare from the train, the same stare from when the Italian mob of men assaulted her. "What did you say to me?" she seethes. Defiant, beneath the subtle sound of rising strings and the zooming camera's enclosing frame, Stuart straightens up and yells, "You're a stupid fucking cu—!" But before he can finish the misogynistic insult, Beth clamps the scissors, castrating him. The threatening guards, even Sasha, every man gathered there shrinks against the actions of the young castratrice. Having faced the victimizing male, this woman usurps the phallic authority to fight back and kill her victimizer. (28) In a spray of spurting blood, Beth wrenches Stuart's penis and testicles from his convulsing body before taking them in her hand and marching out of the room. "Let him bleed to death," she says before flinging his genitals to the dogs. In this sense, Beth, using Wood's phrase, usurps the phallus. She literally castrates Stuart but can only do so because her wealth provides her the phallic authority to do so.

"To the next level."

In his analysis of *Dressed To Kill*, Robin Wood relies upon Freud's castration theories, claiming that "men hate and fear [women] because as castrated they perpetually reactive childhood fears of literal castration, and because they may at any point reject their status as castrated and attempt to appropriate the symbolic phallus." (29) In this system where those who have penises have phallic authority, attempts by women to "possess the phallus is simultaneously perceived as a threat to castrate the male." (30) With this in mind, *Dressed To Kill*'s villain, Dr. Elliot kills women in order to make peace with his desires to become a woman but "can view his femininity only in terms of castration." (31) Because he refuses to act upon his desire to cut off his penis, Dr. Elliot cuts women who sexually arouse it. Here, men who disavow their femininity kill women to prove their masculinity, and those who disavow their figurative castration figuratively castrate women. This leads Wood to conclude, "If the struggle for women's liberation is to be won, men must learn to relinquish [phallic authority] not in the name of liberal condescension and fair play but as an act that liberates them, too: in psychoanalytical terminology, they must learn to accept castration." (32)

At face value, the castration scene in *Hostel II* seems to do just that. Stuart can only view his wife's phallic authority as castrating. Refusing his "feminine" role, he tortures and kills women to prove his masculinity, and disavowing his figurative castration, he figuratively castrates women. In the end, Stuart is literally castrated by one of those women: the torturer is tortured, the murderer is murdered, the castrator is castrated, the villain is punished, and the heroine is saved. Because Stuart cannot accept his wife's phallic authority, he must lose his penis, and as he bleeds to death, the film suggests that those who cannot accept figurative castration face literal castration. According to Wood's logic, by doing so, the film relinquishes a false sense of penile entitlement and ushers in victory for women's liberation. By representing the horrors of literal castration, *Hostel II* invites male audiences to reflect upon the much less horrific and, as Wood claims, even liberating virtues of figurative castration.

Embracing male castration and female phallic authority proved a common theme in many 2007 horror films related to *Hostel II*. That year, the film's executive producer, Quentin Tarantino, also produced, wrote, and directed *Death Proof*, a film that turns the slasher film on its head, ending with the male serial killer of women hunted down and killed by a band of women. Robert Rodriguez's *Planet Terror* features Tarantino as Rapist #1 who attempts to sexually assault the film's female protagonist before his genitals melt. In Hostel II, even director, writer, producer, Eli Roth, figures himself into the iconography of castration: as Beth stumbles into Sasha's chamber of decapitations, a replica of Roth's severed head stands among the others.(33) With these examples, 2007 saw horror films that reversed the castration anxieties evoked in traditional horror cinema. Rather than using castration threats to frighten then

assuage audiences, restoring the penile phallic authority, these films reveled in castrations, parodying masculinity by assaulting the penis. Even male producers, directors, and writers of these films parody themselves with castration, creating spectacles around the demise of their own penises. With this, it would seem that these films answer Wood's calls, taking powerful steps towards accepting castration. But does this debasement of the male member help usher in the women's liberation Wood claims it does? In many obvious ways yes, but in many subtle ways that I will now explore, this denigration of the penis actually preserves the phallic authority of men by taking it to what *Hostel II* calls "the next level."

To further explore the veneration of male phallic authority through the degradation of the penis, one must first take a detour through the history of castration. In *Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood*, Gary Taylor claims Freud's castration theory does not refer to castration at all. While the father of psychoanalysis refers to penectomy, the severing of the penis, castration has historically meant orchiectomy or orchidectomy, the severing of the testicles. While Freudian focus on a historically rare form of castration has dominated scholarship from psychoanalysis to horror film analysis, Taylor claims, "Freud's theories about castration anxiety and the penis envy of castrated females can hardly be an accurate description of 'patriarchy,' because they misrepresent almost the entire history of castration and almost the entire history of patriarchy." (34) In "twentieth-century psychoanalysis, castration means loss, unequivocal loss, the epitome of loss," but in ancient societies castrated men had much to gain.(35) During a time when testicles were the source of male sexual identity, procreation the meaning of sex, and orchiectomy the purpose of castration, eunuchs occupied high places in society. According to Taylor, eunuchs who had their testicles removed could not reproduce, and, therefore, kings trusted them to guard royal harems. Because of this privileged position, eunuchs blurred the lines between man and woman, but also a division "even more fundamental for all ancient societies, the division between slave and free" as a "slave king." (36) In this context, castration did not signify loss but the only way slaves could gain freedom and power.

Beyond ancient times, the Medieval Era also viewed castration in positive terms. In "Sexual Mutilation and Castration Anxiety," Jacqueline Murray claims, "Castration and fear of castration, occupied a central place in theological, legal, and popular discourses precisely because it was a real issue for medieval men."(37) Christian men especially grappled with Matthew 19:12, the Biblical passage in which Jesus faces the multitudes and declares, "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." Considering this verse in his *Confessions*, St. Augustine claims, "If I might have more carefully listened to these words and, thus been made a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake, I might have more happily awaited Thy embraces." (38) Many other Christian men would reflect on their ability to make themselves eunuchs for the God. Regardless of whether or not these faithful underwent orchiectomies, "castration continued to be presented as a positive metaphor for chastity and the individual's control over his disobedient genitals."(39) In this context, men exalted castration as a sign of spiritual power and loathed the genitals as "dangerous and irrational organs." (40) According to Murray, "rich medieval discourses on nocturnal emissions, spontaneous erections, and impotence" suggested the extent to which men felt genitals made them weak. (41) "Consequently," she claims, the penis, "the locus and symbol of men's patriarchal power was also the site of their spiritual weakness and physical vulnerability." (42) Making themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven, men also made themselves kings over women on earth. No longer were they subject to the sexual power women held over them; no longer would weak "men, dominated by lust, bec[o]me like horses or mules." (43) Freed from their genitals, they were freed from sexual desires and made invincible, because, as Murray claims, "a castrated

man was saved from lust and could resist women and sexual temptation." (44) In the name of Christianity, chastity, and self-control, many medieval men willingly deprived themselves of their genitals, manhood, and humanity to pursue a life of power they could enjoy as a eunuch which they could not enjoy with a penis.

The male empowerment through castration found in the Medieval Era occurs during the Italian Renaissance as well. In *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in the Italian Renaissance*, Valeria Finucci claims, "Through the years there has been a persistent politicization of the grief that should have defined the psyche of men who were proscribed from the congregation of 'regular' men because of a cut."(45) While this assumption stems from Freud's theories of figurative castration, it does not reflect the historical realities of literal castration. She cites numerous examples in which "castrati laughed when people pitied their condition, given the obvious narcissistic and economic advantages enjoyed by the most successful among them." (46) Freud and his followers may imagine castration as a lack, but the castrati lived lives in many ways fuller than uncastrated men. They achieved wealth as performers, prestige as singers in the church, and escapades with women seeking to have intercourse with men who could not impregnate them. With such a lifestyle, these castrated men usually had more financial, political, and even sexual power than other men.

Given these historical perceptions of castration as the key to power, many horror film scholars reconceptualize the castration anxieties supposedly central to the genre. In *Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, Barbara Creed argues that horror films challenge traditional psychoanalytic interpretations of castration. She claims that Freud stresses women's physical castration while Lacan emphasizes their castration in a symbolic sense.(47) The theories of both psychoanalysts claim women terrify because they are castrated, but Creed claims that such arguments overlook the extent to which women terrify because they might also castrate. She claims, "Freud takes refuge in his theory of woman's castration" rather "than consider man's dread of the imaginary castrating woman."(48) In horror films, she argues, the *femme castratrice* is even more horrifying, because while "the castrated female monster is inevitably punished for her transgressions, the castrating woman—usually a sympathetic figure—is rarely punished." (49) These films justify femme castratrices who seek revenge for being raped. For example, in *I Spit on Your Grave*, Jennifer (Camille Keaton) exacts her vengeance against Johnny (Eron Tabor), one of four men who raped her. After recovering from her wounds, she lures him back to her cabin with the promise of another sexual encounter, and in a bubble bath, she manually stimulates his penis before cutting it off. While gruesome, the scene does not elicit sympathy for the castrated man, because his spurts of blood and whimpers of agony fail to undo the images of him brutally raping Jennifer earlier in the film. In this way, the film's narrative allies audiences with Jennifer as she castrates Johnny. Freud claimed women evoke male castration anxieties, but Creed claims that, in this cinematic moment, "it is the mutilated male form that evokes castration anxiety while the heroine is represented as the avenging castrator, the central protagonist with whom the spectator is encouraged to identify."(50) In these filmic instances, Creed points out, "the castrated male body, not the female body, represents lack and absence."(51)

Male audiences, however, may not identify with the femme castratrice as much as the male she castrates. Creed acknowledges, like Neale, that horror films rely upon the psychological structures of Freudian castration anxieties, but they do so in particular ways, by "playing on the spectator's fascination with the relationship between sex and death—particularly for the male." (52) Even in the scene from *I Spit on Your Grave*, male audiences may identify with Jennifer as she castrates Johnny, but, Creed claims, they can only do so after she ignites male sexual desire by telling him she enjoyed the rape. The knife hand

rises but only after the hand job in a sequence that, as Creed claims, offers "the spectator the promise of an erotic pleasure associated with a desire for death and non-differentiation."(53) Combining sex and castration, Jennifer "arouses a fear of castration and death while simultaneously playing on a masochistic desire for death, pleasure and oblivion." (54) The film eroticizes castration, leading Creed to claim that "the death scenes of the male victims offer a form of masochistic pleasure to the viewer because of the way they associate death with pleasure." (55) Given narrative structures that not only justify castration but derive pleasure from it, Creed claims *I Spit on Your Grave* invites audiences to experience castration anxieties not as one of Freud's primordial fears but as a primal "phantasy" on par with other fundamental sexual events like birth and seduction. (56)

Male Phantasy: Castration and Desire

Constructing castration as a sexual phantasy, such films may also construct castration as an avenue to a different kind of male desire. To see how this may be the case, one must first contrast Freud's notion of castration threats with Lacan's notion of symbolic castration. Freud claims that during the phallic stage, a boy localizes sexual pleasure in the penis and becomes "dominated by his interest in his own genitals." (57) In this stage of genital self-stimulation, the penis becomes the primary source of both sexual pleasure and vulnerability as the boy learns "that the organ which is so dear to him will be taken away from him if he shows his interest in it too plainly." (58) Fearing castration, the boy overcomes masturbatory desires. Freud makes similar claims about the prohibitive power of castration threats in his theorization of the Oedipus complex. In his case study of Little Hans, he claims the boy showed aggression towards his father and desire for his mother, a desire the boy eventually repressed because of the idea of being castrated by his father. (59) According to Freud, the Oedipus complex would remain one of the primary sexual attractions in boys if it were not "broken down by the castration complex." (60) In "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes," he claims that this incestuous attraction to the mother is not merely repressed but "is literally smashed to pieces by the shock of threatened castration."(61) In both the case of masturbation and the Oedipus complex, Freud claims that castration threats prohibit certain objects of sexual desire.

In Lacanian thought, however, "symbolic castration" is an inevitable part of subjectivity that actually produces desire. He claims that the subject's existence is unthinkable without the Symbolic, the linguistic realm that provides the word "I" to make one's existence conceivable. The "Other" is a locus of meaning that makes language possible, but the subject eventually comes to imagine that this "Other demands his castration."(62) Whereas the Freudian father threatens to castrate the boy who does not relinquish desire for his mother, the Lacanian Other admits subjects into the Symbolic order by separating them from their unbridled "jouissance" and imposing, instead, the permissible "Law of desire."(63) By cutting away its limitless pleasure for more lawful forms, the self of the Symbolic order suffers a perpetual lack (manque), perpetually trying to recover the jouissance it has lost by pursuing objet petit a that inevitably fail to satisfy and spawn more insatiable desires.(64) Here, "symbolic castration" prohibits the subject's jouissance but also produces the endless pursuit of desires that will never satisfy.

With symbolic castration, however, this chain of desires need not be sexual. Freudian theories of castration pose a threat against the literal penis, which assumes penectomy is the ultimate loss because penile sexual gratification is the ultimate goal. Symbolic castration, on the other hand, poses a threat not against the physical body, but the subject's self-mastery. Symbolically castrated, the subject surrenders control of its jouissance, and entering the Symbolic world of language, the subject loses control of its ability to articulate its desire. Feminist theorist Jane Gallop suggests this much when she claims "castration for Lacan is not only sexual; more important, it is also linguistic: we are inevitably bereft of

any masterful understanding of language, and can only signify ourselves in a symbolic system that we do not command, that, rather, commands us."(65) She further claims that "everyone's inevitable 'castration' in language" means that no one can attain a "masterful grasp" of the language they inhabit.(66) If symbolic castration primarily threatens self-mastery, one must acknowledge the extent to which jouissance may connote much more than unbridled gratification of the penis; one must acknowledge the jouissance of self-mastery that might not be sexual and, for the male subject, might actually be at odds with penile gratification. The subject's symbolic castration creates intersubjective networks, encouraging the individual to seek others that may fulfill its desires. With this interdependency, the Symbolic that allows the subject to articulate itself also makes self-mastery impossible. In the case of penile sexuality, the subject becomes dependent upon the others who can sexually gratify its penis. To fully disavow its lack, the subject seeks not a series of others that might finally satisfy its penile desires but the recovery of jouissance in which the subject lacks nothing and needs none other.

This seems especially so in the Digital Age where billions of dollars and innumerable minutes are spent on pornography that promises to fulfill the subject's jouissance of self-gratification without the complications of desire that make one dependent upon others. In cyberspace, one can download the body of another for self-gratification without submitting the body of the self to the other. But the jouissance of self-gratification seen in the Digital Age is not solely based upon a masturbatory existence in which men gratify their own penises, a new phallocentric technology that resonates with old Freudian theories of literal castration and Lacanian conceptualizations of symbolic castration. In fact, penile self-gratification may be another desire at odds with the jouissance of self-mastery. This may especially be the case in the Digital Age where literal castration may feed the sexual phantasy that one does not have to just police desire in a Freudian sense or submit to it in a Lacanian one, but can transcend it altogether. According to Lacanian theorist Slavoj Žižek, cyberspace allows users to transgress their bodies, to posses "*another*—etheric, virtual, weightless—*body*, a body which does not confine us to the inert materiality and finitude, an angelic *spectral body*, a body which can be artificially recreated and manipulated."(67) In this context of the spectral body, the physical body, even the penised, uncastrated body, becomes a hindrance, and, Žižek claims, the "penis, organ of urination *and* procreativity," becomes less a sign of phallic power than a sign of powerless "self exposure," an organ with which "our innermost self is directly externalized" and made "disgusting." (68) Maxine Sheets-Johnstone makes a similar argument when she claims that the penis "gains unassailable stature and power" only if it "is protected, hidden from sight." (69) "As an object perpetually protected from public view and popular scientific investigation," she claims, "it is conceived not as the swag of flesh it normally is in all the humdrum acts and routines of everyday life but as a Phallus, an organ of unconditioned power." (70) To keep its penis shrouded in mystery, the subject keeps it hidden from public view, but to keep its symbolic castration disavowed, the subject must also keep its penis hidden from private view. Freudian castration is a threat to make the penis absent, and the penis signifies fullness, the absence of castration. In Lacanian theory, however, the presence of the penis signifies one's lack: as the source of uncontrollable erection, nocturnal emissions, and irrepressible passions, it becomes proof that the subject has been symbolically castrated, is subject to the Law of desire, is sexually attracted to and sexually dependent upon others. It is not enough to hide the penis from others so they cannot castrate it; the subject must also hide its penis from itself if it wishes to disavow the fact that it has already been symbolic castrated.

The subject can seek to evade both literal castration and symbolic castration through what Žižek calls the "astral body," that supersensible being that comprises the individual, survives it after death, and allows the subject to exist without a body.(71) The penis, once the route to phallic authority, may now be an obstacle to it, a tie to be severed if one wishes to leave the disgustingly vulnerable body for the astral

body that enjoys self-mastery. With on-line buying and selling, meeting others, learning, encountering the digital world without the risks of the material one, this astral body experiences the ultimate in phallic authority: physical invincibility. This astral existence is available to men and women as everyone can hide their sex online, but for women already coded as castrated this disembodiment proves not as liberating as for men that are coded as castrate-able.(72) If the penis is a sign of weakness, a "swag of flesh" that can never live up to the power of the Phallus, then the male who relies upon the lie of the penis can leave the penis permanently hidden and shrouded in mystery by adopting the astral body. Phallic authority may no longer belong to penised bodies or penis-less bodies but the disembodied, and the subject made vulnerable by the penis, may seek self-mastery, the disavowal of symbolic castration, through literal castration. In the Digital Age, literal castration may no longer embody the ultimate loss but the ultimate gain, escaping the penised body that is vulnerable to castration and receiving the castrated body, uncastrateable and invulnerable. Contrary to Freud and Lacan notions of castration, the literally castrated subject may lack nothing and enjoy fullness, ceasing sexual desires, eliminating the final threat psychoanalysis can levy against it, and achieving the ultimate in phallic authority: self-mastery, castrating itself before others can, which makes castration threats and anxieties disappear. Rejecting the penis, the subject forsakes the penile desires that make one subject to others, the Law of Desire that proves one has been symbolic castrated by the Other, is disavowed. With such phantasies, the castrated body becomes astral or what I will call the "castral body."

Phantasies about this castral body underlie *Hostel II*, phantasies most articulated through Todd, Stuart's friend, who represents the film's fifth relationship to the penis. As he jogs through the Slovakian village with his friend, Todd asks, "You remember the first guy in high school who got laid?" He goes on to claim the sexually experienced boy "just had something about him" that set him above his peers. In Todd's mind, the genital actions of this young man compelled others to instinctively revere him: the penis has the power to exercise phallic authority over women, conquering them sexually, and actions of the penis have the power to exercise phallic authority over men, demanding their respect. Todd then links men who have lost their virginity with men who have killed: they do not have to act tough or declare their deeds, but when in the presence of a killer, "You know that this guy's got the balls to do what few others can."(73) Todd inserts himself into that category of alpha-males, phantasizing about how he too has the "balls" to torture women, and he imagines that by the end of the day his physical genitals will grant him even further phallic authority over others. Back in their hotel, hours from their torture sessions, he raises a toast "to the next level." Then, they enter a brothel seeking penile stimulation one last time before they go to the torture chamber in search of non-penile stimulation. Once Todd's Elite Hunting pager sounds, however, he quickly hurls the woman off of his penis, stopping his sexual act incomplete, depriving himself of genital gratification before moving onto that next level of gratification: torture.(74) At this stage, the penis becomes irrelevant, a thing that generates less pleasure than circling a bound and gagged girl with a radial saw.

In Stuart's final moments, he oscillates between exercising the penis and exercising phallic authority. Before he attempts to torture Beth, he tries to rape her. Aroused by her submission, he foregoes the stimulation he gets from torture and attempts genital stimulation. With these final acts, the film emphasizes Stuart's penis moments before taking it away, but the film spends most of its time emphasizing non-penile gratification. With Todd's rhetoric about the next level, the film suggests a source of male phallic authority derived from something other than the penis. As he talks about having the "balls" to do what few others do, the film suggests that balls are figurative, not an issue of genitalia as much as power. In the prostitute scene, Todd gets his penis stroked but leaps at the prospect of stroking his own ego. As his pager sounds, the film places the penis at odds with phallic authority; either sex or

torture, penile stimulation or extra-penile stimulation, the penis or the phallus.(75) Faced with these choices, Todd and Stuart choose the latter. Doing so, they accept castration without accepting female phallic authority Todd's response to Stuart's figurative castration? Do not accept castration; reject the penis altogether. Following Wood, these men seem to accept castration: by storming out of the brothel, they forsake the penile stimulation women can provide. At the same time, however, they reject castration: by storming into the torture chamber, they pursue a phallic authority over women that does not require a penis. Contrary to Wood's claims, accepting castration does not necessarily deliver a victory for women's liberation as much as it takes male phallic authority "to the next level," a level that derives its power not from the uncastrated male body but from the uncastratable body. Given how *Hostel II* establishes the castral body as a male phantasy, one must wonder if literal castration is really horrific in this film. Does it overwhelm audiences with castration anxieties or indulge castral phantasies?

The same must be asked of the other horror films that feature castration. Do *Hostel II*, *Planet Terror*, *I Spit on Your Grave*, *Last House on the Left*, or *Teeth* parody male phallic authority by denigrating the penis, or do they mock only a certain kind of male phallic authority? These films castrate men who rape women, but do their scenes of castration punish men for sexually assaulting women or for relying too literally on the penis as the source of domination? These moments of castration pointedly criticize masculinity but only that type of masculinity based upon the anatomical penis. They evoke the castration anxieties only to push them over the edge with scenes of literal castration, and, doing so, these films seem to satirize men who find too much power in their penises. Doing so, however, does not necessarily venerate the female phallic authority that castrates these men. Could these castration scenes mock men who lose their penises for failing to know how to achieve self-mastery, recover jouissance, and disavow symbolic castration without the penis? Do these scenes of castration simply mock the outdated, anatomical body for suffering under penile sexual desires rather than pursuing non-penile ones? The ancient eunuch, the Medieval Christian, and the Renaissance castrato seem to have come full circle in the Digital Age. After a small hiatus during 20th century of Freudian discourse on castration anxiety, this era, like those before it, may find little anxiety in castration and may actually welcome it. After nearly a century of psychoanalysis insisting that penile lack signified the ultimate loss, castration may once again, like it had through much of history, be understood as the ultimate gain, dominating others *and* the self with a castral body that can cast aside the useless penis because it has attained the ultimate in phallic authority: self-mastery.

1. While Freud's conceptualization of the castration anxiety changed throughout his career, I will be focusing on those interpretations that focus on the castration threats against the anatomical penis in his theories of sexual differentiation in children. Freud's theories of psychological development in boys and girls hinge upon the penis. For example in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, especially in "The Transformations of Puberty," Freud suggests the penis is fundamental to the psychological growth of boys, and in "Castration Complex and Penis Envy," he claims the lack of a penis is central to the psychological growth of girls. Here, the anatomical penis is not to be confused with the phallus in Lacanian theory or even much of Freud's writing, that suggests a difference between the penis and the phallus, the anatomical and the symbolic.
2. Freud, Sigmund. "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood." *The Freud Reader.* Ed. Peter Gay (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989): 443-480, 460.
3. Ibid. 460.
4. Freud, Sigmund. "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes." *The Freud Reader*. ed. Peter Gay. (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989): 670-678, 674.
5. Ibid. 674.
6. Neale, Stephen. *Genre* (London: BFI, 1980), 43.
7. Ibid. 44.
8. Williams, Linda. "When the Woman Looks." *Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism.* Eds. Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, and Linda Williams. (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America): 83-99. Williams argues that women and monsters share a peculiar relationship in horror films. She argues, "The destruction of the monster that concludes so many horror films could…be interpreted as yet another way of disavowing and mastering the castration her body represents" (88-89). At the same time, however, "the woman's look at the monster offers at least a potentially subversive recognition of the power and potency of a non-phallic sexuality" (90).
9. Neale. 44.
10. Ibid. 44.
11. Hutchings, Peter. *The Horror Film* (Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2004), 64.
12. Ibid. 65.
13. Ibid. 65.
14. Ibid. 65.
15. Ibid. 65.
16. Ibid. 65.
17. Ibid. 65.
18. It is important to note that Lorna is not killed by a man but by the only female torturer in the film, one who murders her in a bath of blood as in the mythical accounts of Elizabeth Bathory, "The Blood Countess."
19. It is significant that the film implies a lesbian attraction between Beth and Axelle (Vera Jordanova), a theme of repressed homosexuality that resonates with the character of Josh (Derek Richardson) in Hostel.
20. Lacan, Jacques. "The Meaning of the Phallus." *Feminine Sexuality.* eds. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose. Trans. Jacqueline Rose. London: Macmillon, 1982): 74-85, 79.
21. Ibid. 76.
22. Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which Is Not One.* trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke. Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1985.
23. Butler, Judith. "The Lesbian Phallus and the morphological Imaginary." *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* (New York & London: Routledge, 1993): 57-92, 83.

24. Luepnitz, Deborah. "Beyond the Phallus: Lacan and Feminism." *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan.* ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 221-237, 226.
25. Wood, Robin. *Hollywood From Vietnam to Reagan…and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, 2003), 122.
26. Ibid. 122.
27. The circumstances of Beth's inheritance suggest that her mother had more money than her father. The mother also cuts this father out of her will, skipping over him to leave everything to her daughter. Enjoying phallic authority over him in life, she also exercises that unusual relationship to the phallus in death.
28. In this way, Beth resembles what Clover calls "the Final Girl."
29. Wood, 123.
20. Ibid. 123.
31. Ibid. 130.
32. Ibid. 124.
33. In "The Uncanny," Freud claims severed heads are a psychological metaphor for castration (50). Mitchell Lichtenstein's *Teeth* (2007) evokes perhaps one of the most central of castration anxieties, fear of the vagina dentate.
34. Taylor, Gary. *Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 60.
35. Ibid. 43.
36. Ibid. 148.
37. Murray, Jacqueline. "Sexual Mutilation and Castration Anxiety: A Medieval Perspective." *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality.* Ed. Mathew Kuefler (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006, 254-272), 255.
38. Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. Vernon J. Bourke. Fathers of the Church, 21 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1953), 35.
39. Murray, 255.
40. Ibid. 264.
41. Ibid. 264.
42. Ibid. 264-265.
43. Ibid. 267.
44. Ibid. 267.
45. Finucci, Valeria. The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in the Italian Renaissance (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 273.
46. Ibid. 273.
47. Creed, Barbara. Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis (New York: Routledge, 1993), 110.
48. Ibid. 121.
49. Ibid. 122-123.
50. Ibid. 153.
51. Ibid. 153.
52. Ibid. 153.
53. Ibid. 130.
54. Ibid. 130.
55. Ibid. 130.
56. Ibid. 153.

57. Freud, "Leonardo," 460. Again, this refers to specific strands of Freudian theory in which the anatomical penis plays a primary role in the dissolution of the Oedipus complex through castration threats.
58. Ibid. 460.
59. Freud, Sigmund. *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*. trans. Alix Strachey. (London: The Hogarth Press, Ltd., 1936), 52.
60. Ibid. 52.
61. Freud, "Some Psychical," 677.
62. Lacan, Jacques. "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious." *Écrits: A Selection.* trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc. 1977): 292-325, 321.
63. Ibid. 324.
64. In *The Plague of Fantasies*, Lacanian theorist Slavoj Žižek claims that as opposed to jouissance, "desire's raison d'etre…is not to realize its goal, to find full satisfaction, but to reproduce itself as desire" (38-39).
65. Gallop, Jane. *Reading Lacan*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 20.
66. Ibid. 20.
67. Žižek, Slavoj. *On Belief* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 54.
68. Ibid. 59-60.
69. Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine. "Corporeal Archetypes and Power: Preliminary Clarifications and Considerations of Sex." *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader.* ed. Donn Welton. (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1998): 149-180. 173.
70. Ibid. 173.
71. Žižek, *On Belief*, 34.
72. Sheets-Johnstone claims, "Western cultural practice generally" assumes "a male's body is not anatomized nor is it ever made an object of study in the same ways as female bodies. The net result is that the penis is never made public, never put on the measuring line in the same way that female sexual body parts are put on the measuring line" (173). Digital existence may be another step in Western cultural practice to keep penises private and de-anatomize the male body.
73. This statement articulates a pre-Freudian sense of male power located in the testicles rather than the penis, but the following scene in the brothel juxtaposes the penis and instruments of torture, re-establishing a Freudian sense of male power located in the penis rather than the testicles.
74. In "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria ('Dora')," Freud claims that in cases of coitus interruptus, "the libido flows back again into its old channel and manifests itself once more in hysterical symptoms" (216). In "Case of Obsessional Neurosis ('Rat Man')," he claims coitus interruptus can be a tool by which men spoil the same sexual affairs they claim to want (349). These two passages suggest a subconscious desire in males to initiate penile stimulation only to stop short of ejaculation as a way to turn sexual desire back upon itself, shoring up those energies for non-sexual exploits.
75. For a similar argument, see Freeland's analysis of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* where she argues, "The notion of chain saw as phallic substitute is driven home (as if it needed to be) when the patriarch of the cannibalistic family tells Leatherface sternly, 'Sex or the saw, son, you have to choose!'" (251).

‘The Great Disillusionment’: H.G. Wells, Mankind, and Aliens in American Invasion Horror Films of the 1950s

Leslie Sheldon

H.G. Well’s 1898 novel *The War of The Worlds* (published initially in 1897 as a series of installments in *Pearson’s Magazine*) establishes many of the key thematic conventions and entertaining plot details evinced in ‘alien invasion horror’ cinema of the two subsequent centuries, most especially in American science fiction films of the 1950s. Aliens as vampires from a dying planet, as violent parasites, as rampaging machines, as brains-without-hearts using high-tech heat rays on their human victims, originated in Wells’ seminal work; the deeper levels of social criticism found in the novel also making their way into such films. Though it is doubtless true that mid-century Hollywood alien invasion films frequently reflected Cold War paranoia towards either ‘Red Scare’ fears of Soviet invasion on the one hand, or of McCarthy-era “creeping conformity” (1) on the other, these films (and even some of those of today) are also culturally centered within the original literary mythopoeia of Wells’ milestone science fiction ‘blueprint’. As the Hollywood producer George Pal noted of the 50s, “*War of the Worlds* had become especially timely”. (2)

For the purposes of this discussion, it is accepted that films such as *The Thing from Another World* (Dir: Christian Nyby, 1951), *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Dir: Robert Wise, 1951), *This Island Earth* (Dir: Joseph M. Newman, 1955), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Dir: Don Siegel, 1956), *The Monolith Monsters* (Dir: John Sherwood, 1957), to cite some of the examples considered, are not *auteurist* artifacts. As Robert Stam observes:

The filmmaker is not an untrammeled artist; he/she is immersed in material contingencies…The film author also requires collaborators. Even a low budget feature can involve more than a score of people working over an extended period…Writers, cinematographers, composers, stars, corporate executives all collaborate in film authorship (3)

Given the quintessentially collaborative nature of film, one cannot state categorically that links to the novel *The War of the Worlds* are always examples of deliberate allusion or literary borrowing by a central filmic ‘auteur’ (though in some cases they undoubtedly are); rather, it is suggested that the films discussed were created via a cultural milieu wherein the symbols, analogies, linkages and themes of Wells’ mythopoetic novel comprised an integral part.

It is also accepted that any subsequent artistic interpretation of a literary original such as *The War of the Worlds* (especially in a new medium) perforce involves a change of perspective. For Orson Welles, his seminal 1938 broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* exploited Wells’ novel to underscore his own concern about the credibility attributed to broadcast news by the listening public of the period: "Radio in those days, before the tube and the transistor, wasn't just a noise in somebody's pocket - it was the voice of authority. Too much so. At least, I thought so. It was time for someone to take the starch out of some of that authority: hence my broadcast".(4) The same alteration of focus and re-interpretation is at work in the 1950s films considered.

American science-fiction movies of the 1950s evince a wide quality continuum, which included ‘serious’, technically sophisticated films, such as *It Came from Outer Space* (Dir: Jack Arnold, 1953) and cheaply made, popular ‘B’ items (often simply ‘drive-in’ fare), including, *Kronos* (Dir: Kurt Neumann, 1957),

and, last and probably least, *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (Dir: Ed Wood Jr., 1959), universally considered (perhaps unhelpfully) the "worst movie ever made" (5). The practical artistic realities of this filmic spectrum were perhaps best expressed by Jeff Morrow, commenting on *The Giant Claw* (Dir: Fred Sears, 1957), in which he played the scientist hero, locked in mortal combat with a gigantic alien bird from a "godforsaken anti-matter galaxy" (6):

We shot the film before we ever got a look at this monster that was supposed to be so terrifying. The producers promised us that the special effects would be first class. The director…just told us, 'All right, now you see the bird up there, and you're scared to death! Use your imagination.' But the first time we actually got to see it was the night of the premiere. The audience couldn't stop laughing. We were up there on screen looking like idiots, treating this silly buzzard like it was the scariest thing in the world. We felt cheated, that's for sure... (7)

However, even in many seemingly unprepossessing American science fiction films of the 50s ('Fright Night' TV late show fare for the decades following, which in the post-9/11 world have become reassuringly nostalgic) there is often a concern with more thoughtful thematic and symbolic implications similar to those in 'quality' invasion films, and likewise descended from Wellsian imagery and themes.

The Wellsian Blueprint

Wells' visionary foray in *The War of the Worlds* into literary 'special effects', Martian heat rays, poisonous Black Smoke, bio-mechanical tripods, flying machines and, perhaps, ecology-altering red weed, are less significant than what the invasion reveals about Western Imperialism in the late Victorian period generally, with its "infinite complacency" (8) engrained racism/colonialism, and unquestioning belief in the value of unbridled technological progress, intellectual growth, and social Darwinism:

...men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter...It is curious to recall some of the mental habits of those departed days. At most terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars, perhaps inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise. Yet across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us. And early in the twentieth century came the great disillusionment. [p. 5].

A central purpose of the novel is to force the shocked reader to realize that the vampiric, tentacled, relentless Martians who are basically bent on genocide, "the murder of mankind" [p. 117], as a ruthless industrial process (the tripods carry a contrivance "like a gigantic fisherman's basket [p. 51] for harvesting the *homo sapien* 'catch') have more than a few things in common with their supposed human 'victims':

And before we judge of them too harshly we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo, but upon its inferior races. The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit? [p. 7]

Ziauddin Sardar contends that late 20th century science fiction is little more than a Western narrative genre aimed at promoting Western cultural ascendancy: "Wherever one looks, the colonising, imperial

mission of science fiction is hard to miss" (9). For Wells in *The War of the Worlds*, however, Western man's imperial spirit and colonial exploitation are most definitely qualified and undercut through their thematic connection with the technocratic Martians' cull of mankind to extract blood—the latter a motif also discernible in 1950s alien invasion films. Wells' Martians "took the fresh, living blood of other creatures, and injected it into their own veins" [p. 141], but as the narrator unsentimentally notes:

The bare idea of this is no doubt horribly repulsive to us, but at the same time I think we should remember how repulsive our carnivorous habits would seem to an intelligent rabbit [p. 141].

At the point in the novel where Wells illustrates the spiritual bankruptcy of organized Christianity, the connection between the extra-terrestrial vampires and European, colonial Man is made even clearer; the sniveling Curate the narrator encounters during his adventures is, in the last stages of distress and panic, unable to reconcile the brutal facts of the Martian invasion with his faith:

"Why are these things permitted? What sins have we done?...fire, earthquake, death! As if it were Sodom and Gomorrah! All are work undone, all the work—What are these Martians?" [p. 77]

As the narrator mordantly replies, "'What are we?'" [p. 77]. Almost a century later, Ripley, the disillusioned xenomorph-destroyer in the film *Aliens* (Dir: James Cameron, 1986) asks wearily: "You know…I don't know which species is worse". (10) In *The War of the Worlds*, this may similarly be a moot point.

For Wells, the alien invasion scenario not only exposes uncomfortable Them/Us linkages, but reveals much about society's internal flaws. It shatters, for example, cherished British illusions about their intrinsic, civilised decency; as the narrator's brother unflatteringly describes "the roaring wave of fear" seizing London "the greatest city in the world":

…by midday even the railway organizations, were…guttering, softening, running at last in that swift liquefaction of the social body…revolvers were fired, people stabbed, and the policemen who had been sent to direct the traffic…were breaking the heads of the people they were called out to protect [102].

Furthermore, as the Martians represent a mechanistic, collectivist force indistinguishable from the machines they operate, late nineteenth-century British man is characterised by soul-less conformity; the Artilleryman, despite his drunken, futile dreaminess, has telling points to make about 'respectable' society:

"They haven't any spirit in them—no proud dreams and no proud lusts…I've seen hundreds of 'em, bit of breakfast in hand, running wild and shining to catch their little season-ticket train, for fear they'd get dismissed if they didn't; working at businesses they were afraid to take the trouble to understand; skedaddling back…keeping indoors after dinner for fear of the back streets; and sleeping with the wives they married, not because they wanted them, but because they had a bit of money that would make for safety in their one little miserable skedaddle through the world" [p. 176]

Don Siegel, the director of *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* claimed mischievously that the message of his iconic film (despite the varied critical discussion surrounding it), is actually about:

"…Pods. Not those that come from outer space…People are pods. Many of my associates are certainly pods. They have no feelings. They exist, breathe, sleep. To be a pod means that you have no passion, no anger, the spark has left you". (11)

Many mid-century invasion films (including Siegel's) are "ambiguous in the rendering of the alien Other" (12), not least for the purpose of pointing out deficiencies in human society, a theme at least partly based on *The War of the Worlds*.

It is also no coincidence that the Martians destroy and pollute the environment (much as industrialised nineteenth-century man does); the poisonous Black Smoke leaves a scummy residue in water, the red weed transforms the green English landscape (possibly a deliberate environmental alteration by the Martians), growing over ruined houses, streets and fields. Appropriately, Wells' aliens are in fact destroyed by their insufficient respect for the power of Nature/the ecosystem, despite prolonged observation of Earth and careful planning: "Martians—dead!—slain by the putrefactive and disease bacteria against which their systems were unprepared; slain, after all man's devices had failed, by the humblest things that God, in his wisdom, has put upon this earth" [p. 191]. Even the technologically advanced make serious mistakes.

In *The War of the Worlds* the catastrophic, almost cinematic destruction of the cutting-edge Royal Navy warship 'Thunder Child' by the Martian heat rays (for example), is perhaps less important for Wells than the emotive images of panicked refugees trying to crowd onto trains in a desperate attempt to escape London, or the visions of burnt, contorted corpses and unthinkable devastation which haunt the narrator. In the end it is the narrator's yearning quest for his lost wife which matters: "And strangest of all is to hold my wife's hand again, and to think, that I have counted her, and that she has counted me, among the dead" (p. 196). Heart in *The War of the Worlds* is more important than Head, the last image in the novel being clasped human hands.

It is thus symbolically significant that the Martians - whatever their technical accomplishments - are the embodiment of brains (and distorted ones at that), without heart: "They were heads—merely heads" [p.141]. Wells, a firm believer in evolution, warns mankind in this novel that the emotionally empty Martians are what the human species may become if it continues to idolize intellect, machines and 'progress' at the expense of passion and humanity. The negative symbolic import of "intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic" [p. 3] is, adumbrated in the bloated crania of many 1950s filmic aliens, including the aliens who inject their human victims with alcohol in *Invasion of the Saucer Men* (Dir: Edward Cahn, 1957), and the (interestingly, from a Wellsian point of view) sex-crazed, criminal xenomorph "Gor" in *The Brain from Planet Arous* (Dir: Nathan H. Duran, 1957).

The narrator of *The War of the Worlds* believes that the alien invasion has taught previously unimaginative mankind about the possibilities of the human future -for example, travel through "the inanimate vastness of sidereal space" [p. 204] - but also about the vulnerability of planet Earth, and of the very species itself. Humanity's future in the "twentieth century" [p. 3] will be filled with dread, insecurity and something akin to '50s-style' paranoia, the Martians perhaps returning to finish the job: "…the shooting stars, will bring with them as they fall an unavoidable apprehension to all the sons of men" [p. 203]. It is an open, potentially pessimistic *fin de siècle* question as to whether Man or Martian will prevail: "To them, and not to us, perhaps, is the future ordained. [p. 204].

"Perhaps the blood of this planet will answer…"

The Martians' alien evil is underscored at the beginning of *The War of The Worlds*, as the narrator recalls his pre-invasion glimpse of their home planet through an observatory telescope:

And invisible to me because it was so remote and small, flying swiftly and steadily towards me across that incredible distance, drawing nearer every minute by so many thousands of miles, came…the Thing that was to bring so much struggle and calamity and death to the earth [p. 9].

It is perhaps not too fanciful to suggest that Wells' emphasis on "Thing" may have provided an inspiration for the title of *The Thing from Another World* (1951); a film which may, in many respects, be regarded as the first major 'alien invasion horror' film of the 1950s, based on John W. Campbell Jr.'s substantially modified 1938 short story "Who Goes There?" Though apparently a black/white tale of good (i.e. USAF personnel, American scientists and a reporter) versus evil (a predatory, seemingly indestructible, 'vegetable' Martian), an uncomfortable ambiguity similar to *The War of the Worlds* can also be discerned. The 'Thing' in this case is, like the Wellsian version, a slaughtering vampire; whose seedling offspring cries which, shockingly, resemble those made by human babies. Here too, the xenomorph is associated with vegetation (as are the pods in the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*), a possible echo of Well's "red weed".

The narrative is made more ambiguous, in particular, by the actions of the lead researcher, Dr. Carrington, "a pluralist mad scientist" (13) who believes that the alien's obviously superior intellect/technology and emotionless character, must be a sign of an advanced civilization (a parallelism Wells rubbishes consistently in *The War of the Worlds*), from which humans "could learn secrets that have been hidden from man since the beginning" (14). Significantly, Carrington also feeds the Martian's botanic "Thinglings" (15) from the beleaguered Antarctic research station's blood bank, making him an accomplice to the Martian's vampirism. Jancovich perceives *The Thing from Another World* as a rejection of Fordism, and class-based "scientific-technical rationality" (16), in favour of the common-man 'heart', and pragmatic vitality represented by the American airmen combating the monster, as well as Nikki (Carrington's secretary, and the hero's love interest). As Sam Sunderland observes, Howard Hawks "takes only a production credit for this low-budget exercise, but his filmmaking style transcends Christian Nyby's nominal direction: rapid-fire, overlapping dialogue, an ensemble of comrades whose professionalism is tempered by wisecracks, and unsentimental female characters…recall Hawks's signature works" (17). The film's emphasis on the ultimate success of a democratic, feisty and rag-tag group of 'common men' (another Hawks' filmic signature) is thematically congruent with Well's emphasis on the primacy of heart and emotion at the end of *The War of the Worlds*. In *The Thing from Another World*, is it the effete scientists who are literally bloodless and who suffer the only fatalities, the Martian invader cutting the throats of two researchers, then placing their carcasses above a bed of alien seedlings so that the dripping blood would feed his growing offspring.

Though the alien is finally destroyed through the leadership of the film's hero (Captain Patrick Hendry—the potential allusion to Patrick Henry and 'Give me liberty or give me death' probably not being coincidental), and a lethal jolt of electricity, paranoid questions (as in *The War of the Worlds*) are raised about a possible recurrence - "Watch the skies" intones the journalist, Scotty. More significantly, within the filmic narrative of *The Thing from Another World* (at one level an edifying celebration of American military courage for a post World War II public and support of the cultural *status quo*), there remains the unpalatable suggestion that the dangers to mankind posed by alien invasions are internal as well as external (Carrington holds Hendry and his crew at gunpoint to try to stop them destroying the

Martian monster, towards which he has become protective and sympathetic); as the Artilleryman confidently asserts about mankind in *The War of the Worlds*:

"Very likely these Martians will make pets of some of them; train them to do tricks—who knows—get sentimental over the pet boy who grew up and had to be killed. And some, maybe, they will train to hunt us...There's men who'd do it cheerful. What nonsense to pretend there isn't." [177].

In the novel, the narrator finally "succumbed" (p. 177) to this supremely misanthropic belief; human loyalties cannot be taken for granted in the face of the unthinkable. Indeed, in an pre-production version of the Lederer script of *The Thing from Another World* the alien kills Carrington, spurring Scotty ('Skeely' in the earlier draft) to remark at the end "Both monsters are dead" (18). The film's embodiment of a "popular unease about where science had brought humanity" (19), likewise reflects Wells' questioning of the suggestion that technological 'progress' is universally beneficial or unproblematically positive.

By contrast, the film version of *The War of The Worlds* (Dir: Byron Haskin, 1953), omits the ironies of the original novel, the narrative being a simplistic Cold War patriotic fable, paranoiac about ruthless, godless Martian invaders, obviously Soviet avatars, versus the forces of Good (the United States). In Barré Lyndon's script, the sniveling Curate of the novel is replaced by the courageous Pastor Dr. Matthew Collins, who is martyred as he approaches a Martian tripod reciting the Lord's Prayer. Embodying Christian courage and inclusiveness (though perhaps, in the film's mythology, a naïve liberalism), he observes to his skeptical niece, Sylvia van Buren:

Matthew: They are living creatures out there.
Sylvia: But they're not human. Dr. Forrester says they are some kind of advanced civilization.
Matthew: If they're more advanced than us, they should be nearer the Creator for that reason…No real attempt has been made to communicate with them, you know. (20)

Gone is Well's caustic rejection of organized religion, and the film ends literally in Church (where the hero, Dr. Clayton Forrester is finally reunited with Sylvia). As a Military Policeman remarks near the end of the film Forrester, the rationalistic scientist thrilled by the wonders of Martian technology ("Fantastic!" he blurts out when he observes first observes a tripod), looks "kinda lost", and has to enter numerous churches before he finds Sylvia, his love interest; some of the other scientists are also now in the pews.

The 'Thunder Child' warship is replaced in the Haskin film by the Atom Bomb (delivered to target by the USAF's bat-like 'Flying Wing'), which similarly fails to stop the Martians, and the drunken, deluded Artilleryman of the novel is morphed into the courageous (if obviously named) "General Mann". It is strongly suggested in Haskin's film that only God is responsible for delivering mankind from the cold, rationalistic evil of the Martians.

For Wells, "the rout of civilization, of the massacre of mankind" [p. 117] has as much to do with the fragility and fragmented nature of human society as with Martian technological and intellectual superiority. In Haskin's film version of *The War of the Worlds* the danger is solely from implacable alien enemies (interestingly, the Martian's vampirism is omitted in the film); the foundations of American society are basically sound, as the mob that destroys the Pacific Tech trucks (carrying, in effect, mankind's last chance to defeat the Martians) comprises "thieves, robbers, worse" (21) on the fringes of society.

Wells' criticism (especially of passionless social conformity) is, however, evinced in *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, though it seems at first as if this film is also a simple them/us, good/bad narrative. The aliens are, again, parasitical alien plants, sucking the life out of the residents of Santa Mira, California during sleep, replacing them with replicas, the latter connected to each other on the basis of a collectivist, emotionless intelligence. Based on the 1955 novel by Jack Finney first serialized in *Colliers Magazine* (1954), as one recent reviewer succinctly put it: "This film can be seen as a paranoid 1950s warning against those Damn Commies or, conversely, as a metaphor for the tyranny of McCarthyism (or the totalitarian system of Your Choice)" (22).

A main difference between the humans and their alien replicas in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is the replicants lack of emotion (something which might have appealed to Dr. Carrington in *The Thing from Another World*) and, at the same time, their undeniable sense of 'belonging'. As the alien replica of Dr. Kaufman (the town psychiatrist) promises Miles Bennell (the rebellious town doctor desperate to escape and warn the world of the danger), and his love interest, Becky Driscoll:

Less than a month ago, Santa Mira was like any other town. People with nothing but problems. Then, out of the sky came a solution. Seeds drifting through space for years took root in a farmer's field. From the seeds came pods which had the power to reproduce themselves in the exact likeness of any form of life...Your new bodies are growing in there…There is no pain. Suddenly, while you're asleep, they'll absorb your minds, your memories and you're reborn into an untroubled world...Tomorrow you'll be one of us...There's no need for love...Love. Desire. Ambition. Faith. Without them, life is so simple, believe me. (23)

Interestingly Miles and Becky, who only pretend to have been absorbed, are discovered when Becky shows emotion by screaming when a dog is nearly run over by a truck, having been advised by Miles: "Keep your eyes a little wide and blank. Show no interest or excitement." (24)

Whether the aliens represent Soviet invaders, Fifth Columnists (Santa Mira becomes the distribution point for the pods, which are being trucked across the United States), or embody zombified Eisenhower-era suburbanites, it is the denial of emotion and individual freedom which are the film's main issues. When Miles, the rebellious loner, attempts to alert the rest of the country (after Becky has been absorbed), he is pictured staggering onto a highway, trying to stop cars, to warn the occupants of the danger:

One of the most striking and famous sequences in the film is where Miles, having finally escaped from Santa Mira, suddenly finds himself on a highway with hundreds of cars passing him, full of people who are unwilling to listen to him, and thus unwilling to save themselves. The setting is dark with Miles in a sea of machines; the people are hiding within these machines, perhaps the first step toward becoming pods. (25)

In the original ending of the film (which is at odds with the unconvincingly optimistic conclusion of Finney's novel, *The Body Snatchers*), the frantic Miles is left alone by the aliens who come upon the scene: "Wait. Let him go. They'll never believe him." (26). As one reviewer claims, the actual message of the film (before it was altered by Allied Artists executives) is simply that "it is the monsters who will prevail" (27), a sentiment certainly in keeping with Wells' unapologetic speculations in *The War of the Worlds*: "To them, and not to us, perhaps, is the future ordained" [p. 204].

The substitution of a more hopeful final scene, wherein the authorities finally believe Miles, after a truck full of pods is overturned in an accident is, even so, resonant of *The War of the Worlds*, one of Wells' points being that extra-terrestrial intellectual/organizational/technological superiority are no protection against error (failing, in the case of the Martians to appreciate the dangers of seemingly insignificant bacterial life) or accident (exposure of the aliens' plans in *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* because of a traffic mishap and an arrogant underestimation of human tenacity).

Another Wellsian filmic portrayal of vampiristic aliens is evinced in *Not of this Earth*, wherein a spy from a technologically advanced, but dying planet (Davanna), masquerading as a man named Paul Johnson, harvests human victims, primarily homeless indigents on the fringes of society. Like the Martians in *The War of the Worlds* the Davannites have no problem with murder, on the simple basis that they have the right to exploit inferior species for their own purposes, as Johnson reveals in a teleconference with his superior:

Commander: Speak of the Earth creatures
Johnson: They are second stage subhuman, weak and full of fright…
Perhaps the blood of this planet will answer. (28)

Ominously, Johnson refers later to the "30 cubits" (29) of blood teleported to his home planet, the Biblical reference (albeit inanely misusing 'cubits') underscoring the suggestion that this vanguard of the Davannite invasion resembles an Old Testament plague. Though villainous, when talking to the nurse attending him, Nadine Storey, Johnson suggests a possible cure for cancer that has occurred to him while poring over books at the local library: not out of concern for humankind, but because it is a challenging scientific puzzle. In *Not of This Earth*, as in Wells' novel, advanced intelligence does not imply benignity. Motive and moral intention matter.

After Johnson is killed when he loses control of his car, Nadine and Harry (the motorcycle policeman who gave chase to him) philosophize at his grave, which bears the epitaph: "Here Lies a Man Who Was Not of This Earth":

Harry: In a way I feel sorry for him…buried so far from home, so far from everyone he knew.
Nadine: I can't feel sorry for him. He had no emotions as we know them. He was a foreign thing come here to destroy us. (30)

In this case the Wellsian "thing" aspect of the invader is primary, but the "Man" in the epitaph resonates with the ambiguity of the alien/mankind connection posited in *The War of the Worlds*. During the final moments in *Not of this Earth*, however, a man in dark glasses is seen walking up to the grave from a distance, just behind the couple—obviously a replacement for Johnson, who similarly wore sunglasses to cover his deadly "Atomic eyes". As in *The War of the Worlds*, this invasion nightmare may not be over.

Wells' depiction of the aliens as parasites, both figurative and literal vampires--with motives and foibles which uncomfortably resemble those of terrestrial man--is likewise reflected in *Kronos*, "a textbook example of 1950s science fiction" (31). The cube-like, extra-terrestrial Kronos is basically a huge mobile battery, sucking energy from any available earthly power source, growing progressively larger. When talking to Dr. Leslie Gaskell, the hero of the film, Dr. Eliot (whose mind has been taken over by aliens, and is directing Kronos on its course of destruction) makes the connection between alien rampage and human behaviour clear:

Eliot: ... their planet has become depleted of energy.
Gaskell: How can that be?
Eliot: What has happened to them may well happen here, if we continue using our resources at the present rate. Now they are sending down accumulators to find and store up new sources of energy...Kronos is only the first. If he succeeds more will come, drain the Earth of energy, of every last bit of power. (32)

That Man and Alien exhibit the same irresponsible, rapacious resource consumption adds to the ideological messaging and complexity of the film, in keeping with Wells' linkages in *The War of the Worlds*. Even though *Kronos* is decidedly 'B' movie fare, it "has been widely praised both for its above-average storyline and its farsighted portrayal of the consequences of over consumption of natural and man-made resources" (33). The negative imagery of alien-as-mechanism is also reminiscent of Wells' portrayal of the Martians oneness with their tripods. As Irving Block (the film's producer and special effects artist) observed of the mechanical monster of the title: "I wanted it to be anthropomorphic" (34).

"Indescribable... indestructible... insatiable!"
The complexity evinced in films such as *The Thing from Another World*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and even *Kronos* would seem harder to find in the kind of 'B' film which features one dimensional monsters and simplistic plots: for example, the mindless carnivore in *The Blob* (Dir: Irvin S. Yeaworth, jr., 1958), or the "Mammoth skyscrapers of stone thundering across the Earth!" (35) in *The Monolith Monsters* (Dir: John Sherwood, 1957).

Yet even in these apparently pedestrian, unprepossessing 'B' films, there is often a thematic allusiveness that has, at its root, the Wellsian 'alien invasion horror' blueprint of *The War of the Worlds*. In *The Monolith Monsters*, the alien invader is in this case not an intelligent vampire, but a natural brute force:

Opening Narration: From time immemorial, Earth has been bombarded by objects from outer space. Bits and pieces of the universe, piercing our atmosphere in an invasion that never ends. Meteors, the shooting stars on which so many Earthly wishes have been born…In every moment of every day they come, from planets belonging to stars whose dying light is too far away to be seen. From infinity, they come, meteors. Another strange calling card from the limitless reaches of space. Its substance unknown, its secrets unexplored. The meteor lies dormant in the night, waiting. (36)

This is suggestive of the ominous associations between extra-terrestrial invasion and meteors depicted in *The War of the Worlds*: "…the shooting stars, will bring with them as they fall an unavoidable apprehension to all the sons of men" [p. 203], and in this film the resulting crystals (which, in keeping with Wells' vampire imagery, still manage to absorb bodily fluids from any human they encounter) are only stopped by the hero (Dave Miller) blowing up a dam and, basically, drowning them in a dry gulch, which is, ironically, a local eyesore. Here, as in Wells' novel, the seemingly insignificant natural world is actually the source of mankind's salvation:

Dave Miller: Martin, you always called that dry lake Mother Nature's worst mistake. Looks like now she knew what she was doing, huh? (37)

Even at the conclusion of *The Blob*, a superficially trite teenage 'sci-fi' about a mindless alien invader, initially titled "The Molten Meteor" (38), there are more complex issues at work. The film considers

'generation-gap' themes, with skeptically dismissive adult authority figures pitted against young people, some of whom have actually seen the monster (another pseudo-vampire, "Bloated with the blood of its victims!" (39) according to the film's tagline) and who want to alert the townspeople. By the end, somewhat optimistically, young and old have joined together to defeat the Blob by freezing it with C02 fire extinguishers. The hero, Steve Andrews, questions what the next step will be, adumbrating perhaps an early global warming scenario and a 1950s concern with the ultimate stability of the environment in the face of untrammeled industrialisation:

Steve: What are they gonna do with that thing, Dave?
Dave [the Sheriff]: Well, the Air Force is sending a GlobeMaster in. They're flyin' it to the Arctic.
Steve: It's not dead, is it?
Dave: No, it's not.
Steve: Just frozen.
Dave: I don't think it can be killed, but at least we've got it stopped.
Steve: Yeah, as long as the Arctic stays cold. (40)

For Wells too, the environment saves mankind, and is also mankind's responsibility. Whether the future belongs to man or Blob (or Martian) is, in this film as in Well's novel, an open question. The thematic import of this 'serious' dialogue at the end of a 1950s 'teen flick' is underscored in the last scene of the movie, where the crated creature of the title is shown floating by parachute onto the Arctic ice, 'The End' title changing, almost accusingly, into a question mark. Interestingly, in the 1988 remake of *The Blob* (Dir: Chuck Russell), the rampaging monster is in fact a man-made terror.

"We Mean You No Harm"

In the 1950s one can see at least two distinct strands in American 'alien invasion' movies, those that posit the 'evil', hostile alien, an avatar derived from Wells' *The War of the Worlds* and apparently non-Wellsian 'good aliens', who are benefactors and friends of mankind. Key examples of the latter are *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Dir: Robert Wise, 1951), *It Came from Outer Space* (Dir: Jack Arnold, 1953), and *This Island Earth* (Dir: Joseph M. Newman, 1955). Given the negative artistic origins of the modern 'alien invader' myth in Wells, however, the 'benevolent' alien concept is often viewed with significant ambiguity and reservation by 1950s American film makers.

The Day the Earth Stood Still (in contrast to *The Thing from Another World*, released the same year) shows the invading alien (in this case the seemingly benevolent, handsome and wise interplanetary emissary, Klaatu) as not only technically, physically and scientifically superior to mankind, but as having a higher moral integrity as well. A kind of antidote to early 50s American xenophobic fear of the 'Other' (Soviets, Communists, Foreigners), the film also addresses the potential for nuclear holocaust arising from the accelerating Arms Race.

In *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, mankind is shown as violent, fearful, paranoid, and trivial, with the possible exception of Klaatu's 'friend' (Helen Benson), her young son, Bobby, and the Einstein-like scientist Professor Jacob Barnhardt (to whom Klaatu gives his warning of mankind's imminent destruction). Indeed, Klaatu's jealous rival (and Helen's boyfriend), Tom Stevens, intends to turn in the fugitive alien (disguised as 'John Carpenter') for the reward, no matter what that means to the fate of humanity:

Helen: Tom, you mustn't -- ! You don't know what you're doing! It isn't just you and Mr. Carpenter. The rest of the world, is involved!
Tom: (exasperated) I don't care about the rest of the world! (41)

Klaatu is killed by a public obsessed with the prejudicial belief that he is an evil alien invader; in a hopeful, feminist twist, Earth is saved by a courageous woman, Helen giving Gort (Klaatu's sinister robotic companion, who has already started a killing spree) Klaatu's dying message: "Gort! Klaatu -- barada – nikto"(42). Temporarily resuscitated by Gort, Klaatu's warning to the world is straightforward, and says nothing positive about human nature:

Klaatu: We of the other planets…have an organization for the mutual protection of all planets… The test of any such higher authority, of course, is the police force that supports it. For our policemen, we created a race of robots (indicating Gort). Their function is to patrol the planets…and preserve the peace. In matters of aggression we have given them absolute power over us…And the penalty for provoking their action is too terrible to risk…I came here to give you the facts. It is no concern of ours how you run your own planet -- but if you threaten to extend your violence, this Earth of yours will be reduced to a burned-out cinder. (43)

This is potentially a more edifying view of alien intervention than that which appears in most American alien invasion films the 1950s, though the suggestion of imposed interplanetary control and the terrifying aspects of Gort (and the concept of giving machines freedom to destroy worlds) sheds some dubiety on the film's message, which Christine Cornea sees as a dubious celebration of "the ideology of global, free market, capitalism and white, paternal rule" (44). It is perhaps useful to bear in mind that in the 1940 short story from which the screenplay was adapted, Harry Bates' "Farewell to the Master", it is the robot (called 'Gnut') who is actually in charge, using Klaatu merely as a kind of biologically acceptable 'front man'. As Cliff, the curious reporter in the story finds to his horror:

"You misunderstand," said Gnut, still gently, and quietly spoke four more words. As Cliff heard them a mist passed over his eyes and his body went numb.

As he recovered and his eyes came back to focus he saw the great ship disappear. It just suddenly was not there anymore. He fell back a step or two. In his ears, like great bells, rang Gnut's last words. Never, never was he to disclose them til the day he came to die.

"You misunderstand," the mighty robot had said. "*I* am the master." (45)

The shock and disquiet associated here with the idea of an Artificial Intelligence being the judge of mankind's ultimate survival is also present in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (it is not particularly reassuring, for example, that Helen has to utter Klaatu's 'abort' order to Gort twice, the robot obviously preparing to vapourise the messenger with his heat ray after the first attempt).

It is perhaps sobering to contemplate that the plot, and the ambivalence, of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is also reflected at the end of the 1950s in the execrable *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, wherein Ed Wood's invading aliens (tantalizingly named Eros and Tanna), arrive on Earth to save mankind from destruction through humanity's eventual discovery of deadly, weapons-grade "solarbonite"; regrettably, part of the aliens' Klaatu-like paternalism involves 'Plan 9': creating zombies from freshly-buried corpses, as a way of attracting the attention of world governments, so that the latter will heed Eros' and Tanna's

extra-terrestrial warnings. As the film's theatrical poster unambiguously promises: "UNSPEAKABLE HORRORS FROM OUTER SPACE PARALYZE THE LIVING AND RESURRECT THE DEAD!" (46) So much for high-minded extra-terrestrial beneficence.

At a different filmic level, is Jack Arnold's 1953 3-D film *It Came from Outer Space*, based on Ray Bradbury's short story "The Meteor". Interestingly, Bradbury gave the studio two story scenarios from which to choose when making the film, involving either malicious or benevolent aliens (47). In the film there is, however, an ambivalent tension between the sinister and the kindly, perhaps originating in the two options, or in the cultural reservations toward the very idea of a 'good' xenomorph. Though the extra-terrestrials in this case are not invaders, but interstellar wayfarers whose ship has crashed in Arizona, they remain an unsettling presence throughout the film. An eerie, foreboding atmosphere is carefully constructed by Arnold's cinematography of the desert, depicting it as a threatening, hostile setting: in effect, "alien terrain" (48). The aliens are not shown until well into the film and, like Wells' Martians, observe mankind at a distance (the theremin musical score adds to the fear surrounding these 'surveillance' scenes). The suggestion of 'being watched' by 'something out there' is palpable.

The uniform emotional reaction to the aliens in the film (who, when they appear, basically comprise expansive crania, and a Cyclops-like eye surrounded by a writhing, gelatinous mass) is uniformly one of revulsion. Even the hero, the amateur astronomer and writer John Putnam (who sees the ship land in the first place, and tries to persuade his fellow townsfolk of the event) is unable to hide his disgust on first seeing these extra-terrestrial visitors: "horrible!" (49). At one level the stimulation of audience fear towards the aliens is thematically intended to demonstrate that people, ignorantly, would destroy anything they "didn't understand" (50). The suggestion that the aliens are "intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic" [p. 5] to use Wells' words, never dissipates, however; one of the extra-terrestrials (a replica of Putnam's girlfriend, Ellen Fields) attempts to vapourise him, and the coldness of the alien hostage-takers remains consistent, something Putnam's idealism does little to dispel, despite the xenomorphs' assertion that: "We have souls and minds and we are good…we understand more" (51). They are more than ready to frighten human beings by reverting to their actual form at various points and, more significantly, to use their technology to destroy the earth: "Give us time, time, or terrible things will happen. Things so terrible you have yet to dream of them". (52) By the end of *It Came from Outer Space* (the "It" in the title clearly recalling Wells' "Thing" characterization of the inhumane/unhuman Martians in *The War of the Worlds*), the audience is perhaps relieved, rather than regretful, about their ultimate departure. Interestingly, one of the working titles for the film was the tellingly unambiguous "Atomic Monsters" (53).

A mixed response to putatively 'benevolent' beings from outer space is also reflected in *This Island Earth* (Dir: Joseph M. Newman, 1955). While this particular 'quality' science-fiction was derived from a novel by Raymond F. Jones (originally serialized in the magazine *Thrilling Wonder Stories*), *This Island Earth* can be related to the Wellsian themes in *The War of the Worlds* involving the linkages between supreme extra-terrestrial intelligence and the sense of 'entitlement' this implies (i.e. domination of inferior species—or in the case of mankind itself, races). Also suggested are connections between intellectual/technical superiority and the monstrous/mechanistic.

In this case, extra-terrestrials from a civilization involved in an interplanetary war visit Earth, led by the apparently benign and cerebral 'Exeter', with a view to recruiting human scientists to help them save their home world, 'Metaluna', in a scenario obviously suggestive of the American use of Nazi scientists in the post-WWII period to defend against the Communist enemy. The aliens set prospective researchers an

ingenious intelligence test, involving the assembly of an 'Interocitor' (a two-way television communicator that is also a deadly 'Neutrino ray' weapon) from a mail order electronics catalogue offering free parts—an obvious parody of the 1950s American 'build-it-at-home' craze catered for by companies such as Heathkit and Meissner.

Though the Earthlings, including Cal Meacham and Dr. Ruth Adams (the hero and heroine of *This Island Earth*) are sequestered at a secret research facility, and reassured by Exeter's reasonableness and enthusiasm, it quickly becomes clear that the aliens are factionalized, with such xenomorphic characters as 'Brack' disliking the whole idea of using humans without subjecting them to the "Thought Transformer" (54), and gleefully killing people off when it comes time to evacuate from Earth. It transpires that most of the scientists have already been brainwashed by the Metalunans' mind-control "sun lamp" (55). When the humans are taken by flying saucer to the war-torn Metaluna (which is under incessant bombardment from the planet Zagon), the 'Monitor' (the planetary leader), utterly dismisses Exeter's respect for humans, and also informs Meacham and Adams of his long-standing intention to 'relocate' Metalunan society to Earth:

Our knowledge and weapons would make us your superiors, naturally…It is indeed typical that you Earth people refuse to believe in the superiority of any world—but your own. Children looking into a magnifying glass, imagining the image you see is the image of your true size…do you still insist, Exeter, that we can allow any of these Earth creatures to have free minds?...You have wasted our time…take them to the Thought Transference Chamber. (56)

Consummate intelligence in Wells and this film does not imply benevolence, though Exeter (obviously a solitary ideological dissident untypical of his race), helps Meacham and Adams escape Metaluna and return to Earth. Interestingly, he is mortally wounded before taking off by a monstrous Metalunan "Mu-tant" which has a large, brain-like head.

"We Have Souls and Minds"…but are we good?

In conclusion, examination of selected American alien invasion horror films from across the quality spectrum reveals not only a sometimes surprising thematic complexity and ambiguity, but also unmistakable signs of the original depictions of extraterrestrial assault found in *The War of the Worlds*—and to a greater degree than has previously been discerned. Particularly noteworthy are Well's characterization of alien invaders as vampires, parasites, technologically advanced (and heartless) distorted intellects, bent on harvesting mankind or exploiting Earth itself (i.e. with behaviour uncomfortably similar to that of rampaging, industrial, 20th century man). As the beleagured American President realizes after contact with an invading alien in *Independence Day* (Dir: Roland Emmerich, 1996), a film also based on *The War of the Worlds*:

He wanted me to understand. He communicated with me…They're like locusts. They travel from planet to planet, their whole civilization. After they've consumed every natural resource they move on. And we're next. (57)

Wells' 1898 themes, social criticism and visual formulations influenced Hollywood alien invasion films of the 1950s (and beyond), possibly as much as the contemporary social, political and cultural factors indirectly mirrored in them; McCarthyism, the Arms Race, the Space Race, The Red Scare, the Civil Rights Movement, the nascent Conservation movement artistically accompany echoes of Wells' late Victorian "great disillusionment" [p. 3]. If it is the case that "Retelling is the *sine qua non* of culture"

(58), then *The War of the Worlds* provided an artistic original which perfectly suited mid-century American science-fiction film-makers eager to depict the concerns and human issues of their own times.

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3. Robert Stam, introduction, *Film and Theory: an Anthology*, ed. Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 4.
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BOOK REVIEWS

Stephen King, *Duma Key*
London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2008

It is perhaps little wonder that creativity is a recurrent theme in Stephen King's novels, given the sheer productivity of the man. It is tempting to think, perhaps, that like the protagonist in his latest offering, *Duma Key*, he is driven to produce work by mysterious dark forces. At almost six hundred pages *Duma Key* provides a tale to settle into for a couple of weeks (or perhaps a long-haul flight to Florida), but is largely focused on one location and a single character, who also fulfils the function of narrator. Regular King readers will be unsurprised to find that this narrator, Edgar Freemantle, bears more than a passing resemblance to King himself. It is not just tempting but irresistible to compare this story of injury and rehabilitation to King's own well-documented accident in 1999. Certainly, Freemantle's recovery is portrayed with almost painful realism, and his character is generally compelling enough to draw the reader along on his journey to a 'second life'.

Although it is unfair to reduce *Duma Key* to a single 'hook' or gimmick, it can be described as an extended horror treatment of phantom limb syndrome. Freemantle is a building contractor whose pickup truck is crushed by a twelve-story crane, leaving him with brain damage, a shattered hip, and the loss of his right arm. The resulting tensions cause a split with his wife, and he becomes increasingly depressed and angry. He is wealthy, however, and on the advice of his therapist, rents a house in the Florida Keys which he calls 'Big Pink' and takes up painting with his good left arm. The island is to become the setting for the entirety of the unfolding narrative, largely based around the conceit that an itch in his missing arm drives him to paint works of remarkable power. The first hint of supernatural happenings comes when a dog (brilliantly named 'Gandalf') is hit by a car and is crushed beyond hope of recovery ('blood and shit oozed sluggishly from between his broken rear legs'). Without realising what he is doing, but wishing to put the creature out of its misery, Edgar strangles it with his missing right hand.

Before long Edgar is settled into life on the key and is enjoying therapeutic walks by day and painting by night. It is during these walks that he spies Wireman, who will become his best friend and confidante on the island. This part of the novel is particularly effective, with the reader willing Edgar onwards as he pushes himself further each day on his ruined leg, one step closer to the friendly figure with a jug of cool green tea and two glasses. The relationship between these two characters becomes the defining one of the novel, their relaxed friendship sketched out effectively by King through subtle moments and casual dialogue, often in half-remembered Spanish phrases. Wireman becomes a kind of anchor for Edgar, and likewise guides us through the mysterious history of the island. Together, their investigations into the strange happenings of the past and present provide an enjoyable mystery narrative.

This somewhat sensitive portrayal of a man 'drawing himself back into the world', however, does not last forever. While the introduction of horror is welcome, and at first chilling, *Duma Key* does at some point descend into supernatural hokum, with no legitimately plausible explanation of the horrors beyond a Lovecraftian 'elder gods from the deep' plot device. Indeed, the hardcore horror elements of this tale rarely move beyond the perfunctory, with lank-haired drowned girls guesting from J-horror and barnacle-crusted undead creatures straight out of *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Far more effective are the early terror Gothic tropes of being alone in a house with a doll that may or may not be alive, and receiving sinister phone calls, albeit here from an old lady with Mafia connections. We also get quintessential King

themes involving the darker side of American history. Racial issues are dealt with via a grotesque 'lawn jockey' that comes to life, as if seeking revenge for being a racist caricature, and a hidden family history involving a heroic housekeeper who embodies the kind of character King himself has admitted to portraying as 'superblack'. While racial elements may not be subtle, the portrayal of Elizabeth Eastlake, the old lady who first painted prophetic pictures on the island, is nicely understated.

'Libbet' as she is know in psychic flashbacks to her childhood, suffered a head injury and began to paint in the same way as Edgar, leading to tragedy. This is, of course, a familiar King trope; that certain people can be sensitive to something stored in a location, referred to elsewhere as a 'psychic battery'. More interesting here is the portrayal of this old woman as a faded society belle. Starting out as a sinister presence, we are drawn into her world as her character is constructed through the mediation of Wireman, whose relationship has changed from being a caretaker to loving Elizabeth as if she were family. Her character veers between comedy and horror as one minute she lights up in an art gallery and generally behaves like an ageing diva, and the next lapses into fits of visionary hallucinations and catatonia. It is fully-rounded characters like Elizabeth who save *Duma Key* from some of the clunky dialogue and unrealistic motivations that King is occasionally guilty of and do crop up here.

Duma Key, though, despite its dramatic evocation of the pain of artistic vision ('Be prepared to see it all. If you want to create – God help you if you do, God help you if you can'), never really feels substantial for all its literary posturing. There is no grand sweep here, but it is nonetheless an effective potboiler, in the most positive sense of the term. Its effective description of a balmy, tropical landscape, with shells scraping under the house and storms threatening is punctuated well with briny corpses, Gothic locales, and a Coleridge-esque vision of Life-in-Death sailing somewhere on the horizon. King paints with a familiar canvas here, but his brush leaves a reassuringly strange impression.

KEVIN CORSTORPHINE

Jonathan Rigby, *English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema*
London: Reynolds and Hearn LTD, 2000

While Jonathan Rigby's *American Gothic* (2007) centred on the relatively neglected field of early twentieth-century American Horror, his study of the *English horror Film, English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema* (2000) takes a much more heavily written-about subject as its focus. Indeed, by choosing to examine the development of the English horror film from its inception right through to its position at the turn of the millennium, Rigby places his work in competition with David Pirie's seminal *A Heritage of Horror* (recently revised and reissued) and the host of books written on the history of Hammer Horror such as Marcus Hearn and Alan Barnes' *The Hammer Story* (2007). Such a broad scope might at first appear somewhat unmanageable, yet it is to Rigby's credit that he manages to discuss over a hundred separate films in some detail and (in the updated edition) provides a comprehensive appendix of British television horror.

On the back cover of *English Gothic*, Rigby notes that "The British Horror film is almost as old as cinema itself." Consequently, the book begins by examining the beginnings of horror on British screens in the early nineteenth century, exploring the links between Gothic fiction, theatre and the silent chillers of the 1920s. The first chapter gives an overview of an emergent British horror cinema by detailing a host of previously lost or forgotten films such as *Ultus, the Man from the Dead* (1915) and the Alfred Hitchcock-designed *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog* (1926). As Rigby notes, these silent horror films are usually overlooked by critics and as a result have remained relatively unwritten-about. With the emergence of the "talkies" at the end of the 1920s, Rigby moves on to discuss some of the films from the 1930s and '40s that he considers to possess "an English 'accent'" (p. 20) – that is to say those examples which, in Rigby's estimation, appear English in nature. Though the period undoubtedly witnessed a great deal of cross pollination between America and the United Kingdom, such a loosely defined means of classification allows Rigby to cast his net slightly further than other critics, incorporating films such as *The Old Dark House* (1932) ("The best British horror film ever made in America" (p. 21)) and *The Ghoul* (1933) (shot at Shepherd's Bush). Rigby concludes this part of the book with a discussion of some of detrimental effects that the advent of World War II had on British horror cinema, singling out Thorold Dickinson's *Gaslight* (1940) and Ealing Studio's excellent portmanteau film *Dead of Night* (1945) as two exceptions to the widespread decline in production during the era that was caused by war time cut-backs in spending.

Perhaps justifiably, the largest part of *English Gothic* is devoted to the horror films of the much written-about Hammer Studio. From the very early *Quatermass* movies through to the more well-known "tent pole" pictures; those guaranteed successes such as *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), *Dracula* (1958) and *The Mummy* (1959), Rigby provides a considered account of the studio's output, contextualising its films alongside those of more minor studios such as Amicus and Tigon. To reflect the repertory nature of British horror during this period, Rigby structures his discussion of this "golden age" of production around the careers of the actors Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing, charting their respective fortunes with the aforementioned studios. While this information doesn't cover any new ground, Rigby's writing style still makes it interesting to read about the differing approaches taken by these two actors towards the horror genre and their place within it. While Cushing is content to remain at Hammer playing reiterations of his gentleman-hero Van Helsing role (with occasional dalliances for rival studios), Rigby paints Lee as a more tempestuous figure. Afraid of being typecast as the monster, the actor was continually forced to turn down Hammer's requests for encores of the Dracula role that shot

him to fame and instead driven to work both overseas and for lesser-known directors and studios in order to find a sense of artistic fulfilment.

Much like *American Gothic*, Rigby's *English Gothic* is especially good at giving an account of some of these lesser-known films of the 1960s and '70s, reappraising examples that have acquired a cult following since their original release; Michael Reeves' *Witchfinder General* (1968), Robin Hardy's *The Wicker Man* (1973), and those that seem to be due for such appreciation, yet remain largely unrecognised; Sidney Hayer's *Night of the Eagle* (1962), Cyril Frankel's *The Witches* (1966), and Stephen Weeks' *I, Monster* (1970). By resituating these "hidden gems" alongside their more famous contemporaries, the book successfully creates a fuller picture of the diversity in output during one of the most productive periods in the history of British horror cinema.

Rigby concludes *English Gothic* with a chapter entitled "British Horror in Retreat", in which he details what he perceives as the relative waning of genre product since the late 1970s. Rigby attributes this slump to a combination of factors. Perhaps, most significantly, the increasingly graphic nature of American horror films, such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), meant that the more "restrained" scares of British films started to appear quaint in comparison. In addition to this, Rigby notes how the continuing pomposity of the British film establishment towards horror and its associated reluctance with regards to funding have inevitably contributed to a deterioration of both the number and quality of examples of the genre. Yet, despite this somewhat ominous situation, Rigby's study ends with a potential glimmer of hope, as the author notes a post-millennial resurgence in artistic and critical respectability for horror exemplified by a new wave of films including Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002), Marc Evans' *My Little Eye* (2002) and Edgar Wright's *Shaun of the Dead* (2004).

Special mention must also go to the additional appendix supplied in the revised edition of the book, which examines British televisual horror. While the number of books on British horror cinema is definitely on the increase, studies of horror on the small screen remain few and far between. Indeed, though horror has been a staple of British television almost from its very inception, Rigby is one of the first critics to write on the topic. In "Gothic on Television" he discusses such landmark examples as Nigel Kneale's original six-part version of *The Quatermass Experiment* (1953), the BBC's anthology series *Late Night Horror* (1968), *Ghost Watch* (1992), and *Hammer House of Horror* (1980), comparing and contrasting these examples with Britain's cinematic horror output to provide a comprehensive and contextualised history of the national development of the form. In conclusion, *English Gothic* succeeds in providing an informed and in-depth overview of horror on British screens over the last hundred years, reflecting the important, yet often overlooked part the genre has played in the country's cinematic output.

DAVID SIMMONS

Edith Wharton, *The Triumph of Night and Other Tales*
North Yorkshire: Tartarus Press, 2008

Although the most prodigious activity in the ghost story genre is commonly associated with the latter part of the nineteenth century, the form also flourished throughout the first forty years of the twentieth, and remains popular today. Anthologies of ghost stories from the genre's heyday usually include the work of such well-known male writers as Arthur Machen, M.R. James, L.P. Hartley, Walter de la Mare, and of course, Henry James. Until recently, many anthologies, particularly of American ghost stories, under-represented female authors. Figures such as Alice Brown, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Ellen Glasgow, Mary Elizabeth Counselman, and Gertrude Atherton who were also working in the period were often forgotten by earlier historiographers of the genre. However, one writer, who nearly always made the cut, irrespective of the gender criteria applied, was Edith Wharton.

Tartarus Press of North Yorkshire have recognised the special contribution that Wharton has made to the genre by releasing a limited edition of fifteen of her stories in *The Triumph of Night and Other Tales*. The most helpful part of their compilation is their inclusion of four stories that that other collections often fail to consider. "The Fullness of Life" and "The Duchess at Prayer" are two wonderful ghost stories that poignantly convey, to different degrees, the sense of feeling stuck in an unsuitable marriage. In "A Bottle of Perrier," Wharton raises uneasy questions over the notion of empire as she depicts an American visitor to a haunted palace along the North African coast who wonders at the absence of his British host, and grows to suspect that he too is at risk of not making it out alive. "A Journey" is the exception in the volume in that it is not specifically a ghost story, but rather falls into the broader category of the uncanny.

Uncanny stories are often ghost stories, but the term also encompasses stories about corpses, disembodied body parts, madness, inanimate objects come to life, and *doppelgängers*, or stories about meeting a version of one's future self or being buried alive. "A Journey" features a woman who is travelling with the corpse of her husband and has a strange, self-fulfilling precognition of her own death. Two other uncanny stories that might perhaps have been included in this collection are "After Holbein," a story about the uncanny dimensions of the ageing process, and "A Moving Finger," where a painted portrait ages with, and has a strange effect on, its owners, *à la* Dorian Gray. Nevertheless, the arrangement Tartarus have assembled is well done. Particularly helpful is their thorough listing of the original dates and magazines in which Wharton's stories first appeared, details that will be very useful to scholars of her work.

Tartarus have also included the Preface to her 1937 collection of ghost stories, a revealing piece of writing for the way it provides Wharton's opinions on the manner in which ghost stories come into being, both for the writer and the reader. In it, she explains that to tell a good ghost story, one needs the ability to be a "ghost feeler," which she defines as having the sensitivity to "invisible currents of being in certain places and at certain hours" (1). This definition is important because it helps readers understand the value of historicising the writer and her work. Wharton saw herself as a writer who was imbricated in her social and historical context and yet detached as a social observer and interpreter of its history and trends. Thus, she felt uniquely receptive to the invisible currents of certain places (America and Europe) at certain times (the first four decades of the twentieth century). This sensitivity was developed from her dedication to reading books about history, culture and science, as well as from her exposure to and participation in intellectual circles; it did not spring from some kind of uncanny power associated with her sex or gender, as some critics of her work have suggested.

Wharton goes on to explain that when she first began to read, and then to write ghost stories, she saw herself as communing with a sense of unease about the trends in her world. She is careful not to reveal too overtly what these "primeval shadows" actually represented, however, and half the fun in reading the stories in this collection is in appreciating the openness of her symbolism. Similar to a definition of the uncanny itself, the source of the haunting in Wharton's stories is never pinned down as referring to any one thing; readers have to bring their own concerns to stories and there the haunting is brought into being. Wharton locates the fear in a tale, not in relation to some exogenous supernatural event, but rather to a vague feeling of unease inside the mind of the teller of the tale, which the reader might share.

Not only in her ghost stories, but throughout her work, Wharton offers unique perspectives on a period that saw immense changes in America, particularly as the country's established ruling class had begun to lose influence in the face of the forces of "democracy," immigration and the rise of a post-industrial, newly wealthy class with empire-building aspirations. Newland Archer's struggle throughout *The Age of Innocence* (1921), for example, is to recognise that there were parts of the old order that were unnecessarily constricting and had persisted beyond their usefulness; but, equally some of the new values which replaced them were to be viewed sceptically, since much about the new was regarded as thin and un-sustaining. Modern critics might say that contemporary America is enjoying a similar "cusp" experience as the country struggles to shape a reasonable policy on immigration, and as members of the power elite face new limitations as the excesses of accepted business practices are laid bare by recent financial meltdowns and banking scandals. Versions of these themes are detectable in stories such as "The Triumph of Night" and "'All Souls.'"

Wharton's work reminds readers not to be in a rush to embrace the expedient methods or the narcissism of the new age. Stories such as "Afterward" provide ominous warnings about the tolerance of "grey areas" in business and white collar crime, and "The Looking Glass" cautions readers against too quickly embracing the advances in cosmetic dermatology and the spiritual short-cuts of psychics. Throughout Wharton's oeuvre, and particularly so in her ghost stories, the tension between old and new organising principles produces a frisson, which either plays itself out as tragic denouement as in so many of her novels, or as a supernatural "twist" as in her ghost stories.

Wharton was disturbed by the way so much of the richness of human experience, and conceptualisations of "character," both in fiction and in the real world, were being reduced to simple explanations and panaceas that elided the struggle and perseverance involved in reconciling incongruous aspects of material existence. She believed that ghost stories helped readers return to a site of calm that she often referred to as the "inner life," where individuals might strengthen their ability to figure things out for themselves. She saw her writing as an effort to preserve the "ghost instinct" in a generation whose imaginative faculties were being made dull by the wireless and cinema. One can only imagine what she would have thought of our own era of video games, channel-surfing, power yoga, and self-help books with "secrets" to reveal. As Wharton believed, ghost stories still have a place in the modern world; they strengthen imaginative faculties and lengthen attention spans by providing a medium for grappling with that which seems anomalous, uneasy or difficult to reconcile about modern living.

The volume assembled by Tartarus affords modern readers this same refuge. As readers return to an age that was not so innocent, perhaps they might recognise something strangely familiar: an America that was wracked by corruption in business and uneasy class relations, disengaged by war, and under threat by the dual forces of immigration and a new brand of nativism. Although Wharton's references to such social and cultural concerns are necessarily oblique, they are there for the attentive reader willing to entertain the

notion that Wharton, as a female writer of uncanny fiction, may indeed be doing far more than relating stories about beleaguered "female experience," or the subtleties of a trendy psychoanalytic theory.

That is not to say, however, that readers of her work cannot find such references. In fact, Wharton's ghost stores are replete with oppressed wives and brutalising husbands. What is more, parallels with the theories of feminist theorists such as Kristeva and Cixous can be found by critics eager to find psychoanalytic resonances in Wharton's observation that a belief in ghosts is located in "the warm darkness of the prenatal fluid far below the conscious reason" (1). Readers persuaded by these reading positions are free to draw such connections in their assessment of the source of the fear in her stories.

One might be wise, however, to remember Wharton's own very ambiguous relationship to the feminism and literary trends of her day. Wharton saw the conflict between the sexes as an age-old theme, and as a subject that already had considerable precedence in literary history. Consequently, one could say she would have resisted the suggestion that her work was doing something new or particularly subversive in relation to gender politics. Furthermore, she regarded the work of some her contemporaries, who structured their work to a theory, whether modernist or feminist, as gimmicky, didactic and simply tiresome. Therefore, one doubts if she would have warmed to the way some of her work has recently been co-opted by certain second-wave literary critics eager to proclaim her as a sister in "the cause." Readers need only recall her letter of 20 October 1928 to Mary Berenson, who asked Wharton to read her daughter Ray Strachey's book *The Cause*; Wharton replied, "To read a book called 'The Cause' (& *that* cause!) will require all my affection for you."

It is the view of this reader that the elements of unease which motivate Wharton's uncanny stories can be closely related to the ambivalence she felt toward the social-historical changes she witnessed around her. In working in this serious way, as a writer, Wharton makes her own contribution to the recent re-evaluation of ghost stories as literature and to the appreciation of the work of women writers as art. Readers of her ghost stories today can enjoy Wharton's wry scepticism, and in the process, perhaps have their own creative muscles strengthened to face that which is ghostly about today's world.

ANN L. PATTEN

Tony Magistrale, *Abject Terrors: Surveying the Modern and Postmodern Horror Film*
Oxford: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005

Horror cinema has won an increasingly favourable position in academic film study over the last ten years. Scholars have begun to produce an understandably broad selection of texts for classroom and research use, from the introductory study aimed at undergraduates to the rarefied, theoretically sophisticated monograph aimed at the hardened specialist. *Abject Terrors: Surveying the Modern and Postmodern Horror Film* is significant in that it fills neither of these niches, but rather arrives on the scene as a non-introductory, non-specialist survey concerned more with the boundaries and limitations of the horror genre and less with constructing chronological history. Magistrale's book is about evaluating tendencies in horror cinema (which he construes, via his selections, as a primarily American and residually British practice) across historical epochs, modes of production and individual talents. Taken as a whole, his work shows the reader—albeit somewhat problematically—what types of things the horror film does particularly well.

Magistrale eschews typical approaches of taxonomising horror cinema—strictly by decade, principle actor, or country of origin—in favour of categorising various films by their mode of "terror," groupings which provisionally situate a given movie with kindred spirits and provide the inspiration for each chapter. Magistrale's "terrors" are a mixed bag that sometimes organises films around established subgenres (Chapter Three surveys "Vampiric Terrors") but just as often around vague clusters of meaning (Chapter One focuses on "Stark Terrors," which essentially amounts to *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) through Universal's *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935)). Though Alfred Hitchcock and Stanley Kubrick are lucky enough to earn their own distinctive chapters, films by other praised *auteurs* such as Wes Craven, Tobe Hooper, and John Carpenter are folded into other analytical units. Such organisational choices seem disruptive, but Magistrale's selections actually help unsettle conventional ways of thinking about classic films. *Abject Terrors* therefore urges the reader to think about horror thematically, generically, and in direct relation to other texts.

After initially contextualising the previous study of horror cinema (in the process providing very concise readings of major critical texts by Robin Wood, Noel Carroll, Barbara Creed, Linda Williams, and Carol Clover), Magistrale works his way through his selection of films, subgenres, directors, and theories with an eye toward explaining why these historically marginalised entertainments matter. Magistrale is especially concerned with affirming the cultural value of horror art. In "Stark Terrors," for example, he examines the prescience of using modernist aesthetics to assimilate the conventions of the Gothic novel, showing how the earliest of mature horror films (*Caligari*, *Nosferatu* (1922), *Metropolis* (1927), and the initial Universal monster movies) constructed monstrosity—via figures of "otherness," terrifying machines, and sub-human automatons—and built a visual style of expressive atmosphere. In this reading, early horror films were able to combine the best of high modernist art and popular suspense stories.

To provide one central example, Magistrale continuously engages feminist criticism of horror films through most chapters of *Abject Terrors*. He finds Carol Clover's formulation of the "final girl" particularly useful. In *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (1992), Clover identifies an archetypal character in slasher cinema, a strong and independent woman who comes to embody bravery, morality, and the survivor spirit in the face of the monstrous masculinity of the male killer. Magistrale reads these traits onto such diverse female characters as Buffy from the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* television series (1997-2003), who he refers to as "a kind of superhero without typical

supernatural capabilities," and the parodic Drew from *Scary Movie* (2000, identified as "the ultimate parody of Clover's Final Girl") (52, 187). In *Abject Terrors,* the problematic sexual politics traditionally attributed to horror films are therefore counterbalanced by a seemingly more empowered reading of women in the face of brutality. Magistrale's favourable discussion of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, for example, identifies heroine Nancy as "one of the great Final Girls in the slasher genre" and explains how she "is forced to employ her own resources and ingenuity to outwit the monster" (166). In the case of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, the laudatory comment is well taken, but the fact remains that the film confronts its spectators with a totally voyeuristic (which is to say, externally and physically voyeuristic on the one hand and mentally penetrating on the other) view of a young woman who is granted absolutely no privacy. Though the horror stems from this inability to escape, the positioning of the female protagonist as totally beholden to diegetic gazes and film-spectator gazes engenders an omniscient, paternalistic practice of looking. One of the implied pleasures of the film is watching Nancy's inner and outer torment, usually manifest in Kruger's violent, phallic aggression. Thus, while *A Nightmare on Elm Street* does depict a successful female within the parameters of the Final Girl trope, it does not offer any alternatives to the to-be-looked-at female. Though pointing out critical shortcomings may run counter to Magistrale's larger affirmation of the importance of the horror film, as this example illustrates, many of the films treated in the text can be criticised from within the bounds of the very traditions they seem to support.

At its best, *Abject Terror*s forms keen insights into the workings of horror on screen by throwing seemingly unrelated films together and hence into sharp focus. The chapter "Terrors from Within" assesses *The Tenant* (1976), *Don't Look Now* (1973), *The Fly* (1986), *The Exorcist* (1973), *Fatal Attraction* (1987), and *Panic Room* (2002), riffing on their themes of familial strife, psychological malaise, and anxiety about the body. Magistrale exhaustively shows the sinister, subversive nature of positioning the monstrous "Other" inside the safe spaces (individual, communal, domestic) of our lives. For example, impressionistic memories of his daughter allow *Don't Look Now*'s John Baxter to be finally seduced into murder by an enigmatic and deformed dwarf dressed like a child. Through the language of psychoanalysis, Magistrale interprets this internal conflict as having external ramifications and finds that "he [Baxter] cannot escape his inner psyche; attempts at repression lead to emotion, and then to a place that is out of his ability to negotiate" (107). Haunting memories take Baxter down an obsessive path that weaves all around Venice, a kind of labyrinthine abstraction for his inner conflict that ends up ensnaring him in a single-minded pursuit. No longer a picture-perfect city of dreams, Magistrale skilfully shows that John Baxter's Venice becomes a space of nightmares.

Despite the positives, *Abject Terror*s is a somewhat problematic as an academic survey. To begin with, there is no readily apparent or wholly unifying methodological framework or ideological positioning. Though this allows Magistrale to draw on a number of established traditions (gender studies, Marxist analysis, psychoanalysis, and narratology), he seldom connects these threads into anything sustainable. Rather, *Abject Terrors* brings together specially selected approaches to specific films, usually in the service of revealing what representative elements or broader ideas are at work in a particular movie and how these factors contribute to a more expansive understanding of horror art. Thus, rather than write as criticism, Magistrale writes in the affirmative. One of his implicit beliefs is that horror cinema has been unduly marginalised in film studies and in the culture at large. However, he tends to overestimate this marginalisation to the point that he seldom argues against any of the ideologies, practices, techniques, and philosophies espoused by these works. The fact that each title in his representative survey of great horror films does certain things very well (and contributes to a generally positive understanding of how terror operates in cinema, never mind the faults) seems to be enough.

Reservations aside, however, *Abject Terrors* is a useful and provoking text for survey courses in horror cinema. More broadly, it is an important work on the horror film insofar as it urges a reader to think of new ways of ordering, conceiving, and appreciating the genre.

KEVIN M. FLANAGAN

Joe Hill, *Heart-Shaped Box*
London: Gollancz, 2007

Heart-Shaped Box tells the story of Judas Coyne, formerly Justin Cowzynski, an aging heavy-metal star, who finds himself attacked by a ghost. Craddock McDermott, the revenant, former military man, hypnotist, and still alarmingly Charlton Heston-like, was the stepfather of one of Jude's many ex-girlfriends, and seems to be sworn to revenge himself against Jude for his stepdaughter's suicide. Soon Judas has to flee his house with his two dogs and the latest of his goth-chick girlfriends, Marybeth, in tow. Jude realises he has been set up; somebody wanted him to be haunted by Craddock's ghost. Desperate, Jude and Marybeth drive across the country, trying to escape the haunting. Craddock, however, remains implacable, pursuing them not in a phantom rickshaw but rather a phantom pickup, and, as is the way with horror, things get worse…

We read books like *Heart-Shaped Box* to see what happens, to see how things turn out, to go along for the ride. In a way, this isn't the sort of book that even *needs* reviewing. This is no criticism of the novel. It's populist horror fiction, and populist horror fiction won't always reward critical reading because it often makes itself perfectly clear the first time through. Where consciously literary fiction demands the tools of literary criticism, popular horror is rather like a ghost train; we get in, it rattles along and twists about, we scream in all the right places, the ride ends, we laugh, and there is nothing much more to it. It is an experience of a slightly different order to that offered by *literature*.

Heart-Shaped Box is more than just populist – it is actually popular. Plenty of readers have already picked it up. Neil Gaiman says nice things about it on both the front and back covers ("best horror debut since Barker", apparently). The limited edition sold out months before it was released, and the mass-market edition made number eight on the *New York Times* bestseller list. More readers will surely pick it up in the next couple of years, as it is being made into a film by Neil Jordan, director of *Interview with the Vampire* and *The Butcher Boy*, amongst others. It's a book that's doing well, especially for what is essentially an old-fashioned horror, a bit like the ones Stephen King used to write. Perhaps this isn't surprising, as Joe Hill is the *nom-de-plume* of one of King's sons. Ought we to be as excited as Gaiman suggests? Is this the best ghost train we've ridden lately?

Certainly it rattles along nicely enough, although I'm not quite as enthusiastic as Gaiman. It's a quick read, its language King-like. But to describe in a review the details of how a book like this clatters off into the darkness is never particularly welcome, as the pleasure of the text resides so strongly in discovering the development of the narrative for oneself. Instead, it's probably more interesting to discuss the book's predilections.

Taste is a peculiar thing in horror because it is a genre that is frequently and deliberately tasteless; and of course, *Heart-Shaped Box* revels in poor taste. Infections are described in close detail. Fingers come off. Incest and molestation seem to be everywhere. People watch films of other people being killed, and talk about vomiting through their nostrils. It's not interested in the decorousness and sophistication of, say, Henry James, although one of its central conceits – that ghosts are attached to the clothes they once wore – could be lifted from 'The Romance of Certain Old Clothes'. But at the same time as being a little crass, the book is concerned with taste itself; in particular, Judas'.

As Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated in his study *Distinction*, which explores the link between taste and class, taste has a lot to do with our place in the world, and is very similar to what we think of as values. Judas'

taste is peculiar but recognisable. He presents himself carefully, has an iconic beard, wears a long duster when he's out and looks a bit like James Hetfield of Metallica. His taste in collectibles is positively perverse – he owns the confession of a burnt witch, the doodlings of serial killer John Wayne Gacy, a trepanned skull, a used noose, and a genuine snuff film. These are affronts to both respectability and decency, but for Judas, they are curios, commodities. Why does he like these things? The question is key to the book in that Craddock is able to enter Judas' life as a part of this collection. Judas purchases him over the internet, a ghost advertised for sale, an addition to his assortment of curiosities. Craddock and his smart, conservative suit arrive in the heart-shaped box of the title. As Craddock's motives are revealed, we realise that *Heart-Shaped Box* narrates the conflict between the tastes of the conservative American cultural hearth and a darker cultural fringe.

We recognise Jude's weird, gothic tastes as being associated with the various genres of metal as much as it is with fictional figures like Roderick Usher or the unhappy pair of aesthetes in Lovecraft's 'The Hound'. Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin famously owned Aleister Crowley's Boleskine House. Marilyn Manson apparently decorates his house with African masks made of human skin and a chandelier made from the skeleton of a Chinese child. Glen Benton of death-metal band Deicide branded an inverted cross into his forehead when he was a young man. These various phenomena suggest a kind of performativity that accompanies the 'darker' forms of metal, an urge, at least in a limited way, for metal musicians to enact and make concrete the largely macabre and fantastic values suggested by their music; to demonstrate their taste.

Yet as *Heart-Shaped Box* moves towards its resolution, we see Jude shift away from these values and instead emphasising a different set which has always been latent within him. More and more, we find there's something all-American about him. He likes restoring cars and listening to easy-going Southern rockers Lynyrd Skynrd. He's close to being one of King's American everymen, self-made, boxing clever, sometimes troubled but basically decent, unafraid to roll his sleeves up – just dressed a little differently. At the end of the book, Jude is happily drinking homemade lemonade and has just released an acoustic album. Horror is no longer a commodity for him. Following the pop-psychological logic of the narrative, Judas needed to confront the demons of his past to surmount the troubles of his present; and so he walks into the future, a better man, living his life in better taste.

The problem here is that Judas' taste, his interest in horror, is revealed as pathological; there was something wrong with him, which is why he liked all those horrible things. Now that he is better, he can leave all that behind. While this is a happy thing for him, I'm not sure how to understand this as a reader. I can't imagine anything much more revolting than snuff films, but on the other hand, I purchased *Heart-Shaped Box* because it promised me the pleasures of horror. For all of Hill's readers, horror is a commodity, a taste to be indulged. Is there something wrong with us for wanting to enjoy horrible things? Isn't enjoying these things the point of popular horror?

I'm not suggesting that the book is a clever device where the reader is pushed to a point of self-reflexive examination where he may be forced to reject what drew him to it in the first place. It's not that sort of a book. Rather, the conclusion is a strange and unintentional insult – and it would be silly to take offence when none is meant. And in any case, I suspect that most of Hill's readers will ride the ghost train, scream in the right places, and there will be nothing much more to it.

TIMOTHY JONES

Walter de la Mare, *Strangers and Pilgrims*
Tartarus Press, 2007

Best known as a poet and a writer of children's fiction, Walter de la Mare can also deservedly take his place amongst the ranks of early twentieth-century writers of supernatural fiction. Edited by Mark Valentine and published by Tartarus Press, *Strangers and Pilgrims* brings together thirty-one of his short stories, drawing on nearly sixty years of the prolific writer's career, and demonstrating that his reputation need not rest exclusively on the much-anthologised classic "Seaton's Aunt."

Taken as a whole, Walter de la Mare's province is that of psychological horror, one that need not find its form of expression in any overtly "horrific" manner. His characters occupy a world which is almost entirely coloured by the belief expressed by the narrator of "Winter" that:

> Any event in this world—any human being for that matter—that seems to wear even the faintest cast or warp of strangeness, is apt to leave a disproportionately sharp impression on one's sense. So at least it appears to me. The experience lives on secretly in the memory, and you can never tell what trivial reminder may not at some pregnant moment bring it back—bring it back as fresh and living and green as ever. ("Winter," p. 175)

Nonetheless, his is a fundamentally ghostly landscape, in which each of his characters is undeniably haunted – sometimes by spectral manifestations, but more often than not by the powers of the imagination and of the human mind itself. So, for example, "Seaton's Aunt" – probably de la Mare's most famous story – relates a series of visits paid by the narrator (both as a child and an adult) to the home of his school-friend Arthur Seaton, who lives in extreme terror of his mysterious aunt. Seaton claims the old woman is "in league with the Devil", and views her as a vampire of sorts that drains the life right out of him, but the story itself refuses to ascertain the veracity of his fears, and leaves the narrator unable to draw any concrete conclusions. Seaton's "tormentor" may well be a supernatural agent, or she may simply be an inadequate substitute mother for the orphaned child, whose *imaginings* about "the old she-wolf" ultimately drive him into an early grave. Similarly, in the intriguing and unsettling "Out of the Deep," the protagonist (Jimmie) inherits the childhood home in which he once lived with an uncle whom he hated, only to endure a series of nocturnal encounters with a ghostly waiting staff which may well be conjured out of his own sub-conscious rather than any obviously paranormal realm.

In many ways, the protagonists of "Seaton's Aunt" and "Out of the Deep" confront (and succumb to) psychological horrors that have their roots in their own childhood experiences; and many of the most memorable stories in the collection draw on childhood fears of archetypal bogeymen ("The Giant"; "The Guardian") or employ an adult narrator's memories of mystical encounters with a fairy-world ("Miss Jemima"; "The Scarecrow"). De la Mare's child-protagonists are more open to the imaginative realm that his adult-protagonists merely sense; and many of the children's tales included in the collection rate amongst the most obviously fantastical. So, for example, in "The Riddle," a family of seven children disappear one by one into an oak chest, from which they never return; and in "Alice's Godmother," the title character pays a visit to her 350-year old godmother, who offers her the secret of eternal life, but only if she is willing to give up her happy home and come live with the ancient recluse. Alice's godmother's outlines the implications of her offer as follows:

> It means an immeasurable sea, infinite space, an endless vista—of time. It means freedom from the cares and anxieties and follies that are the lot of the poor creatures in the world

> beyond—living out their days in brutish stupidity. […] It means, my child, postponing a visit to a certain old friend of ours—whose name is Death ("Alice's Godmother," p. 258)

In this, she articulates her ability to offset the existential questions that haunts practically all of de la Mare's protagonists, both adult and child – the inevitable passing of time, and the isolation of the individual within modern "progressive" society. The former provides the premise of another of his most haunting vignettes, "The House," the protagonist of which (Mr Asprey) takes his leave of his house, cataloguing chances missed and promises unfulfilled as he wanders through the empty rooms. The latter is evident in a series of tales which feature protagonists who seek to escape the hustle and bustle of city life, encountering mysterious, reclusive figures in distant and wild landscapes ("The Creatures"; "Mr Kempe"), and in the recurring employment of train carriages and stations for both the action and the narration of his stories, indicating that many of his characters are quite literally in flux.

Stylistically, it is evident that de la Mare's intention throughout is usually to draw the reader's attention away from the "shocks" of the supernatural in favour of considering the existential concerns which recur throughout the stories. So, he frequently uses the device of the tale-within-the-tale, using first-person narrators either to tell their own stories ("The Vats"; "All Hallows"), or to frame or recount the tale of another narrator ("Promise at Dusk"); a high proportion of the stories are in fact "twice told," employing narrators who recount stories that others have told them. In "Promise at Dusk," for example, the frame narrator re-tells (word for word) a story which has been told to him by a friend of his. In this instance, the story effectively employs two first-person narrators, destabilising its narrative authority and leaving it up to the reader to decipher the significance of an obliquely-presented "promise." When de la Mare does employ a third-person narrator, more often than not the omniscient narrator will interject with comments that serve to debunk any suspense that might otherwise have built up. Moreover, many of the stories resist textual closure, and even their narrators frequently offer apologies about these meandering narratives – "The Bird of Travel," for example, is presented as "a rather pointless story" – and refuse to adhere to the stipulations set up by the narrator of "The Scarecrow" that:

> a story ought really to be like a piece of music. It should have a beginning and a middle and an end, though you could hardly say which is which when it all comes out together. It ought to be like a whiting with its tail in its mouth—but a live whiting of course. This one, you see, this one I am telling you, begins—and then goes off into nothing. ("The Scarecrow," p. 232)

These appeals to the audiences *within* the stories seem to be predicated on the need to establish that there is someone listening – as in de la Mare's most famous poem "The Listeners," these narrators seem repeatedly to ask "Is there anybody there?" Such concerns about audience are further evident in the recurring theme of the afterlife of the literary work and the written word which is found in some of the most interesting stories in the volume. In "The Green Room," Alan, a habitual browser at Mr Elliot's book shop, uncovers the unpublished manuscripts of the mysterious female figure by whom he is "haunted," which he promptly seeks to publish (with catastrophic results). Similarly, in "A Revenant," a professor gives a lecture on the writings of Edgar Allen Poe, which is seemingly attended by the (none-too-impressed) ghost of the author himself.

De la Mare's self-conscious musings on the afterlife of literary works and their authors seem to reflect an underlying theme of authorial anxiety that recurs throughout the volume, not only that his words will be read and the stories heard, but that they will continue to exist after the author's demise. It is a concern that this handsome new edition of his supernatural fiction serves admirably to offset, as Tartarus Press

continues its commitment to uncovering the work of forgotten practitioners of the genre. Commendable as it is to reconstruct de la Mare's *oeuvre* in this way, though, at times it does serve to expose his tendency to repeat motifs and narrative structures; and so these tales are perhaps best consumed individually rather than wolfed down in a single sitting, in order to savour them to the full. All in all, though, this is a fine collection and an admirable addition to Tartarus' ever-expanding catalogue of worthy reprints.

JENNY McDONNELL

Stephen D. Youngkin, *The Lost One: A Life of Peter Lorre*
University Press of Kentucky, 2005

In perhaps the most famous image from Fritz Lang's *M*, Peter Lorre, as the child killer Hans Beckert, looks into a shop-front mirror and sees the title letter imprinted in chalk on his coat – "M" for "Murderer". For Beckert, literally a marked man, it is the beginning of the end. For Lorre himself, the image, in addition to visually capturing the duality that lay at the heart of his screen persona, can be said to have marked both the beginning and the end: from 1931, the year of *M*'s release, till his death in 1964, the actor, like so many of Lang's fictional protagonists, was hounded by a malignant Fate, in the shape of his own creation, which he could never escape. Wherever he went, it seems, from Germany to Britain and then to America, Peter Lorre would always find the letter "M" indelibly stamped on his shoulder.

Stephen D. Youngkin's interest in Lorre stretches back at least as far as 1982, when he co-wrote *The Films of Peter Lorre*, and it is self-evident that his monumental, 613-page biography, entitled *The Lost One: A Life of Peter Lorre*, is the culmination of a lifetime's devotion to his subject. Containing a quite staggering array of interviews with Lorre's family and colleagues, many now deceased, and an impressive amount of research, particularly from contemporary German sources, it is equally clear that his book will be considered the last word on the actor best-remembered by the general public as Dr. Gogol in *Mad Love* (1935), Mr. Moto in the eponymous series of the late 1930s, and, of course, the malignant but strangely appealing Joel Cairo in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941).

Born László Loewenstein in Hungary in 1904, Lorre was the son of a Jewish accountant and reserve officer in the Austro-Hungarian army. Following what seems to have been a relatively happy, if somewhat unsettled, childhood, in 1923 Lorre abandoned his position in a Viennese bank in favour of the stage, and was eventually accepted into an experimental company known as the Theatre of Spontaneity, whose director bestowed upon him the name which he would retain for the rest of his life (the actor's talent for mimicry apparently inspiring his surname – "Lorre" being the German for "parrot"). During this period, Lorre underwent a botched abdominal operation which not only led to a series of related health problems but also a subsequent addiction to morphine.

With his highly distinctive looks, Lorre soon caught the attention of theatre critics in a series of performances often combining the comic and grotesque, before landing a small role in Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* in 1928. The following year, Lorre moved to Berlin and was cast in Brecht's production of *Pioniere in Ingolstadt*, receiving rave reviews for his portrayal of a local half-wit. More importantly, it marked the beginning of a collaboration with Brecht in which the playwright came to see Lorre as the embodiment of the radical, stripped-down, emotionally realistic style of theatre he (misleadingly) termed "epic", while Lorre himself became one of the most celebrated actors of Weimar Germany. In 1929, Lorre was approached (due to the efforts of his future wife, the actress Celia Lovsky) by Fritz Lang, the country's greatest film director, who immediately promised the apparently nonplussed Lorre that his next film, whatever it might be, would be written specifically for him.

When Lang duly reappeared, two years later, with the script of *M*, Lorre was in rehearsals for Brecht's *Mann ist Mann*, which would prove to be their last project together before being forced to flee Germany soon after the Nazis came to power in 1932. Lang, true to his sadistic reputation, reduced Lorre to a physical wreck during the shooting of *M*, on one occasion insisting on at least a dozen retakes of a minor close-up in which Beckert is kicked on the shin with a hob-nailed boot. The resultant film, however, was

a masterpiece, one which would act as the refugee Lorre's calling card to the world while at the same time fixing his screen image forever as either a pervert or a killer.

Exiled in Paris in 1934, Lorre was on the brink of penury when Alfred Hitchcock offered him the part of the sinister Abbott in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Lorre's casting, and the film's success, soon reached the ear of Columbia boss, Harry Cohn, who proceeded to invite Lorre to Hollywood. Having signed up the latest available Continental "sensation", however, it soon became clear that Cohn had no idea what to do with him, and Lorre, viewed as "difficult to cast", was forced to remain idle. After almost a year, Cohn received an approach from MGM, which wanted Lorre to star as the demented protagonist of *Mad Love*. Wary of being typecast, Lorre resisted the offer, having set his sights on an adaptation of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. He then proposed a *quid pro quo*, whereby Cohn agreed to back the latter project (the producer apparently thought it was a straightforward suspense yarn) in return for the loan-out. It was to prove the only occasion on which Lorre was able to use the prestige of his European reputation to make a film which reflected his own wide-ranging literary and intellectual interests. Despite Lorre's striking appearance as the bald-as-an-egg Gogol, *Mad Love* was received with indifference, and that, combined with the artistic and financial failure of *Crime and Punishment* (both films were released in 1935), effectively ended whatever chance Lorre may have had of becoming a top-billed character star.

In 1936, on his return from filming Hitchcock's *Secret Agent* in Britain, Lorre was released from his Columbia contract and moved to 20th Century-Fox, where he embarked on the eight-film series of spy stories featuring the inscrutable and rather sinister police agent, Mr. Moto. Enjoyable enough in an unambitious way, the films proved popular but made few demands on Lorre's acting ability. Physically, however, the movies exacted a toll on the accident-prone actor and it was not long before he tired of the character. More seriously, however, the pain incurred through stunt-related injuries only increased Lorre's ongoing dependence on drugs, and it was a relief to him when, in 1939, the series was cancelled in reaction to Japan's increasingly brutal policy of expansionism.

Opting to work as a freelance, Lorre then made what is now considered the first true *film noir*, *Stranger on the Third Floor* (1940), for RKO, and, in the following year, gave an impressive performance in Columbia's *The Face Behind the Mask* before finally finding a home at Warner Bros. following his remarkable portrayal of Joel Cairo in *The Maltese Falcon*, a film which Lorre would later cite as his best. Brilliantly directed by John Huston, *The Maltese Falcon* not only introduced Lorre to Humphrey Bogart, who became a lifelong friend, but also paired him for the first time with the mountainous Sydney Greenstreet, with whom he would form a memorable double-act in a further eight films, including *Casablanca* (1942) and *The Mask of Dimitrios* (1944), leading to them being unofficially dubbed "the Laurel and Hardy of Crime".

But while Lorre had entered a period of professional stability, if not contentment (Celia described his demeanour at Warner Bros. as "happily unhappy"), by 1947, his life away from the studio was in disarray. Having parted amicably from Celia in 1940 and married Karen Verne the following year, Lorre found himself constantly short of money, mainly due to his own spendthrift habits. Furthermore, his drug dependency had brought him to the notice of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics which forced him to undergo a cure of dubious efficacy at a sanitarium in Texas. But perhaps the most unsettling factor in Lorre's life at this point was the reappearance of Bertolt Brecht, who had arrived in America in 1941 and who took it upon himself to act as Lorre's artistic conscience, urging him to return to the theatre and fuelling the actor's own considerable doubts about the value and quality of his film work. In a more sinister vein, Lorre's friendship with Brecht (who, though never a member of the Communist Party, was

definitely of the Left) had led to him being labelled a "fellow-traveller" by the FBI, a stigma which led to his departure from Warner Bros. shortly thereafter.

In 1949, Lorre suffered the ignominy of being forced to declare bankruptcy. Later that year, he returned to Germany, where he managed to ignore overtures from Brecht to join him in East Berlin, and to set up his only outing as a director. *Der Verlorene* (*The Lost One*, 1951), in which Lorre also starred, sounds like a worthy, if predictably grim, attempt to examine the political pathology of Nazi Germany through the character of a research scientist who, having killed his fiancée for betraying his work to the Allies, is then protected by the Nazis, who are more concerned that he continue his work than in seeing justice done. Haunted by his crime, the scientist disintegrates morally and commits further outrages before finally finding freedom through suicide. Artistically, *Der Verlorene* seems to have reflected the influences of both Brecht and Lang, combining a naturalistic acting style and overall neo-realist look with occasional expressionist set-pieces deliberating reminiscent of *M*. Almost inevitably, the film proved to be a rather unwieldy clash of styles, and failed to find an audience.

Bitterly disappointed, Lorre returned to the States, relying on work in television in the lulls between film work. In 1962, two years after the embarrassment of appearing in *Scent of Mystery* (the first film in Smell-O-Vision), Lorre found amusement, if not contentment, in making two films based – extremely loosely – on the works of one of his favourite authors, Edgar Allan Poe. In both *Tales of Terror* (1962) and *The Raven* (1963), Lorre was encouraged by director Roger Corman to improvise his own lines, thereby contributing greatly to their eventual success. In March, 1964, the day after a joint visit from his third wife (from whom he was separated) and his two ex-wives, Lorre died of a brain haemorrhage. When his estate was assessed, he was found to have been insolvent.

In 1939, Lorre ruefully remarked that, "Ever since I came to this country I've been trying to live down my past. That picture 'M' has haunted me everywhere I've gone." At other times, perhaps aware that he would never again be offered work of similar stature, Lorre would speak more fondly of the film. On the whole, Youngkin tends to side with his subject on the double-edged nature of *M*'s effect on Lorre's subsequent career, and clearly feels that the actor was shamefully misused by Hollywood. While that may well be true, there is an implication throughout the book that Lorre's case was in some way exceptional – which, unfortunately, it was not. An obvious parallel can be drawn between Lorre and his compatriot, Bela Lugosi. Both men made their mark in the same year, 1931, in films (*M* and *Dracula* respectively) which permanently defined their screen personas; both expected better opportunities in Hollywood than they received; and both ended their careers addicted to morphine and playing grotesque parodies of their earlier selves.

Although *The Lost One* undoubtedly succeeds in being the last word on its subject (and is also a beautifully produced book), there are occasional omissions that may strike the reader as puzzling. For instance, it is hard to believe that Lorre's relationship with director and fellow countryman, Michael Curtiz, did not extend beyond the sort of pranks inflicted on that long-suffering perfectionist by Errol Flynn and David Niven, and there is no mention of Lorre's wonderful assessment of Curtiz as a man who "ate films and excreted them". It is also somewhat irritating to find, on page 432, an anecdote concerning Lorre's willingness to help less confident colleagues which could just as easily have been included on page 227, in which the same actress relays a similar story concerning the same film. And lastly, while Youngkin lists in the epilogue the many posthumous reincarnations of Peter Lorre in various media, including music, he has shamefully neglected to include the celebrated opening lyrics of Al Stewart's 1976 hit, *Year of the Cat*, which, of course, went like this: "On a morning from a Bogart movie/ In a

country where they turn back time/ You go strolling through the crowd like Peter Lorre/ Contemplating a crime." Such minor flaws, however, are few and far between, and should do nothing to deter readers from parting with the not-insubstantial asking price for what is an exceptional study of an exceptional actor.

JOHN EXSHAW

FILM REVIEWS

"Is this another attack?": Imagining Disaster in *Cloverfield*, *Diary of the Dead* and *[Rec]*

***Cloverfield* (Dir. Matt Reeves)** USA 2007
Paramount Home Entertainment

***Diary of the Dead* (Dir. George A. Romero)** USA 2007
Optimum Home Entertainment

***[Rec]* (Dir. Jaume Balagueró & Paco Plaza)** Spain 2007
Odeon Sky Filmworks

In 1965, at the height of the Cold War, Susan Sontag declared in her famous essay 'The Imagination of Disaster' that the world had entered an "age of extremity" in which it had become clear that from now until the end of human history, every person on earth would "spend his individual life under the threat not only of individual death, which is certain, but of something almost insupportable psychologically – collective incineration which could come at any time". Sontag went on to claim that narratives in which this fate was dramatised for the mass audience in fantastical form – like the monster movies of the 1950s – helped society deal with this stress by distracting people from their fate and normalising what was psychologically unbearable: a kind of vaccination of the imagination, if you will. If this is the case, then *Cloverfield*, in which Manhattan is destroyed by an immensely powerful sea monster, George A. Romero's latest zombie movie, *Diary of the Dead*, and claustrophobic Spanish hit *[Rec]* are not so much pre-emptive vaccinations against probable catastrophe, but intermittently powerful, if flawed, reminders of actual calamity. In all three films some of the most destabilising events and anxieties of the past decade – including 9/11 (and the fear of terrorist attacks striking at the heart of American and European cities), Hurricane Katrina, the 2004 Tsunami, and the SARS virus– are reconfigured as genre-based mass market entertainment.

What is particularly interesting about these films is the fact that all three present themselves as a somehow more 'authentically' terrifying viewing experience than usual by dint of the fact that each consciously apes the style and tone of amateur video footage and of the real-life media coverage of such events. If 'torture porn' or 'gornography' has been the most notorious trope in the horror movie in recent years, then at the moment it seems as if that trend is being superseded by the emerging popularity of so-called 'shaky-cam' films shot from a first-person perspective and edited to look like 'found' footage of real-life atrocities and disaster zones. Of course, this trend is in some respects none too original. In 1980, Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocaust* purported to be the true story of a sensation-seeking Western film crew slaughtered by murderous Amazonian cannibals. Slightly more thoughtful than some of the other Italian cannibal movies of the period (though still appallingly racist), the film's cleverest conceit – that the bulk of the movie is footage filmed at first hand by the doomed protagonists – was also to be its most influential, as the popularity of the likes of *The Blair Witch Project* (Dir. Daniel Myrick & Eduardo Sánchez, 1999) would prove many years later. Significantly, outside the horror genre this device has most notably been recently used in the war films *Redacted* (Dir. Brian De Palma, 2007) and *Battle for Haditha* (Dir. Nick Broomfield, 2007), both of which are themselves creative responses to one of the most divisive events of recent years, namely the U.S. led "liberation" of Iraq, and it is apparent that the current crop of shaky-cam horror narratives also have their roots in contemporary global concerns.

The present popularity of the 'shaky-cam' movie can be seen to stem from several related factors. Foremost amongst these seems to be the presupposition that scenes edited to look like 'real' footage of unfolding events a truly disturbing end of the world tale seem more 'authentic' and better convey a sense of panic, disorder and catastrophe than footage shot with conventional staging, lighting and cinematography. Second, and just as important, is the way in which these films serve as a response to the rise of user-generated content on websites such as MySpace, Bebo, You-Tube and Google Video. As a character in Romero's movie says, "the mainstream had vanished. Now it was just us". There is also the fact that it's a bit easier and cheaper to shoot footage with handheld video cameras than in the traditional way: certainly, Romero's comments on his latest film suggest that he found the relative freedom afforded him by affordable new digital and editing technologies helped make *Diary of the Dead* his most enjoyable directing experience in years. This doesn't mean, however, that such films aren't as contrived as movies shot in the 'traditional manner' or that special effects don't play an important role as well, as we shall see.

This is particularly true of *Cloverfield*, which is essentially a *Godzilla* movie shot entirely from the perspective of the little people on the ground below, trapped between a rampaging monster on one side, and the gung-ho military on the other. The film has much in common with the classic graphic novel *Marvels* (Kurt Busiek and Alex Ross), which re-imagined key superhero clashes in the Marvel comics universe from the perspective of the everyday New Yorkers whose city had suddenly become the venue for wildly destructive battles between god-like super beings. One of the most interesting aspects of the graphic novel was the fact that it was told from the perspective of a resolutely normal newspaper photographer whose images captured the action from a very human perspective. Similarly, *Cloverfield* is presented to the viewer as an unedited feed from a video camera found by the U.S. army in "the site formerly known as Central Park", a *Cannibal Holocaust*/*Blair Witch*-style conceit which gives the film its distinctively *ad hoc* cinematography and most obvious selling point: visual and emotional immediacy. The constant movement of the camera and whip-pans left and right may also make viewers prone to travel sickness more than a little queasy, a symptom experienced by at least one of my companions during an initial viewing of the film, but as with the similar effect experienced by some viewers of *The Blair Witch Project* and Gaspar Noé's *Irréversible* (2002), this unfortunate side effect will presumably only add to the film's reputation as a gruelling viewing experience. It may also resemble the experience proffered by first-person perspective videogames, therefore – intentionally or not – evoking the style and atmosphere of the film industry's most powerful rival, the videogame.

Cloverfield's plot is fairly straightforward. Self-centred yuppie Rob Hawkins (Michael Stahl-David) is about to leave New York for a high-profile job in Japan, so his friends have thrown a party for him in a trendy Manhattan loft. Even before bits of the city start falling from the sky, Rob is having a bad time, due to the fact that he has recently slept with a friend, Beth (Odette Yustman), whom he then neglected to call. Excerpts from Rob's tape of their morning-after-the-night-before bookend the main body of the narrative and intermittently pop up briefly throughout, presumably in order to give some resonance to the utterly unreasonable quest which provides the impetus for the latter half of the film. Though only around twenty minutes are spent following the events of the party, this section feel rather longer, mainly due to the fact that Rob and most of his friends seem like such self-absorbed, painfully shallow hipsters. The first eruptions of chaos are actually all the more jarring and effective, then. During the disorientating moments after the initial explosion, each confusing new clue as to the exact nature of the threat faced by our protagonists only makes the horror even more gripping ("It's alive!"; "It was eating people!").

The film's strongest scenes therefore are those in which it manages to capture the panic and the sheer disbelieving chaos which erupts on the streets of the city in the moments following the monster's appearance. Though never explicitly referenced (save in the anxious aside "Is this another attack?") the 9/11 reference points are obvious: prominent New York landmarks are angrily rent asunder by the mysterious aggressor (conveniently, the head of the Statue of Liberty lands on the same street as our protagonists), and in the aftermath of the first wave of destruction, a long stream of dust-covered survivors attempts to flee to safety on the other side of the Hudson (a sequence also seen this year in the anaemic Will Smith vehicle *I Am Legend*). After roughly the half-way mark, the monster's increasingly lengthy manifestations inevitably erode some of the novelty, as does the fact that the narrative evolves into a dishearteningly implausible and conventional one from the moment that Rob decides to save Beth who is trapped in the ruins of her apartment building uptown, thereby leading his friends away from safety and into even more danger. Clearly, we're meant to view him as a hero, but instead, given the scale of the destruction around him, Rob's actions seem both selfish and deeply implausible, and the 'friends stick together' vibe central to the film is, like most of the protagonists' behaviour, oddly unconvincing.

Key to the fear evoked by *Cloverfield*'s monster is the fact that its actual shape is unquantifiable for most of the movie. The creature is both a rampaging giant and, like Murnau's Count Orlock, is also, a bringer of pestilence and disease. One of the film's cleverest conceits is to have the monster shed hundreds, perhaps thousands of secondary creatures, man-sized insect-like terrors which pounce upon unsuspecting passers-by and have an infectious bite which rapidly proves fatal. Indeed, one of the best scenes in the film is that in which one of the few truly likable characters in the whole movie – the laconic Marlena (Lizzy Caplan) – suddenly and graphically succumbs to her symptoms after being bitten by one of these creatures. The creature's very indefiniability is what makes it such an effective antagonist: at times it looks like a kind of weird giant salamander, at others like something out of Lovecraft. Our final glimpse of the creature – during a fight with the military in central park – is both the most complete, and paradoxically, the most disappointing. *Cloverfield*'s rampaging beast was undeniably terrifying when viewed in glimpses and quick, disbelieving flashes, but close up in the light of day, like most movie monsters (and most night time fears), it just seems rather silly.

Whilst we never do quite find out what the creature in *Cloverfield* actually is, problems or classification don't pose a problem in *Diary of the Dead*, the fifth and weakest so far of Romero's 'Living Dead' series. Despite the fact that 2005's *Land of the Dead* seemed ripe for a sequel, the celebrated director has chosen to go back to year zero and reconfigure his work for a new audience. The film's protagonists (and 'directors', for, as the title indicates, the film is a mock-video diary of an unfolding zombie outbreak) are a group of college students whose self-conscious mastery of technology and new media is ultimately of little help in ensuring survival against great odds. Indeed, by the end of the movie it seems clear that the almost pathological urge to record events displayed by his callous directorial amanuensis Jason (Joshua Close) is in fact perhaps symptomatic of a certain psychotic detachment from reality. Given that this is a Romero film, there is no shortage of interesting and provocative ideas here. It's just a shame that neither the cast nor ultimately the film itself do them justice.

It all starts amusingly enough, as news footage of a zombie attack is followed by an extract from the dodgy-sounding low-budget horror movie "The Death of Death" which Romero's protagonists are filming in woods just outside Pittsburgh (a nice touch); their inept mummy-movie footage allows Romero to make a few sly digs at some of the recent cultural additions to the zombie mythos by those who would seek to usurp his throne, particularly the moment when the youthful director of the film observes that "Dead things don't move fast!" Once the first indications of catastrophic events begin to emerge in the

form of garbled TV and radio transmissions, as in Romero's earlier films, it becomes clear that both the forces of law and order and the scientific community are completely unable to cope with the escalating crisis, and the students decide to flee the city and head for the country mansion of one of their classmates. What follows is a rather episodic, uneven narrative which generally fails to live up to Romero's previous films, although there are just enough hints of the old genius left to remind us that at his best, he is one of the most thoughtful and insightful horror directors of all time.

An early indication the film's heavy-handed philosophising and contrived plotting comes in the scene in which the group decide to go to the local hospital (surely the very worst place to be during a zombie outbreak?). As his friends wander the eerily deserted and blood-splattered halls in search of medical assistance for one of their number, Jason (who, like fellow cameramen Hud (T.J. Miller) in *Cloverfield* and Pablo in *[REC]* is barely glimpsed by the viewer at all) decides to recharge his camera. There follows an utterly ridiculous scene in which he is attacked by a zombie whilst plugged into the power supply, and refuses to relinquish his camera in order to defend himself properly because, as he puts it, in a statement that sums up his whole character "If it didn't happen on camera, it's like it didn't happen at all". While the sentiment is key to understanding the film, which is to a large extent Romero's rather despairing attempt to understand the technology-obsessed denizens of 'Generation Y', the scene itself is so contrived, and the statement expressed in such a flat manner, that the essential truth of what Romero is trying so hard to say here is all but lost. It doesn't help that the students are accompanied on their travels by their alcoholic Professor Ridley Wilmott (a terribly over-the-top performance by Philip Riccio) who, in between taking bracing nips of Scotch from his silver flask, is prone to making portentous, nail-bitingly clunky statements such as "I remember the war. In wartime, killing comes easy."

There are strong echoes of Romero's earlier zombie films here, but unfortunately, they serve mostly to highlight the inadequacies of *Diary of the Dead*. Romero devotees will be unsurprised to learn that the most capable, rational character in the whole film is a young woman, Deb (Michelle Morgan), whereas most of the men in the film fail to cope with events particularly well. The exceptions, again unsurprisingly, given Romero's earlier films, are a well-armed and organised group of African-American men – gang members who have created their own unofficial militia because, in the words of their leader, "For the first time in our lives we have the power, because everyone else left". The echoes of the sorely inadequate Government response to Hurricane Katrina are unmistakable, and are only further reinforced when, slightly later on in the film, the students are stopped by a National Guard patrol and robbed of the supplies just given to them by the militia. The scene in which the students encounter the gang members is perhaps the best in the entire film, not only in its wider, real-world connotations, but also because it contains a genuinely nerve-racking zombie attack whose effectiveness is never again recaptured. One can't help but think that had Romero followed his more radical instincts and created an entire film in which the effect of the zombie crisis upon an already marginalised African-American community was explored instead of focusing upon privileged, whiny white college students, he might well have come up with something much more interesting.

There are a few undeniably effective moments here (the sight of a group of gently flailing zombies floating like corks in an indoor swimming pool, or the scene in which the group arrive at Deb's family home to find that they're rather too late) and a couple of laugh-out-loud scenes (one featuring a zombie clown, and another a deaf Amish farmer), but it's all too little to late. By the time the remaining survivors have holed themselves up inside a suspiciously *Resident Evil*-style mansion only, inevitably, to find themselves picked off one by one, most viewers will have stopped caring. ****SPOILER BEGINS**** Like Hud in *Cloverfield*, Jason too dies while filming events, although because he has shown such

reluctance to help his companions lest he miss something onscreen (in contrast to Hud's relative heroics) one feels that he's gotten what he deserved: his obsession with making a record of all that has happened around him has ultimately and inevitably cost him his life. **** SPOILER ENDS**** In the film's final bleak moments however, Romero does manage to create an image which aptly encapsulates his feelings towards the modern age. The last survivors end up barricaded inside the mansion's panic room, unable to leave yet able to view the zombie hordes outside through the room's extensive CCTV system. A bleaker and more despairing view of the inadequacies of the information age you'll be hard pressed to find, but it's just a shame that the rest of the film fails to live up to this resonant concluding image.

2007 Spanish film *[REC]* is, rather like *28 Days Later*, a zombie movie in disguise. As in David Cronenberg's *Rabid* (1977) we're dealing here not with the reanimated dead, but with live people who have been infected with a lethal strain of rabies which rapidly turns them into aggressive and extremely infectious psychotics. Once more, everything is shot from a first-person perspective, although this time, the conceit is accounted for by the fact that the film is meant to be footage shot by a local news crew doing a report on shift workers. As young reporter Ángela (Manuela Velasco) and her cameraman Pablo hang around the local fire station, ill-advisedly hoping that something interesting will happen, reports come in that an old lady has fallen ill in a nearby apartment block and needs to be rescued. Ángela and Pablo duly accompany the firemen to the scene, only to find that the elderly woman in question is both entirely irrational and possessed of almost superhuman strength. Once she takes a bite out of a policeman's artery, the film really kicks into high gear. Rather than ease the situation, the Barcelonan authorities decide to contain the outbreak by sealing off the building from the outside, which means that, as the film progresses, and resident after resident succumbs to the mysterious disease and turns on the others, things become increasingly desperate for our protagonists. *[REC]* is one of the best zombie (or rather, pseudo-zombie) movies I've seen in years, a genuinely claustrophobic viewing experience in which the use of shaky-cam footage truly adds to the tension in a way that ultimately outclasses even *Cloverfield*. At just under 80 minutes, the taut running time and rapid pace mean that, despite the fairly familiar opening scenes, the film never becomes tedious, unlike the meandering *Diary of the Dead*.

As Ángela and the others become increasingly desperate to escape the apartment building, the tight close-ups of our absolutely terrified protagonists and unsteady footage of rabid attackers suddenly breaking loose make for gripping viewing. Those looking for narrative complexity or character development will not find it here, for *[REC]* is the cinematic equivalent of a triple espresso: a jolting wake-up call which one should not linger over for too long. Indeed, secret coward that I undoubtedly am, I could barely bring myself to watch the insanely claustrophobic final ten minutes of the film, in which the directors make the most effective onscreen use of night-vision since the climax of *The Silence of the Lambs* (Dir. Jonathan Demme, 1991). It is also at this point that the film takes a narrative turn into (possible) supernaturalism which will confuse most viewers, and profoundly irritate others. Nevertheless, the film remains an undeniably effective and thrillingly entertaining viewing experience. Furthermore, it also confirmed my suspicions that, along with drinking alcohol, losing one's virginity, and deciding to take a shower, carrying a video camera should be added to the list of things NOT to do if one wishes to survive to the end of a horror film.

So what next for shaky-cam horror? Given the popularity of digital video with emerging film makers, it seems likely that we haven't seen the last of this growing subgenre. *[REC]* has already been the subject of an American remake scheduled for release in October, and the team behind the original have just announced that there will be a sequel. Similarly, there has been talk of a sequel to *Cloverfield* as well, perhaps consisting of footage of the monster's attack shot from a different perspective. Furthermore, films

such as the low-budget pseudo-documentary serial-killer flick *Head Case* (Dir. Anthony Spadaccini, 2007) will continue to exploit the immediacy of 'first-person' perspective footage to evoke a more 'authentic' sense of horror and dread. Whether there will be many more genre-related disaster films shot in this style, only time will tell. What seems clear is that films in which fictional and fantastic catastrophes are evoked from an ever more 'realistic' perspective will be popular for as long as the feeling persists that in the real world, horrors of an even more disturbing nature have been permitted to flourish. As ever, horror and the gothic are in these instances able to encapsulate real-life fears and anxieties more effectively than any news report or politician's sound bite. The "age of extremity" described by Sontag so many years ago lingers still, except that now, for better or worse, we can watch it all unfold in front of our very eyes, again and again.

Bernice M. Murphy

***Night of the Demon* (Dir. Jacques Tourneur)** UK 1957

Columbia Tristar 2002 (released as "*Curse of the Demon* and *Night of the Demon*")

Sceptics have always been given a hard time in horror movies. Whenever a character dismisses supernatural happenings as stuff and nonsense, it is fairly certain that before too long he or she will meet with either a rude awakening or a sticky end – or both. As that supreme rationalist Sherlock Holmes liked to say, "When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth," and this is a maxim which horror film-makers have taken to heart, even if Holmes himself (unlike his creator) firmly believed that the supernatural was the impossible, and that human nature, rather than hocus-pocus, lay behind even the most uncanny events.

One of the most determined sceptics to appear on the screen is Dr. John Holden (Dana Andrews) in Jacques Tourneur's masterly *Night of the Demon* (1957). "I'm not open to persuasion," Holden informs Dr. Julian Karswell (Niall MacGinnis) during their celebrated encounter in the Reading Room of the British Museum. To which Karswell pointedly replies, "But a scientist should have an open mind." Holden, however, despite claiming that he will consider evidence of the supernatural, has already decided that it is all so much hogwash, and so, by the immutable laws of cinema, his dogged investigation of Karswell will lead to the inevitable rude awakening.

Night of the Demon, while generally acclaimed as one of the great horror movies, continues to inspire debate, with some commentators criticising the playing of both Dana Andrews and Peggy Cummins in the lead roles. To some extent, this is justified: Andrews does appear to be sleep-walking through the film, though his very stolidity actually suits the character of Holden, at least in the first half of the film. Later on, however, when he should be reduced to a trembling wreck at the thought of being roasted by the Fire Demon, Andrews acts as if he is simply dealing with another lowlife in one of his *noir* movies: "Siddown and shaddup," is (more or less) all he says to Karswell at the film's climax. Even his assertion that he now believes in the supernatural lacks any great conviction. Criticism of Cummins, who plays the role of Joanna, niece of the recently immolated Professor Harrington, seems less well-founded, given that her part mainly requires her to unquestioningly advocate the case for the supernatural and to issue dire warnings to Holden. To a large extent then, any shortcomings in the lead performances can be attributed to the script rather than to the actors themselves.

If the lead roles are underwritten, the same can hardly be said of Julian Karswell, who is without doubt one of the great screen villains, brought brilliantly to life by Niall MacGinnis, and made all the more frightening by being supremely human rather than supremely evil. Not only does Karswell arrange Hallowe'en parties for the neighbourhood children (a direct and very clever inversion of the scene in M.R. James' original story, 'Casting the Runes', in which Karswell deliberately terrifies the kiddies with a grotesque magic lantern show), but he only uses his powers after polite appeals have failed, and seemingly with some regret. He may end up ruining the Hallowe'en party just to prove a point, but one suspects he probably felt sorry about it later. However, the real masterstroke by screenwriter Charles Bennett was his decision to portray a warlock who is as frightened of the forces he can summon, but not completely control, as any of his victims, thereby adding immeasurably to the sense of dread so ably evoked in the film by Tourneur's deft use of light and shadow and the fluid camerawork which were his trademarks.

The principal area of debate inspired by *Night of the Demon* is, of course, the decision to show, from the very beginning of the film, the Demon itself in all its fire-breathing fury. Admirers of Tourneur's subtly suggestive work with legendary producer Val Lewton have taken the view that such an obvious manifestation of the supernatural robs the film of any real suspense and ambiguity, a view which was shared by both Tourneur and Bennett. Others, such as John Carpenter, have argued that, while subtlety is all very well in its place, in a monster movie, it is "absolutely essential" to see the monster. If one accepts that both viewpoints are valid, the question that emerges is not so much *whether* the Demon should have been shown, but *how* it should have been shown.

What seems reasonably clear is that both Bennett and Tourneur favoured an approach which was essentially faithful to James' story (in which the Demon is sensed and felt, but not seen), while at the same time accepting that, from a cinematic point of view, some sort of visual manifestation was necessary. Certainly, as Tony Earnshaw has demonstrated in his excellent study, *Beating the Devil: The Making of Night of the Demon* (reviewed by Darryl Jones in Issue One), the Demon was present in the script from the very beginning, and its basic design, by Ken Adam, was approved by Tourneur. Nonetheless, it seems fair to deduce that not only did Jacques Tourneur have no intention of utilising the Demon in the way that producer Hal Chester ultimately did, but that he never conceived of *Night of the Demon* as a 'monster movie' in the first place. Chester, however, no doubt inspired by the box-office takings of such films as *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953) and *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* (1956), seems to have thought of it as nothing else, and one gets the definite impression that, had the budget allowed, he would have been quite happy to have the Demon play dominoes with Stonehenge and stomp the British Museum to dust.

On the whole, the Demon can be said to have aged quite well, even if one accepts that it is not always shown to best advantage. The decision to present it as 'a monster' of at least twenty-four feet in height seems regrettable (there being no good reason why a demon shouldn't be small), and it is in the long shots that it looks least effective. Furthermore, the decision to accompany its appearance with a sound effect which strongly resembles a sofa with badly-oiled casters being dragged across a floor is unfortunate to say the least, giving the impression that the Demon is some sort of mechanical prop being wheeled into place by an unseen gang of special effects men. The close-ups of the Demon, however, are still powerful, particularly the mid-close-up in which it leans forward, talon outstretched to grasp its victim. How might Tourneur have constructed the Demon scenes? Perhaps through use of shadow, cutting to quick close-ups of a talon or an eye or something scaly (a visual interpretation of James' partial descriptions of the Demon), intercut with the extremely impressive smoking footprints seen when Holden is being followed through the wood, and ending with a brief shot of the Demon leaning forward to grasp its victim. Perhaps, but alas, we'll never know; indeed, as Dr. Holden rather fatuously observes at the close of the film, "Maybe it's better not to know," a position which would have appalled Sherlock Holmes but one which leaves us free to enjoy *Night of the Demon* as it is, imperfections and all.

The Region 1 DVD from Columbia Tristar includes both the full British print and the truncated U.S. version, the latter cut by Chester from 95 minutes to 82 minutes to allow it to be featured on double-bills (under the title *Curse of the Demon*). Comparing the two versions is instructive, in a depressing kind of way, and certainly serves to disprove the maxim that "less is more". Not only does one get considerably less of Niall MacGinnis (his key scenes with his mother have been ruthlessly excised), but the actual narrative structure has been altered, with the famous scene where Holden senses something strange in the corridor of his hotel actually being moved back one day to precede, rather than follow, Holden's and

Joanna's visit to Karswell's stately pile. Distribution problems have meant that the long-rumoured and much-anticipated Region 2 50th Anniversary Edition of *Night of the Demon* has as yet failed to materialise, but for those who can't wait, region-free versions of dubious legality can be found on-line.

John Exshaw

***The Orphanage* (*El Orfanato*) (Dir. Juan Antonio Bayona)**Spain/Mexico 2007
Optimum Releasing

The Orphanage is the first feature length film by Spanish director Juan Antonio Bayona, 'presented' and produced by the better known Mexican director Guillermo Del Toro, who has made successful films in Spain -*The Devil's Backbone* (*El Espinazo del Diablo*, 2001) and *Pan's Labyrinth* (*El Labertino del fauno*, 2006) and America (*Blade II*, 2002 and *Hellboy*, 2004). Bayona's debut feature shares some thematic concerns and broad interest in the imaginary world of children with Del Toro's recent Spanish films; however, it updates these ideas to put a contemporary spin on the old-fashioned haunted house genre.

The film's central protagonist is Laura (Belén Rueda), who has returned with her doctor husband Carlos (Fernando Cayo), and young son Simón (Roger Príncep) to the orphanage in which she grew up. She plans to reopen the facility for the treatment of physically and mentally disabled children. Simón, who was adopted by Laura and Carlos and has AIDS – neither of which he is aware of – requires regular medication, but otherwise appears to be a normal healthy child, with a vivid imagination and two imaginary friends. At first Laura enjoys showing Simón her former playground, but when she takes him to the small cove nearby, his exploration of a cave uncovers a new and apparently imaginary friend. This new presence in Simón's life introduces him to five more 'imaginary' companions who live in the orphanage and his behaviour quickly begins to change, becoming distant and argumentative. At the orphanage's grand re-opening – a masked party for the children who will be treated there – Laura has an argument with her son, who then disappears. While searching for Simón, Laura has a disconcerting encounter with a masked child and ends up locked in a bathroom. When she is found and realises Simón is still missing, Laura panics and starts a fruitless search party that ends at the cove. With her son's disappearance lengthening, the closure of the orphanage and the police's unsuccessful search, Laura begins to unravel. After six months, she continues to insist that Simón is still alive and, fearing that the house itself has something to do with his disappearance, invites a medium to visit despite Carlos' scepticism. When the medium discovers the trace of a traumatic past event, involving children from the orphanage, Laura convinces Carlos – who has decided to sell the house and try to move on – to let her stay and solve the mystery, delving back into her own past to try and find out what has happened to her son.

From the wonderful opening credits, featuring children's hands ripping off sections of ornately decorated wallpaper to reveal the names of the principle cast and crew, *The Orphanage* establishes itself as a quality horror film, with psychologically motivated characters and a well-constructed narrative. Indeed, it bears significant resemblance to the kind of horror recently exemplified in films like *The Sixth Sense* (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999) and *The Others* (Alejandro Amenábar, 2001), which highlight attention paid to atmosphere and a narrative that suppresses vital information until the final moments. There are moments where the influence of these films, *The Others* in particular, seems to be in danger of overwhelming *The Orphanage*, particularly in the mysterious appearance of an old woman claiming to be a social worker, and in the design of the house itself. Nevertheless, these generic resonances are successfully embedded into the narrative and visual design of the film, and as such the repetitious themes and images are deployed with intelligence, rather than out of laziness. The particular reflexivity and propensity for the horror genre to repeat itself, whether in narrative or imagery, is after all one of its key pleasures. Overall the film manages to use its more familiar elements to great effect, holding its scares in balance with the emotional life of the characters.

The narrative takes its structure from the literary tradition of the Fantastic, whereby there exists more than one explanation of events, thus providing a narrative hesitation between the real and the supernatural. This central aspect of the film, which mostly concerns Laura's state of mind – offering the viewer uncertainty between seeing her as mad, or believing in the existence of ghosts – is well balanced, making the conclusion deservedly affecting. The real strength of the film lies in the characterisation of Laura and Belén Rueda's performance as the latest in a long series of investigating women within the horror genre, to which Laura adds an interesting dimension as a representation of motherhood. Through these means the film interrogates its central theme concerning the relationship between mother and child. Our access to Laura throughout the film ensures alignment with her during the deterioration of her mental state and Rueda's performance rewards this attention by successfully incorporating elements of hysteria and strength, embodying the central dilemma offered by the plot, and thus making it very difficult decisively to place her as mad. Laura is certainly not a passive heroine, and her experiences evoke a significant amount of sympathy.

The complicated nature of the plot brings many different elements into the film, and in reflection makes it seem almost as though the filmmakers were working from a checklist of terror. Even so it works very well – I freely admit to spending a great deal of time peeking through my fingers and even shrieking with fear – as the scares are woven into the texture of the film from very early on, almost acting as signposts for what is to come (in particular the image of a scarecrow at the front of the frame as the children play in the opening flashback to Laura's childhood). In this way the horror gradually builds up so that the last section of the film has an atmospheric and emotional intensity that is at points almost unbearable.

Whilst many of these elements provide a welcome relief from the blatancy of many contemporary horror films, particularly in terms of actual scariness, *The Orphanage* is not without its flaws. The ending is potentially overly sentimental, and the appearance of a deformed child in the plot echoes a current trend for deformity – as seen in the recent cycles spawned by the remakes of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Dir. Marcus Nispel, 2003) and *The Hills Have Eyes* (Dir. Alexandre Aje, 2006) – which over-literalises aspects of monstrosity. However, these criticisms can be countenanced to some degree: the issue of deformity is certainly far more sensitively handled than in other recent examples, and the sentimentality of the narrative is part of a structure working from the beginning and plays to the film's interrogation of the relationship of parents to their children and their own childhood. In the current climate of horror which overwhelmingly consists of flaccid slasher remakes and unpleasantly brutal but repetitive fare, *The Orphanage* succeeds in using horror to interrogate some interesting narrative and thematic tensions, whilst remaining a refreshingly atmospheric and genuinely frightening film.

Lucy Fife

***Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (Dir. Tim Burton)** USA/UK 2007
Warner Home Video

The onscreen marriage between horror and the musical formats has been a difficult one, and the most memorable examples of genuinely unsettling musical moments have tended to occur in otherwise family-friendly fare – the eerie Hallowe'en sequence in *Meet Me in St Louis* (Dir. Vincente Minelli, 1944); Gene Wilder's 'Wondrous Boat Ride' in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (Dir. Mel Stuart, 1971); and, of course, Margaret Hamilton's Wicked Witch of the West and her flying monkeys in *The Wizard of Oz* (Dir. Victor Fleming, 1939). The most complete fusions of the two genres have often been comedic in tone; see, for example, *Little Shop of Horrors* (Dir. Frank Oz, 1986), *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Dir. Jim Sharman, 1975) and *Cannibal: The Musical* (Dir. Trey Parker, 1996). More straight-faced fare has tended to fall flat, as Joel Schumacher gamely proved with *The Phantom of the Opera* (2004). Nonetheless, Schumacher's film of Andrew Lloyd Webber's stage-show seems to have jump-started a renaissance of sorts for the horror musical, with rock operas proving especially popular – *Repo!: The Genetic Opera* (Dir. Darren Lynn Bousman, 2008) is shortly due for release, and a remake of Brian de Palma's *Phantom of the Paradise* (1974) is reportedly in the offing. The most successful horror musicals to date, though, have come from Tim Burton stable – first, as writer/producer of stop-motion classic *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (Dir. Henry Selick, 1993) and now as director of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (2007), an adaptation of Stephen Sondheim's dark and gory take on the fabled and vengeful coiffeur.

In the 160 years or so since the character of Sweeney Todd made his first fictional appearance in the penny dreadful *The String of Pearls*, the tale of the murderous barber who dispatches his clientele via a customized barber's chair has undergone various re-imaginings on stage and screen, but the well-known revenge plot wasn't introduced until Christopher Bond's 1973 play. Sondheim's stage musical and Burton's film also prioritise this retribution narrative, opening as Benjamin Barker (Johnny Depp) returns to London after a fifteen-year stint in an Australian penal colony. Unjustly punished for a crime he didn't commit, Barker has changed his name to Sweeney Todd, and comes bearing a grudge against the dastardly Judge Turpin (Alan Rickman) whom he holds responsible for his transportation and separation from his wife and daughter, and also Turpin's greasy accomplice, Beadle Bamford (Timothy Spall). Todd quickly relocates to his old stomping ground on Fleet Street, where he encounters Mrs Lovett (Helena Bonham Carter), purveyor of the worst pies in London. She updates him on the fate of his family; his wife has been driven to poison herself, while Judge Turpin has claimed Todd's daughter Johanna (Jayne Wisener) as his ward. Todd is now hell-bent on revenge and determined to be reunited with his child. Soon, a run-in with Adolfo Pirelli (Sacha Baron Cohen), a rival barber who threatens to expose Todd's real identity, inspires him to take bloody action. Faced with the prospect of disposing of Pirelli's body, he and Mrs Lovett hatch their opportunistic plan to take advantage of Todd's razor skills to improve the quality of the meat that goes into her pies, all the while hiding this truth from Pirelli's young assistant Toby (Edward Sanders) to whom Mrs Lovett has taken a shine. Young Toby proves a useful asset once her pie shop becomes the toast of the town, and is especially adept at getting rid of a mysterious beggar woman (Laura Michelle Kelly) who persists in hanging around. Meanwhile Anthony (Jamie Campbell Bower), a young sailor who had accompanied Todd on his voyage home, has fallen in love with Johanna, and (unaware of Todd's paternal link to the girl) enlists the barber's help in freeing her from Turpin's grasp. Thus, the scene seems set for Todd to fulfil his plan; but this being a revenge tragedy, the film builds to its inevitable and blood-soaked conclusion in which practically everybody ends unhappily.

Sweeney Todd's Grand Guignol excesses certainly mark a return to Burton's more recognisably gothic worldview than his recent output of remakes (*Planet of the Apes*, 2001; *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, 2005) and whimsical fare (*Big Fish*, 2003). The film also ranks amongst his most visually-arresting work, practically employing a monochromatic palette throughout – from the ashen faces and dark eyes of Todd and Mrs Lovett, to the washed-out, sepia tinged interiors and the rain-soaked, claustrophobic streets of London ("a hole in the world like a great black pit / And the vermin of the world inhabit it", as Todd views it). This makes the flashes of arterial spray that accompany each swipe of Todd's blades a real shock to the senses, further heightened by the sickening sound of bones crunching as they plummet from Todd's barber's chair into Mrs Lovett's basement *en route* to the meat-grinding machine. Of course, this sensory onslaught is further achieved in the union of the film's striking visuals with Sondheim's songs and brooding score, and the film presents a number of memorable set-pieces: a bravura, dizzying trip through the streets of London to deposit Todd at Mrs Lovett's pie shop; a cheery montage of Todd disposing of his hapless customers while singing of his long-lost daughter; and Mrs Lovett's fantasy of retiring to the seaside with Todd, the only sequence in the film that is invested with any real brightness. The decision to cast non-professional vocal artists in the main roles really pays off in the case of Depp's Todd, garnering him his third Oscar nomination in five years, and adding another string to his bow as the most versatile actor currently working in Hollywood. Although his voice is certainly not a polished one, this enhances his characterisation of Todd, making him that bit rougher around the edges and (as many critics have noted) Depp manages to come off sounding a bit like David Bowie. In particular, his rendition of 'My Friends' – an ode to his razors with which he has just been reunited – stands as one of the film's most chilling moments. Bonham Carter, to be fair, actually has a more difficult task in the role of Mrs Lovett, and though she gamely tries to master the character's intricate vocal arrangements in her solo efforts, her voice is sometimes a little small, and often risks being drowned out by the orchestration itself. She does better when paired with other characters – in particular, with young Toby on the affecting 'Not While I'm Around'; and with Todd himself in 'A Little Priest', a cheery little ditty about cannibalism.

In its combination of extreme visuals with introspective and playful musical numbers, *Sweeney Todd* is that rare beast: a horror musical that takes itself just seriously enough, in which the juxtaposition of bloodshed and show-tunes is not designed to be incongruous. The film provides a relentless sensory onslaught from its stylised opening credit sequence to its final tableau, accompanied each step of the way by a series of tunes that worm their way into the viewer's consciousness. Admittedly, with its maniacally melodramatic plotting and gleeful transgression of taboos, Burton's macabre tale does not make for a subtle film; but it is masterfully executed, and probably one of the most beautifully-shot films about a vengeful mass murderer you're likely to see this year.

Jenny McDonnell

***30 Days of Night* (Dir. David Slade)** USA 2007
Icon Home Entertainment

Post-9/11 and post-*Buffy*, the North American vampire has been rendered strangely toothless, and has been reconfigured as a quietened, even domesticated presence, lacking any predatory inclinations and genuine menace – Richard Roxburgh's Dracula in the awful Hugh Jackman film *Van Helsing* (Dir. Stephen Sommers, 2004) is testament to the sterile, jaded and two-dimensional replication of vampires recently produced by Hollywood. However, a recent spate of adaptations from graphic novels has re-instated serious credibility into the horror and gothic genres, with the appearance of the likes of Frank Miller's and Robert Rodriguez's *Sin City* (2005); the much anticipated *The Dark Knight* (Dir. Christopher Nolan, 2008); *Watchmen* (Dir. Zack Snyder: currently in production); and most recently *30 Days of Night*, which has injected some much-needed new life into the vampire genre. Directed by David Slade (who also helmed the controversial *Hard Candy* in 2005) and adapted from the 2002 graphic novel of the same name by Steve Niles and Ben Templesmith (published by IDW Publishing), *30 Days of Night* translates the original story to the screen in all of its sanguine, dark, and violent glory. The vampire-as-villain is back, and in spectacular, visceral and brutal form. The UK DVD release is particularly worth investing in for hardcore vampire fans, containing, as it does, eight interesting making-of featurettes as well as excerpts from the graphic novel. The companion short *30 Days of Night: Bloodtrails*, which traces the origins of the film's vampires back to their home city of New Orleans, has also been released as a separate volume.

Set in Barrow, Alaska, where each year the sun sets for thirty days, the film traces the story of Sherriff Eben Oleson (Josh Hartnett) and his estranged wife Stella (Melissa George), who come upon The Stranger (Ben Foster). He forewarns them of a calculated invasion by a pack of vampires, led by the vicious Marlow (played by the fantastic Danny Huston), which duly begins once the sun sets. With no possibility of communication with the outside world, limited power and food supplies, and vampires waiting at every turn (with no daylight to thwart them in the seemingly endless Alaskan winter), eight survivors led by Eben attempt to survive the onslaught of the bloodthirsty invaders as they comb through the wreckage of the town; at the same time, the townspeople must face personal conflicts and challenges in increasingly cramped living conditions, as children try to protect elderly parents, and quarrelling lovers heal their fractured relationships. The premise is therefore rather similar to that of the 2005 Swedish vampire movie *Frostbiten* (Dir. Anders Banke), which is also set in an isolated community besieged by vampires during the month of eternal midnight (see interview and review in our October 2006 issue)

The film successfully manages to resurrect the vampire as a figure of primal sensuality. These vampires do not belong to a romanticised, Ricean tradition of individual beings invested with rational thought or verbal interplay. Only Marlow retains any form of linguistic nuance (using both English and an ancient vampire language based on tribal and guttural sounds, which is surprisingly convincing) while the vampiric collective communicate through knowing glances and nods, and high pitched, intimidating screams, often replicating the cry of hyenas. This detail reinforces the group's depiction as an animalistic pack driven by primal instinct; they are a gluttonous, excessively violent force of nature that carry out acts of perverse carnage without remorse - picking off, decapitating and spiking victims in gloriously nasty detail. The intensity of this evil is clearly evoked from the first vampire attack, when local Gus (Grant Tilly) is devoured and decapitated. Without resorting to the woeful CGI effects which sorely marred the other major vampire movie of the last twelve months, *I Am Legend* (Dir. Francis Lawrence, 2007), the monstrous nature of the vampires is further evoked in the film's striking special effects and use of

make-up: their two rows of yellowed jagged teeth, blown-pupils and elongated, talon-like fingernails reminding the audience that not all vampires on film have (or need) the beauty of Anne Rice's Louis (Brad Pitt) in *Interview With The Vampire* (Dir. Neil Jordan, 1994). The film makes their otherness even more apparent in their seemingly unstoppable nature. In keeping with recent trends in postmodern vampire fiction and film, the 'rule book' has been re-written and reinterpreted, so that no garlic, crucifixes or boundary restrictions can harm them; the only limitation that continues to apply is an aversion to sunlight and Ultra Violet light. God too has been disregarded, as Marlow clarifies to a whimpering victim: "God? [looking skyward and tilting his head around at the carnage] No God!"

Although the film displays a sense of novelty and inventiveness in its characterisation of its vampires, elsewhere it pays homage to modern horror classics. It incorporates the atmosphere and despair present in John Carpenter's similarly snowbound and claustrophobic remake of *The Thing* (1980), while the disturbing vampire child is clearly inspired by George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), in which a bloodstained zombified child murders her mother with a trowel. The film descends into a cat-and-mouse game of hide and seek, which successfully heightens the tension until the next inevitable bone-crunching attack on a blood-gargling victim. Slade also retreats to some familiar cult vampire territory in the use of images of burnt and scarred vampires, which recalls Kathryn Bigelow's *Near Dark* (1986), and provides a welcome reminder of past classics that warrant due credit.

Overall, the film relies on the presence and relish of Danny Huston's Marlow in order to progress the narrative, but beyond the majesty of the vampire pack, the film does falter somewhat. In particular, although the characters of Eben and Stella are the only ones provided with any back-story, the performances of Josh Hartnett and Melissa George fail to compel, and crucially they lack any on-screen chemistry. Structurally, the countdown towards sunrise appears jagged and uneven; it dislocates the timing and frequency of the horrifically violent clashes which feel as though they have occurred in a single night, and as such, leave the audience wondering why there has been no squabbling over food rations or cabin fever. The climax revisits the age-old solution to overcoming vampire invasion, calling upon the necessary heroism and sacrifice of Eben to overthrow Marlow's crew in a brutal, bone-shattering finale, temporarily suspending supernaturalism in favour of sheer physical brutality and force, but ultimately providing only a temporary closure which permits the vampire's continued existence, while suspending finality enough to facilitate a sequel.

Slade's rejuvenation of the vampire legend proves a thoroughly entertaining watch, reinstating faith in the genre which has suffered tremendously in the advent of CGI and poor remakes of superior films. By returning to the graphic novel, Slade has effectively relocated vampires from the page to the screen, allowing actions, movement and physicality to evoke sentiments of fear and otherness where other, bigger-budgeted fare, has failed. Let's hope this film will inspire a more dynamic and original approach for vampire productions to come, so we do not have to suffer more of the current direct-to-DVD dredge on offer *á la Lost Boys: The Tribe* (Dir. P.J. Pesce, 2008). A thoroughly refreshing bloody treat!

Sorcha Ní Fhlainn

***Doomsday* (Dir. Neil Marshall)** UK/USA/South Africa 2008
Rouge Pictures / Intrepid Pictures

Given our increasingly uncertain times, it is not surprising that films such as *28 Days Later* (Dir. Danny Boyle, 2002), *Land of the Dead* (Dir. George A. Romero, 2005), *The Host* (*Gwoemul*) (Dir. Joon-ho Bong, 2006), *28 Weeks Later* (Dir. Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, 2007), *I am Legend* (Dir. Francis Lawrence, 2007), and *Cloverfield* (Dir. Matt Reeves, 2008) are all drawing audiences to the cinema. Their fictional apocalypses, rampant viruses and infected monsters allow for a safe confrontation with our global fears, secure in the knowledge that in these cinematic worlds humanity can overcome all adversity. It would seem then that it would be easy to locate Neil Marshall's third film, the post-apocalyptic fantasy *Doomsday*, within this current trend for its antagonist is the fictional Reaper virus. Being blood-borne, Reaper has the necessary qualities to suggest real-world parallels with Ebola, SARS, HIV, and perhaps even BSE. Such anticipated parallels imply that *Doomsday* has the same potential as Marshall's previous film, *The Descent* (2005), in which the director deftly merged entertaining action and scenes of appropriate horror with a narrative that was preoccupied with abjection and motherhood, and where the spilling of blood meant something. Unfortunately, in *Doomsday*, the spilling of blood is simply the spilling of blood.

The film begins on 3rd April, 2008, Glasgow, Scotland where the first signs of the Reaper virus have begun to manifest themselves. Black and white images of the infected, their skin bloated and blistered, are intercut with flashes of molecular structures and newspaper headlines. As the infected become more grotesque, so the headlines become more sensational. Over all this is the doom-laden voice of Dr Kane (Malcolm McDowell), steadily narrating the montage with fact and poetic reflection. Seventy-eight days later and Scotland is put under quarantine. A containing wall is built around its perimeter, effectively sealing it off from the rest of the world. The uninfected population gathers at the military patrolled border in an attempt to flee the virus. Amongst them is a man who shouts out that the end of world is nigh, a mother who clings to her daughter, and a hooded teenager who is slowly working his way through the crowds towards the barricades and armed soldiers. Before he can reach them, his hood is pulled down and he is revealed to be infected. Without hesitation he is shot by a soldier, his death shown in all its gory detail: the camera lingers first upon the boy's hand which explodes as bullets pierce it and then upon his convulsing body as more bullets hit. His infected blood sprays in unnatural quantities across the clean, bright faces of the uninfected before cutting back once again to his bullet-riddled body. It is an unpleasant moment that quickly defines the film's visual agenda – excessive, almost comic-book violence that renders the symbolically charged blood as nothing more than a means for presenting graphic and brutal depictions of violence against the oppressed. In this instance the oppressed respond accordingly and charge the barricades as the soldiers shoot into the crowds. More bodies explode as many are shot down. Amongst all this bloody carnage, the mother drops to the floor with her daughter, shielding her against the gunfire with her body. But it is too late. A stray bullet has taken out her daughter's right eye.

Doomsday's opening sequence recalls the tenement block assault that began George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), where the disaffected corralled into a claustrophobic space, the infamous exploding zombie head is substituted for the infected teenager's exploding hand and the SWAT team are replaced with the British military. In both films attempts at containing the pandemic end in panic and death, and the forces of control are overrun by the forces of chaos. It would seem then that whatever measures are taken, the chaotic will always find a way and, in *Doomsday* it does. Twenty-seven years later the Reaper

virus breaks the confines of the Scottish borders and manifests itself within central London. Fearing another pandemic, the Prime Minister, John Hatcher (Alexander Siddig) orders Major Sinclair (Rhona Mitra) of the Department of Domestic Security to hand-pick a team of soldiers and, with selected medical personnel, enter into Scotland in an effort to find a cure.

This mission, unsurprisingly, allows Sinclair to 'find herself' for she is, of course, the girl who lost her eye during the film's opening sequence. Sinclair has grown up to be a distanced orphan and matured into a masculine female, an attractive but lethal soldier. With controlled force, she is an effective assassin, one who takes measured risks and gambles the lives of others in order to get the job done. In this respect, Sinclair is of the Ripley / Sarah Connor mold of Action heroines – rough, tough and beautiful – but whereas Ripley and Connor's heroics are tempered with an emotional depth, Sinclair lacks any sense of characterisation. She is simply a highly trained and highly effective soldier who has a traumatic connection with the past. Similarly, with such masculine qualities it would be very easy to draw comparisons between Sinclair and Sarah (Shauna Macdonald), from *The Descent*. Both are born out of a violent situation and respond by replacing their femininity with a tough masculine exterior. Sarah's narrative descent constructed her as a female immersing herself in abjection as a means of coping with the trauma of losing her only child, ironically constructing her character as she devolves into a primitive state. Sinclair on the other hand simply battles her way through the narrative, killing and killing and killing in increasingly efficient and brutal ways in order both to complete her mission and to propel the narrative forward.

Such is the suffocating extent of Sinclair's masculinity that she functions, quite explicitly, as a female version of Snake Plissken (Kurt Russell) from *Escape from New York* (Dir. John Carpenter, 1981): both are combat veterans, both talk briefly and in grave tones and both are missing an eye. They even share narrative events, particularly a sequence where both are forced into a gladiatorial arena where they fight to the death with medieval weapons. In both instances, Sinclair and Plissken are the victors, each deftly terminating the opposition with a certain brutality that only these post-apocalyptic heroes seem to posses. The parallel with Plissken suggests a further criticism of *Doomsday*: the narrative seems to be more a collection of the 'best bits' from other films than an actual original screenplay. To this effect, *Doomsday* can be read as a virtual 'reworking' of Carpenter's film that is interspersed with scenes or set-pieces influenced by other films. These include *The Warriors* (Dir. Walter Hill, 1979), *The Road Warrior* (Dir. George Miller, 1981) *Excalibur* (John Boorman, 1981), and *Knightriders* (Dir. George A. Romero, 1981), whilst Marshall himself cited *Zulu* (Dir. Cy Endfield, 1964), *Metalstorm* (Dir. Charles Band, 1983) and the work of Terry Gilliam as influences upon him whilst he wrote and directed the film. As a result Doomsday is more a collection of ideas and images than a fully realised narrative: there are the *Mad Max*-esque punks led by the psychotic Sol (Craig Conway), whose bodies are adorned with multiple piercings and tattooed with radiation symbols. They revel in extreme violence, vaudeville style performances and cannibalism. In contrast to these aggressive people is the Arthurian-inspired community under the leadership of Dr Kane. Moving up into the safety of the countryside, they have used the remnants of Scottish Heritage sites as their homes, regressing into the past as opposed to Sol's army who have progressed into a dystopian future.

This basic sense of opposition is compounded by the introduction of a subplot involving the discovery of Cally (Myanna Buring), found locked in an underground cell; Sinclair soon finds that she is sister to Sol and daughter to Dr Kane and that father and son are engaged in a war for dominion over Scotland. With the emergence of this second storyline, it is assumed that the threads of the film's plot will now move steadily and inexorably towards this final showdown but it does not. Instead, this potentially enhancing

plot line is mentioned, considered and then rejected in favour of more gory violence between Sinclair and assorted psychopaths. ****SPOILER BEGINS**** In fact Sol and Kane never actually meet each other at all for the duration of the film. Instead, they stand miles apart in their separate little domains, shouting degrading comments about each other but never actually doing anything about it. Perhaps predictably it will be Sinclair and Sol who will meet for the final showdown: as Frankie goes to Hollywood's 'Two Tribes' plays over the soundtrack, Sinclair and Sol engage in a car chase to the Scottish border which recalls the climatic chase of *Road Warrior* and allows for a considerable amount of vehicular and bodily carnage to take place before concluding with the decapitation of Sol. As for Sinclair, there is sequel potential for she concludes *Doomsday* by opting to stay behind. Picking up Sol's severed head, she drives back into the derelict city and confronts the remains of Sol's army. With her gun on her hip, she throws down the head and the soldiers cheer. Their new leader has emerged out of the trails of the wasteland. It is perhaps no coincidence then that Sinclair's forename name is Eden. ****SPOILER ENDS****

Such an analysis suggests that Marshall's film is without merit but this is not necessarily the case; for *Doomsday* can be viewed in one of two ways, either as a mindless but highly entertaining and effective horror/action film or as a questionable third feature from a director who showed great promise as an emerging British genre talent. As a piece of action cinema, Marshall delivers the prerequisites extremely effectively and with great directorial command. The sense of his talent still lingers as the film contains some extraordinary images: a contemporary soldier, gun in hand, stands silhouetted before a medieval knight, the apocalyptic wasteland overrun with herds of cows and a steam train pulling out of the future city and into the pastoral past of the Scottish countryside. These are all powerful moments but they are lost in the noise and violence of the narrative, suppressing the sliver of originality and creativity that is clearly evident within these images. **** SPOILER BEGINS****One of the film's more satisfying moments is the revelation that there is no cure. Instead, those that have remained alive within the walled confines of Scotland were simply naturally immune to the Reaper Virus. This subversion is truly apocalyptic – that only by some genetic chance will some live and some die **** SPOILER ENDS**** It further suggests there is another darker, more sombre and reflective *Doomsday* quietly mumbling in the grain.

With the film now on general release and with his name attached to multiple projects from multiple genres (*Conan the Barbarian*, *Eagle's Nest*, *Drive* and *Sacrilege* to name a few), it will be interesting to see which direction Marshall chooses to go: towards the bright but light thrills and delights of blockbuster cinema or back to the darker and more cerebral grounds of horror?

James Rose

***The Mist* (Dir. Frank Darabont)** USA 2007
Dimension Films

Stephen King is renowned for his prolific production of accessible, easy-to-read horror fiction. His early novels revolutionised the way in which the genre was perceived, helping horror novels make the leap from low rent, cheap paper-back publications to the profitable realms of mainstream fiction. As a reader, I have always had something of a love/hate relationship with King's work. On the one hand, the quality of his early novels cannot be denied. *IT* (1986) ruined clowns for me forever (but it was worth it) and *Carrie* (1974) made me eternally wary of the quiet girl in the class. On the other hand, King has frequently produced some decidedly sub-standard fare, such as *The Tommyknockers* (1987), *Bag of Bones* (1998) and most of his more recent novels, which tend to spend 600 pages on character development only to have endings that cannot possibly live up to such interminably long build-ups.

However, the one area of horror writing in which Stephen King consistently excels is short fiction, as seen in collections such as *Night Shift* (1978), *Nightmares and Dreamscapes* (1993) and, more recently, *Everything's Eventual* (2002), all of which illustrate his skill at producing thought-provoking and effective horror in a few short pages. One of his best is 'The Mist', a truly disturbing tale of the end of the world originally included in the collection *Skeleton Crew* (1985), which haunted me for weeks after I first read it as an admittedly impressionable teenager. It has now been adapted as a feature film by Frank Darabont, who is no stranger to King's writing, having previously directed *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) and *The Green Mile* (1999).

I approached the film version of *The Mist* with some trepidation. Films based on King's novels and short stories have never really worked out well, generally suffering heavily from film producers' desire to make horror films 'audience friendly'. While movies such as *Carrie* (Dir. Brian de Palma, 1976) and *The Shining* (Dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1980) are renowned genre classics, poor King adaptations by far outweigh the good. The dreadful *Lawnmower Man* (Dir. Brett Leonard, 1992) is a prime offender: a minor short story about an encounter between a demonic gardener and man who loves his lawn was bizarrely turned into a rip-off of *Flowers for Algernon*; indeed, the only similarities between story and film are the title, and the fact that both involve a gruesome death involving a lawn mower. Most adaptations of King's work have been mediocre at best, then. However, like Mikael Håfström's *1408* (reviewed in the third issue), *The Mist* manages to buck this trend.

The Mist begins with a storm battering a small Maine town (King's favourite fictional setting) and wreaking some real havoc on the residents' homes. The film's protagonist David Drayton (an impressive turn from Thomas Jane) surveys the damage to his lakefront home, and, following a brief altercation with a neighbour, he and his young son go into town to buy supplies, leaving his wife behind in the house. As they leave, a mist begins to rise up across the lake and ominously drifts to shore. After watching army vehicles hurrying to a military base which lies above the lake, father and son arrive at the store and begin to stock up on groceries. By now, the rising mist has covered the town in an all-pervasive cloud. As the shoppers watch, an injured man staggers out of the mist and into the store, roaring at those watching to close the doors and yelling that something in the mist has attacked him.

From this point on, *The Mist* develops into a tense, stomach-churning adventure tale, but one which deftly manages to personalise the horror by keeping the focus of the story on the people trapped in the store rather than on the creatures in the mist. The monsters instead act as a barrier separating the stunned

townsfolk from their previously safe and comfortable lives, replaced now with an uncertain future. If King's novella had been written after 2001, the 9/11 interpretations would surely abound (as they did for his 2005 novel *Cell* which also featured a sudden apocalyptic calamity). Regardless, the decision to adapt the story for the screen at this juncture does seem particularly timely, and the film repeatedly taps into contemporary North American and global anxieties. King's original novella and Darabont's interpretation both lead the viewer to the conclusion that no matter what the external threat, humanity will always react in a primitive manner, resorting to violence and irrational religious impulses rather than employing logic and common sense. The true horror in *The Mist* comes when the people trapped in the store rapidly turn to religious extremism. In this, they are led by the insane Mrs. Carmody (Marcia Gay Harden) a fundamentalist preacher who had previously been the town joke but whose Old Testament ways now seem much more appealing to the townspeople as they seek to find a way in which to deal with their plight. As the horror of the situation continues to unfold with no hope in sight, they eventually offer up a human sacrifice to the beasts in the mist. Only David and a few others maintain their rationality, and in doing so become the targets of fundamentalist anger and fear. This follows in the tradition of other post-apocalyptic films such as *Day of the Dead* (Dir. George A Romero, 1985) and post-nuclear drama *The Day After* (Dir. Nicholas Meyer, 1983) which depicted the events following a nuclear war. Indeed, it could be argued that *The Mist* provides a commentary on the current growth in religious rhetoric espoused by world leaders such as George W. Bush and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in their reactions to similarly unseen and external threats: the bogeymen of terrorism and imperialism that function as their own beasts in the Mist.

Darabont's screenplay follows King's original novella almost to the letter, and his assured direction and focus upon character and atmosphere ably demonstrate that, in the hands of the right director and screenwriter, King's stories can be translated accurately and effectively to the screen. In fact, Darabont's film manages to improve on his source material, by taking its bleak conclusion and expanding it to become what is possibly the best and most disturbing five minutes I've ever witnessed in a movie. Furthermore, Thomas Jane does a great job of portraying a concerned father who has to confront an even greater threat than the tentacled beastie that lurks outside their safe haven. However, the film is stolen by Harden's portrayal of a religious fundamentalist who, following the collapse of conventional morals and thinking, has finally gained authority over those who once ridiculed her, and revels in exacting petty revenge in the face of a devastating, yet unseen, threat.

The Mist is a must-see for fans of Stephen King and the horror genre, providing both scares and psychological jumps that will have you thinking back on it for days after, much in the same way the novella did. Surprisingly, *The Mist* was a flop in the US, the tone of the film apparently not going down well with a home-grown audience. The bleak tone of the film may not have been what an American audience wanted at a time when their news media is filled with images of war and violence, instead preferring bland and predictable horror films such as the *Prom Night* remake (Dir. Nelson McCormick, 2008) and the umpteenth 'reimagining' of a Japanese horror films. However, *The Mist* is one of the most accomplished horror films released in the past decade, for, rather then relying on cheerleaders being stalked by guys in hockey masks, it suggests instead that the real monster might lie behind the eyes of the person standing next to you in Tesco.

Rico Ramirez

MULTI-MEDIA REVIEWS

Y: The Last Man #60

Brian K. Vaughan, Pia Guerra

It was Garrison Keillor who wrote: "Years ago manhood was an opportunity for achievement, and now it is a problem to be overcome." No more so is this the case than in writer Brian K. Vaughan and artist Pia Guerra's post-apocalyptic serial *Y: The Last Man*. Set in the aftermath of a plague that, supposedly, kills everything on the planet with a Y chromosome, the story follows the last males on Earth; slacker/escapologist Yorick Brown and his helper-monkey Ampersand, as they trek across the globe to find his girlfriend Beth, last heard from in the Australian outback.

Yorick's journey would be complicated enough without the aid of basic transport and communications infrastructure were it not also for his significance as humanity's only hope in finding the cause of the plague, and maybe even a cure. To this end add the humourless Dr. Alison Mann (who knows more about the 'gendercide' than she lets on) and their protector, Agent 355 of the shadowy organisation 'The Culper Ring' - whose dalliances with mystical relics may also leave her with some explaining to do. Hot on our protagonists' heels are a disparate group of idealists and maniacs ranging from a militant Amazonian movement, a ninja assassin, Yorick's estranged sister Hero, and Alter, a suicidal Lt. Colonel in the Israeli Defence Force. Needless to say, a lot happens.

Finishing its run with issue 60, Vaughan has constructed a 50-page chamber piece where, through a series of flashbacks, we learn the permutations that made up the 'happy ever after' for the remaining protagonists after a dreary evening in Paris where everyone finally got together and everything fell apart. The result is a fine summation of the series, showing off what the Vaughan/Guerra team brought to the table; snappy dialogue, collegiate humour, character design that emphasises the face over the torso and a willingness to experiment with structure where a perfunctory, conservative approach would typically have been expected.

Yorick's last hurrah takes place some 60 years into the future where cloning has taken over as the dominant form of procreation, his clones walk the Earth and universities are toying with the idea of letting male students through their doors. The focus of our attention brefly shifts to a 22-year-old clone of Yorick as he considers his options as a "free man". Summoned to Paris by Yorick's daughter, Beth, now French president, the visitor is given the task of amusing his ailing 'father', making the last man's last moments more bearable that the many years preceeding them.

Throughout the series Vaughan has thrown thematic and philosphical questions at the reader. How does the collective deal with grief? Can women get along without men? What new world order arises out of a situation where huge gaps in authority and skill suddenly appear? What do women do when the proverbial glass ceiling is lifted and the only thing blocking their progress is other women? What about the arts, and, God forbid, what of comics with no male geeks left to read them? As we see in issue 60, Vaughan's answers range from a belief that science will out and that society will pick itself up through co-operation and common sense to some shoulder-shrugging pragmatism that if Truth doesn't float your boat then Faith will still be around to pick up the pieces. What's more the world will be a damn prettier place to boot. Who would have thought all the world needed was a little TLC in order to create a liberal, secular utopia? It's here that the cracks in Vaughan's worldview are on full show. As with the rest of the series' characters, Yorick specifically, no one is shy of the sound of their own voices. The dialogue has a

tendency to descend into didacticism, trivia and one-liners and everyone seems to have a college education. Yorick's introduction to his alter ego, for example, is not the cynical rant of the broken hearted but a chance to impart the nugget of wisdom that Elvis had a twin brother. It should be noted that all knowledge of The King did not make it to the brave new world. One shudders to think about the fate of The Duke.

The flashbacks are a mixed bag. With lesbianism now the default romantic pairing in the world the term 'strange bedfellows' takes on a whole new meaning as some unlikely romances blossom. For the most part all Yorick has left are tales of woe as he recounts the loss of his companions. At the risk of giving too much away things start well then go downhill. Way downhill.

As the heart and soul of Y's success, Guerra's artwork is one part Jack Kirby one part Hernandez Bros., familiar enough to engage the fanboys while daring enough to show off some serious art-comics credibility. Her characters are all curves, clear skin and great hair without ever straying into outright T&A territory. The downside is her creations are designed with such loving care that it seems she is loathe to depict anything ugly. What violence there is here lacks grit and brutality. Blood is coloured ketchup red and wounds always seem clean and uncomplicated. Like everything in the series it's nice, maybe too nice.

Having mastered the art of the cliffhanger over the past five years Vaughan has developed a knack for tapping into his readership, giving them enough of what they know while throwing in some cheap thrills for good measure. Yorick is a recognisable and engaging protagonist, a post-slacker 'everygeek'. He likes magic, has a charitable streak, loves his girlfriend and is all at sea with the fairer sex. He's a dreamer and a misfit and relishes the role of the outcast, constantly playing spoilt child to his adopted aunts Mann and 355. When we meet him in the final issue he has styled himself as a dotty octogenarian, surrounded by helper monkeys and clad in a straightjacket. For all his ups and downs, however, you never get the sense that Yorick is in any danger. He's almost too precious a creation to injure, too much like his readership to be harmed lest people take it seriously. Couldn't they at least have given him a scar or something for his troubles?

As a series, *Y: The Last Man*, typified by its last issue, is an excellent piece of liberal sci-fi writing. According to Vaughan, people are essentially good, attractive and intelligent. Optimism is a virtue, wisdom and invention can be found in the most unlikely of places and science will save us all. Spirituality and superstition are overrated, unless you're on your last legs, democracy is a natural state of government that arises from any period of uncertainty and a good put-down can be every bit as effective as a punch to the chops.

If you buy into this Platonic worldview then Y is certainly the series you have been waiting for. It's a 'nice' read that engages the brain, has a few surprises and only mildly suffers from filler. If you're of a more Hobbesian bent then maybe the misanthropy of Alan Moore or brutality of Brian Azzarello's *100 Bullets* would be more your style.

Vaughan has since moved away from comics to work in television, currently writing for the similarly inoffensive *Lost*. Guerra will be moving on to a series of *Doctor Who* comics with writer Tony Lee. And before you ask, yes, they do use the obvious gag. But at least they left it as the last word in the series. On that alone they can take a bow.

Niall Kitson

Secret Files: Tunguska
(Developer: Dreamcatcher Interactive)
Platform: Multiple platforms: game reviewed on Nintendo DS

In 1908, an unexplained blast tore through the forests of Tunguska, Siberia. The explosion was the equivalent of 2,000 Hiroshima-strength atomic bombs. It destroyed 37 square miles of forest and the flash was seen across the planet. It's far reaching effects included people being able to read newspapers at night in England and Moscow looking like a bright summer's day at midnight. The explanations for the Tunguska explosion range from the credible (a massive meteor smashed into the planet) to the less credible (a UFO crashed into the forest and exploded) to the slightly mad (a tiny black hole formed above Tunguska and travelled straight through the planet, wrecking havoc across the planet - this theory was discredited on the grounds that Helsinki, on the other side of the planet from Tunguska, wasn't turned into a steaming pile of rubble). The explosion at Tunguska has been a favourite of conspiracy theorists for decades, giving rise to hundreds of books and even the occasional film and television show (including, unsurprisingly, *The X-Files*)

In 2006, game developer Dreamcatcher Interactive added to the theories with its point and click adventure *Secret Files: Tunguska*, which has now been released as a DS game. *Secret files* follows the story of Nina Kalenkov, a Berlin-based motorcycle mechanic (no, really) who's father works at a local museum. Upon calling in to visit her father at work one day, Nina discovers that something untoward has happened. Her father is missing and his office in complete disarray, obviously having been searched by someone. The only clue as to what happened is from gleaned from the museum's alcoholic caretaker, who is found hiding in a cupboard muttering about flying men in black robes with no faces.

The game follows Nina (and later on, her father's colleague Max) as they investigate the reasons why her father has disappeared and what it has to do with a mysterious expedition to Tunguska in the 1960's.

The game follows a traditional point and click interface, a method of gameplay that has been in use since the early 1980's (LucasArts *Escape from Monkey Island* is a classic example of this gameplay type). This method of gameplay has since gone out of fashion with programmers and players, generally replaced by the more interactive methods supplied by 3D graphics (a game which exemplifies this approach is the *Resident Evil* series which combines puzzle solving with lots of gory action). Point and Click adventures revolve around puzzle solving and exploring rather than action and gunplay, and *Secret Files* is no different in this respect.

The game is based on static screens, explored through a magnifying glass icon that highlights areas of interest. Various objects picked up along the way must be combined in order to solve puzzles and progress through the game.

All actions can be controlled via the stylus, making the game perfect for the DS's touch-screen interface. However, whilst graphically the game is excellent, the sheer number of puzzles soon becomes infuriating. The first room in the game is Nina's father's office. You gather up a number of random objects in this room (including everything from a bowl of water, a rock and some aloe vera), some of which will not be used for a considerable length of time in a completely different section of the game.
There is no indication of this within the game script, resulting in the player (at least certainly this one) spending 15 minutes randomly combining items and trying things out to see if that completes obvious puzzles which can not be competed until you go to other parts of the game and then return later. Some of

the puzzles also involve less than obvious solutions. At one point, in order to listen in on a phone conversation, you have to sellotape a mobile phone to a cat, which to my mind is a tad random. Also, if you've ever tried to sellotape anything to a cat in real life you'll find out that they really don't like it and the process will probably leave you with permanent scarring…

The sheer number and difficulty of the puzzles in *Secret Files* soon becomes frustrating and lessens the pleasure at playing such a graphically accomplished game. This slows gameplay to a snails pace, resulting in players having to force themselves to play through the game to reach the end. Also of note is the section in which you visit Ireland, which plays up on any number of stereotypes – one puzzle involves bribing a fisherman with a bottle of whiskey and much of the action takes place at the local pub or at the local Lord's Castle (who sounds more Scottish than Irish). Begorrah indeed.

Horror elements within the game are also limited despite its obvious Fortean influences. This is mostly due to the games style and choice of puzzles: it's difficult to experience any sense of horror or menace when you're busy trying to attach a hose pipe to a urinal in order to progress to the next challenge…

Still, it has to be said that *Secret Files: Tunguska* is a good example of a Point and Click adventure and is a perfect game for the DS stylus interface. However, the slow gameplay and sheer difficulty of the puzzles removes much of the enjoyment from the game, as does the general lack of humour (cat and urinals aside) and fact that much of the dialogue is pretty badly written. These factors help discourage the player from caring about the characters and, in my case at least, interest waned long before the game had been completed.

If you're a fan of point and click adventures and puzzle heavy games such as *Hotel Dusk*, then *Secret Files: Tunguska* may well be of interest. However, if you prefer your DS games be short bursts of frenetic fun then it is best avoided and you're better off investing in something a little less cerebral and a lot less frustrating.

Eoin Murphy

Secret Files: Tunguska
Graphics: 8
Gameplay: 5
Sound: 7
Replay Value: 4
Overall Score: 6

The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen: The Black Dossier
(America's Best Comics, 2007)
Written by Alan Moore and Drawn by Kevin O'Neill

The Black Dossier, the third addition to Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* series is apparently intended to serve as a stand-alone stop gap between Volume 2 and 3 of the ongoing series rather than as a fully fleshed instalment in its own right. As such, fans who have been salivating over this much-delayed release (indeed, the book is presently still only available in the United States) may well be slightly disappointed by what is on offer here. *The Black Dossier* is the weakest so far of Moore's LXG efforts, and that is for two main reasons. First of these is the fact that it is, as the title indicates, a 'dossier' containing details of the history and development of the league, and as such is by necessity rather uneven and episodic. Second is the fact that that the contents of the dossier will be nigh on incomprehensible to anyone who has not closely read the previous two volumes, or who, furthermore, does not have a fairly exhaustive knowledge of Victorian and early-mid Twentieth-Century popular literature. That in itself is by no means a bad thing – and indeed, the pleasure one gets from playing "spot the reference" whilst perusing Moore's work here is, as ever, considerable – but all the same, there are occasions here when wry intertextuality is in danger of becoming outright pretension, and those who are not hardcore fans of Moore's erudite and playfully demanding scripts may find themselves somewhat at a loss. In other words, if you want to introduce Moore's work to a newcomer, start elsewhere.

The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen has a premise rather similar to that of Kim Newman's classic alternative universe novel *Anno Dracula* (1992) which also features a disparate band of characters culled from Victorian popular literature. The line-up in the first two volumes consisted of H. Rider Haggard's Allan Quatermain, Bram Stoker's heroine Mina Murray, H.G. Wells Invisible Man, R.L. Stevenson's Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, and Jules's Verne's Captain Nemo, not to mention more cameo appearances from other literary creations both well known and obscure.

The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen has often (and simplistically) been described as a kind of Victorian *X-Men*, and it is presumably this misleadingly reductive appellation which meant that the rights to the first volume were snapped up by Hollywood and subjected to one of the silliest, most appallingly illiterate screen translations of recent years. Moore's complex, humane and uncompromisingly intelligent comic books have never been well served by film makers – see also the film adaptations of *V for Vendetta* and *From Hell*– but Stephen Norrington's version was something of a new low, adding as it did some remarkably unnecessary new characters to the original line-up (namely Stuart Townsend as a blandly sinister Dorian Grey, and the incredibly annoying Shane West as a gee-whiz Tom Sawyer) and some bafflingly unnecessary alterations to those that remained (Mina Murray is now a vampire (!), and fallen imperial hero Allan Quatermain is no longer an opium addict). Needless to say, it was not a success.

*The Black Dossie*r is the first new addition to the series since, and as such is apparently intended to provide an insight into the background of both the league readers will be familiar with as well as serving as a kind of wry unofficial 'history' of the organisation in general. As with the previous volumes, one can take an obsessive delight in each panel, due to the fact that practically every minor character and seemingly throwaway detail contains a sly (or not so sly) reference or allusion to be deciphered by the faithful. However, unlike as in Volumes One and Two, in which the marginalia and esoterica was buttressed by a compelling overall story line (the nefarious designs of Fu Manchu style character in the first story and the attack of H.G. Well's Martian invaders in the second), here, the wraparound story here

is a rather abbreviated and perfunctory chase narrative set in an austere and conformist post-fascist 1950s Britain. Here the ever-youthful Murray and Quatermain, (having gained immortality in a blink-and-you'll miss it aside in the appendix of the second volume), steal the titular dossier from the Ministry of Defence and are chased across the country by a duo of ruthless secret agents. In a typically nice touch, the agents who pursue our hero and heroine are none other than "Jimmy" Bond (depicted as a psychotic would-be rapist) and the sex-obsessed and sadistic Emma Night (a younger and much less likable version of Mrs Peel from *The Avengers*).

The main storyline is in itself fairly clever and enjoyable, if undeniably lightweight and contains a wealth of clever pop culture and literary allusions and pastiches on each page. Similarly, the actual book – or at least the American hard back edition in my possession – is a delightful artefact in its own right, which comes complete with 3-D glasses to be used when reading the final few pages, set in the surreal "Blazing World" first imagined by Margaret Cavendish, which seems to serve as a kind of nexus between all possible worlds, both real and imagined. As for the documents contained in the dossier themselves: well, hardcore fans of the first two instalments will find much to enjoy here, and as ever, O'Neill and Moore's design is witty and appealing, with both men obviously relishing the opportunity to engage in entertaining literary and artistic pastiches. These include: civil service documents written in Orwell's "Unspeak"; a pornographic Tijuana Bible from the same era; a postscript to John Cleland's *Fanny Hill* and a parody of Shakespeare detailing the creation of the "original" league in the time of the Faerie Queen Gloriana (a kind of parallel universe Elizabeth the First), as well as the short story "What Ho, Gods of the Abyss" (which combines P.G. Wodehouse's Jeeves and Wooster with Lovecraft's Cthulu mythos to hilarious effect) and an authentically incomprehensible extract from the work of a fictional beatnik writer who apparently encountered Murray and Quatermain in Post-War San Francisco. As ever, O'Neill's expressive and painstakingly detailed artwork – he's particularly good at capturing facial expressions – contributes immensely to proceedings, to the extent that it's nigh on impossible to imagine the series without him.

What *The Black Dossier* essentially does then is fill in the gaps between what happened to the League between the end of the last volume (about 1898) and the likely beginning of the highly-ambitious and much anticipated next volume, to be entitled "Century", which is scheduled for initial publication in 2009 and will take the adventures of the league right upon to the present day. As such, the undeniably episodic, somewhat insubstantial, and, dare I say it, occasionally self-indulgent *The Black Dossier* will not suit all tastes, but nevertheless, it is still a dauntingly well researched, erudite, and above all, playful addition to the a remarkably entertaining series, if not quite up to the dauntingly high standards of its predecessors.

Kelly Grant

Dementium: The Ward
(Developer: Renegade Kid)
Platform: Nintendo DS

If there's any one building that has suffered at the hands of videogame developers over recent years, it has to be the hospital.*Silent Hill* filled one with blank faced nurses wielding scalpels, *Resident Evil* occupied its hospital with zombies and *The Suffering* populated theirs with monsters that wanted to rend and tear human flesh.

And now along comes *Dementium: The Ward*.

Unusually for a horror RPG, *Dementium: The Ward* is played from a first person perspective, and the opening of the game immediately immerses the player into their character. There is no back story, and no opening CGI: your avatar just wakes up in a hospital bed following a crack of lightning, disoriented and wondering just what the hell is going on. Initial hints abound: for instance, the word 'murderer' is scrawled on blood on the walls (which is seldom a good sign). The first glimpse of a monster is when you walk into the hallway to see a massive creature dragging a screaming woman through the hallway by her hair. This approach - dropping the player straight into the gameplay without any preliminarily preamble – serves to create a strong sense of curiosity and encourages exploration of the environment through dark hallways illuminated only through broken lamps with the aid of a handy flashlight discovered in a nearby cupboard.

The atmosphere of the game is augmented by the clever use of sound. The game is perhaps best played with a set of headphones connected to the DS, so that the sound surrounds you and helps bring you further into the game, starting at every creak of a door and blip of a heart monitor (of which there are a lot!).

The graphics are excellent for the DS, which does not have the power of other rival handheld console the PSP (Playstation Portable). The graphics are reminiscent of the original *Silent Hill* on the Playstation One, and indeed, the limitations of the platform's capabilities actually add to the overall game atmosphere. Where *Silent Hill* used fog to limit the amount of pop up (pop up is when a building or object suddenly appears on the screen, rather than emerging gradually), *Dementium* makes use of the dark hospital lighting and length of corridors to ensure this is not an issue. The game's developers make good use of lighting effects. As previously noted, the gamer is provided early in the game with a flash light with which to navigate through the hospital corridors. In a similar method to that employed by Id Software's *Doom 3*, the player has to switch between the torch and weapons to defend themselves. This adds an extra level of strategy, because the player has to switch between the flashlight and weapons to fend off creature attacks.

Enemy models are again taken from a similar stable as that of *Silent Hill*, as the hideously misshapen results of monstrous scientific experiments roam the halls. The first enemies you meet are humanoid, their heads distorted by massive fanged mouths and an open chest cavity through which you can see their hearts. One caste of enemy is introduced when you pass through the infant ward and glimpse incubators through large glass windows. Once you get near them you realise the incubators are occupied by baby sized worms which then swarm around you, filling the screen with red blurs as you take damage and desperately search for a way out of the room.

Both DS screens are made use of:, with the top screen showing the game screen and the touch screen proving information on health and items held.

The game is controlled through a combination of the stylus and the left side of the DS (although this can be altered depending on the individual gamers playing style). The stylus is used to control where you look and aim once you get access to fire arms) and the left hand controls the d-pad which involves movement. The left shoulder button controls item use, from turning on the flashlight to hitting enemies with a truncheon (always a handy thing to leave lying around a hospital!)

The story is driven by your character (identified as John Doe by the chart outside his hospital room) who explores the hospital and tries to discover why he's there and why the building is filled with monsters. Following the formula established by other traditional horror RPG's you have to fight various Boss characters to progress through the game. Back story is provided by the various files and news clippings you find distributed throughout the hospital.

Whilst the game is graphically good, and features excellent sound, it does have a number of problems. One of the most significant is with the control system. Whilst it makes good use of the DS stylus, you still end up holding the DS one handed, with your thumb controlling movement and your forefinger using the left shoulder button. This quickly puts a strain on your hand and if you play it the game for longer than an hour at a time – as most players probably will at some point – you will end up with severe cramp. This problem is less pronounced in the DS Lite but most players will still probably need to limit gameplay in order to alleviate the discomfort caused by this awkward controls . And this is where difficulty number two arrives. The game performs an autosave when you quit a session, allowing you to return to the point you left from. However, if your character is subsequently killed, the game restarts at the start of your current chapter. At one point this resulted in my having to replay over 30 minutes of the game, which was deeply frustrating.

Dementium: The Ward is ultimately most reminiscent of the horror and fantasy based RPG's that once ruled on the original Playstation and Xbox platforms. It's good to see game developers starting to create DS games for an adult audience, given that the vast majority of existing titles for the console seem to be designed for children (such as the likes of *Pokemon*, *Cooking Mama*, *Nintendogs* and *My Horse and Me*) or if not, largely consist of repackaging classic arcade games (as in *Atari Retro Hits*) or gimmicky puzzle/brain training releases. The graphics push the DS to its limits and combine with the sound to create atmospheric gameplay that will get the occasional jump out of you. Despite the poor save system, *Dementium: The Ward* is still a must have for horror fans with a DS.

Eoin Murphy

Dementium: Secret Files
Graphics: 9
Gameplay: 8
Sound: 8
Replay Value: 6
Overall Score: 7.75

Vampire: The Masquerade - Bloodlines
(Developer – Troika) Rated 18
Platform – PC-CD ROM

"Blood? It's your new rack of lamb, your new champagne. Blood's your new f**ckin' heroin!" In a typically tongue-in-cheek style, one of *Vampire*'s many characters explains to you the basics of what it means to be a vampire in Troika's game. Here, you play a fledgling vampire in the twenty-first century. The twenty-first century, up to date with a vengeance.

Why such a grand opening? Because *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines* defines the videogame vampire as powerfully as *Dracula* defines the literary one. All vampire texts, in whatever medium, are haunted by the shadow of influence cast by Stoker's novel, and this game is no different. Indeed, it attempts, (successfully, I think) to revise Stoker's vampire myths to authenticate and canonise its own vampire world, twenty first Century L.A. Laptops replace typewriters, email replaces the telegram, and sub-machine guns replace garlic, stakes, and the crucifix. *Vampire*'s developers, Troika, go out of their way to offer videogame players a world separate to Stoker's, where vampires and their prey are governed by different technologies and codes of survival to those found in late Victorian writing. In the tutorial stage of the game, Jack, your incidental instructor, continues to explain how you as a vampire are to survive:

"You can still be destroyed, but…forget the books and the movies. Garlic? It's worthless. A cross? Pfft. Shove it right up their ass! A stake? Only if it catches you in the heart."

Vampire positions itself in a post-Anne Rice world, where all the religious weaponry that was effective in the nineteenth century is now null and void. Here's why I think the game is so effective at setting a new standard of vampire mythology, and it's our way into reviewing the game itself: the dialogue. The things that the characters say in this game really bring the world to life. Since *Vampire* is an Action/Role Playing hybrid, you'll spend a lot of time getting to know your surroundings, talking to NPCs and taking a side in the epic plot that unfolds. What's initially striking about this is the detail the game surrounds you in. There's haunted mansions, (clearly inspired by the *Thief* games) goth clubs, graveyards, and even a Chinatown to explore. Every NPC you can interact with is extremely well-written, each one with their own distinct personality and agenda. In a medium so restrained by poor dialogue and stereotypical characters, *Vampire* is a breath of fresh air. Although you'll quickly develop a favourite, the game introduces a truly inspired character at every turn, discarding one brilliantly written, brilliantly voiced character for an even better one. Again and again. My favourite is Gary, the Nosferatu Primogen, who in life, was a 1940's Hollywood *noir* actor. His lines are so good they wouldn't look out of place in well… a 1940's Hollywood *film noir*. Here, the writing serves to make these supernatural characters believable, and its connection to popular culture and American urban living, authenticates their views on a recognisable world in which they exist secretly amongst the living.

It's easy to get carried away with all this excellent attention to detail, but it's only half of what makes a game great. Does *Vampire* work as well as a game as it would as a film? Well, the answer is yes and no. One thing that's very well done is how the Role Playing elements augment but never dominate the game. You pick a vampire clan, each with different special abilities, and undergo quests set by the various characters you encounter. Each time you successfully complete a quest, you're given points which you can spend in order to upgrade these abilities. For example, one of these abilities allows you to turn yourself invisible for a short period of time. Upgrading this ability allows you to remain invisible for

longer, and under the noses of ever more powerful and perceptive foes. Unlike many Role Playing games, where upgrading the statistics of a character seems to be the sole reward and reason for playing, *Vampire*'s stat system is a route to a much deeper level of enjoyment. You earn points in interesting ways, (such as in one quest where you exorcise a haunted house) and put them to ever more inventive uses. In one bizarre and hilarious example, you can use your powers of persuasion to convince a haughty restaurant critic to write a bad review. Victory isn't simply the killing of faceless monsters because you have a higher set of numbers than them. It's also because you have the ability to outwit or persuade your foes to do your bidding. *Vampire* is a much more realistic gaming experience than other RPGs, where these foes often use speech craft rather than brute force to scupper your chances of success. It's a feature that merges imaginative game design and character writing seamlessly, demonstrating that games can indeed compete with other mediums in telling stories, without actually forgetting that they're games, and not novels or films.

But there are some drawbacks as well. Firstly, and perhaps most superficially, the graphics aren't all that great. *Vampire*'s graphic engine is based on Valve's Source code, used in the *Half-Life 2* series. Even in 2004 when Vampire was released, its visuals looked rather dated. Although the engine allows for realistic facial expressions on the NPCs that you talk to, the lighting dynamics are often poor, and many of the environments in the game are sparsely decorated. *Vampire*'s atmosphere comes from its music, sound effects and period textures, rather than its surface appearance. Also, the game is incredibly buggy, where some quest events in the game fail to work the first time you encounter them, meaning you have to re-load your save game and try them again. The physics in the game are often erratic, where boxes fail to touch the floor, and thrown bodies spin endlessly in the air if their trajectory is impeded by any part of the scenery that's in their path. It seems here that Troika have a game that's just a little *too* ambitious. They've used a graphics engine which isn't really suitable for the sheer range of genres that they offer. As such, *Vampire* feels a little confused, trying its best to hold its vast genre hybridity together. It can't decide whether it's an action game, an adventure game, or a traditional RPG. Rather than blending these features seamlessly together, its quests force you to change your playing style according to its needs, breaking the immersive nature of actually being a vampire and doing things in the way you choose to yourself. For example, towards the end of the game, there's an over-emphasis on combat elements. Here, all those points you've carefully spent on linguistic and scholarship abilities are wasted and never put to use again. Why couldn't Troika have offered a non-violent solution to the game's conclusion, allowing vampire players with a specialist in speech craft to find a solution that caters for their style of play?

Despite these drawbacks, *Vampire*'s strengths keep you playing. For every combat segment that outstays its welcome, there's a brilliant dialogue exchange and plot twist to reward you with. After you've encountered another one of the game's totally convincing characters, you'll swear the trawl to get to them was worth it. The sheer depth, while confusing at times, will keep you coming back to the game time and time again. There's dozens of optional side quests with multiple solutions, and the world reacts to each vampire clan differently, ensuring that no two gaming experiences are the same. *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines* is an assortment of inspired writing and ill-considered code, of atmospheric depth and poor design. But for anyone who ever wanted to see the world from the perspective of a vampire: install the patch, draw the curtains, and enter the night.

Stuart Lindsay

Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines
Graphics: 7
Gameplay: 7
Sound: 9
Replay Value: 10
Average Score: 8.25

TELEVISION REVIEWS

"We See Dead People": Living TV's *Most Haunted* (2002 - present) & *Ghost Whisperer* (2005 - present)

Although Living TV, a British satellite/cable channel, claims to provide what it calls "women oriented entertainment," it more closely resembles a series of advertising slots for the services of numerous heroic investigator-types. A regular viewer rapidly learns that should she find herself plagued by violent crime, she should seek out a brooding, sombrely dressed man, preferably one who shuns sunlight in case it singes his undead skin, who spends his days in a windowless laboratory, or who only removes his shades when dramatic emphasis requires it. Perhaps less puzzling is the parallel implication that, should one's difficulties stem from the disgruntled dead, a young, good-looking married woman with big eyes and acute hearing is best qualified for the job. Specifically, "reality"-TV behemoth *Most Haunted* and *Ghost Whisperer*, a supernatural drama series in the *Touched-By-an-Angel* vein, both posit women as particularly susceptible to and suitable for what Edith Wharton referred to as "ghost feeling," relying upon time-honoured associations between femininity, the uncanny and the rituals surrounding death. Via these domesticated Sibyls who guide us through the televisual underworld, uncovering long-buried truths and taming unruly spirits, Living offers its viewers vicarious fantasies of impossible agency that do little to unsettle either the audience or traditional gender stereotypes.

There is more to the choice of a female protagonist than audience identification, however. Any show that claims to produce genuine, regular paranormal phenomena leaves itself vulnerable to debunking efforts, and *Most Haunted* is no exception. The bulwark of its defence against the tide of disbelief comes in the delicate, blonde form of Yvette Fielding, a former *Blue Peter* presenter, and the one member of the team who has visibly been around from the beginning. Strongly evoking the ultra-rational environment of *Blue Peter*, where even sticky-backed plastic and dangerous animals behave themselves, she provides a vital anchor for what would otherwise be literally and laughably incredible. Obviously, television can draw upon vast resources as regards special effects, editing and lighting tricks (for example the "orbs" that supposedly indicated the presence of spectral energy), while mysterious bumps and knocking sounds issuing from darkened corners are ludicrously cheap and easy to produce. Nonetheless, rather than focusing on the potential for simple image manipulation, audiences have instead seized as scapegoats the participating mediums and their incorporeal interlocutors. Wishing desperately for the ghosts to be real and yet (or maybe therefore) determined to unmask an imposter, in 2005, there were some quite successful efforts to expose the then psychic-incumbent, Derek Acorah. In response, the British communication industry's official watchdog Ofcom ruled that *Most Haunted* contains:

> a high degree of showmanship that puts it beyond what we believe to be a generally accepted understanding of what comprises a legitimate investigation. On balance, we consider that overall *Most Haunted*/*Most Haunted Live* should be taken to be a programme produced for entertainment purposes. This is despite what appear to be occasional assertions by the programme that what viewers are witnessing is real. As such this programme should be seen in the light of shows where techniques are used which mean the audience is not necessarily in full possession of the facts. (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4500322.stm)

Indeed, if anything, since 2005 the show (now running to ten seasons, and supplemented by frequent live specials) has actually gone to greater and greater lengths to ensure that the audience is not "in full

possession of the facts." Following the fragmented Gothic format familiar from Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* to Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, *Most Haunted* revels in moments when sound is lost, the camera cannot move quickly enough to capture events and, occasionally, the screen goes completely black. Keeping the viewers literally in the dark was not, however, always central to its *modus operandi*. Coinciding neatly with the departure of Acorah (he was prepped with false information and then proceeded to "channel" a fabricated ghost), the visual style has altered considerably from that of earlier seasons. Eschewing a *mis-en-scène* reminiscent of Victorian phantasmagoria, which relied on fancy stage effects, showy lighting, camera tricks and dry ice (significantly, haunted theatres featured prominently in these early episodes), the editors now favour a pared-down, claustrophobic, motion-sickness inducing *Blair Witchiness*. In particular, the programme is characterised by an almost Manichean *chiaroscuro*, where the flamboyant use of night-vision photography (a current horror-film staple) clashes with occasional glimpses of strong lights in the background.

With this new streamlined style, and the absence of the one truly memorable psychic (who has been replaced by a clutch of matronly women with neat bobs and semi-emaciated men with strange accents and modest goatees), it has become increasingly evident that Yvette Fielding, whose on-screen persona vacillates between informed *reporteuse* and startled woodland creature, is the real star of the show. When the crew are wandering tensely around stygian stone corridors, dusty attics and vaulted cellars, tension is evoked by means of extended close-ups of Fielding's eyes, exaggerated far beyond their usual size by night-vision cameras and framed with spidery black lashes, which one must assume have been coated in some form of light-sensitive mascara. While Acorah and those who come after him may be the ones actually contacting the spirits, what carries the show is Fielding's strongly marked femininity, her gasps, her screams, the imperceptible sounds she claims to hear, and the spectacle of her metamorphosis from an authoritative narratorial voice to a mere cipher for innocence in peril.

What is more, as the numerous interviews with Fielding available on the Living website attest, over the years she has herself become increasingly sensitive to spirits, developing an ability to encourage manifestations and the "knocking" that the show is so devoted to, even in her everyday life. This is a canny move on Living's part – those slippery professional psychics might be lying, but our Yvette? Heaven forefend! To underline her position as an icon of virtue and sensibility, the programme is punctuated by her constant queries as to whether everyone else is OK. Her reified and constantly foregrounded figure is therefore almost Protean in its inclusiveness, encapsulating a petrified Gothic heroine, a natural-born ghost-feeler, a nurturing mother figure, and a concerned and devoted wife (her husband, Karl Beattie, being both co-creator and co-star, and, somewhat randomly, an honorary Samurai). That the show's depiction of femininity nevertheless rests on a somewhat shaky ideological basis was made clear in a recent live show from Turin – "Satan's City"! – which revolved around that old Gothic dichotomy of benevolent Protestant rationality versus Catholic corruption and sexual violence (think naked women being tied to pillars and whipped by hooded monks). This served to draw perhaps too much attention to the fact that the voyeuristic sadism directed against women all too familiar from the Gothic is never far below the surface of the show (they love their Victorian murderers and Medieval torturers). Arguably, then, Fielding serves as a refinement of Carol J. Clover's "Final Girl," the heroine who, by helping to expose and/or vanquish the murderers of other women, allows the audience conveniently to forget the gloating pleasure they have taken in the others' appalling deaths.

Centring on family conflicts instead of on historical and religious violence, Living's *Ghost Whisperer* also features a latter-day Gothic heroine who, as she announces smugly at the start of early episodes, is also married. Melinda is played by the pneumatic Jennifer Love Hewitt, whose ample feminine assets are

matched only by her melting yet highly observant eyes. Once again, central to the staging of frightened womanhood is this particular part of her physiognomy – fetishised, fringed by fluttering lashes, emphasised with dark eye-shadow and growing ever wider as Melinda gasps, faints, and pants provocatively. Unlike Fielding, however, who may be sensitive but must still rely on others to mediate between her and the spirits, Melinda is quite literally her own medium. While Fielding stares, blinded and trembling, into the darkness, Melinda can *see.*Essentially a post-mortem family counsellor, in the majority of episodes she acts as a mediator for troubled, restless souls who need messages to be relayed and interpreted to the living, so that they can "cross over" to "the other side". While the *Most Haunted* crew also engage in this form of neo-religious exorcism, the fictional format of *Ghost Whisperer* works very much in its favour, permitting the depiction of spirits moving euphorically toward "the light". In almost every episode, once the ornaments have finished shattering and livid spectres cease trying to strangle their nearest and dearest, therefore, we are shown unequivocally that everyone always loves one another and that unity, harmony and understanding will ultimately prevail. Crucially, though, this is only possible with the intercession of the Final Girl from a film that Sarah Michelle Gellar once apparently referred to as *I Know What Your Tits Did Last Summer*.

Why marital status should be so vital to media portrayals of mediumship (it also features prominently in *Medium*, staring Patricia Arquette) becomes clear in the Season 3 episode "Unhappy Medium" (2007) which pits the formidable Miranda against a flashy, professional, Acorah-esque psychic. The craze for spiritualism in the mid- and late 1800s, which inevitably involved a lot more razzmatazz in America than in the UK, created a division between public mediums (generally young, single, lower-class girls who displayed their talents in large public theatres) and private mediums – respectable middle-class ladies, often married, who "performed" only for select audiences in the comfort of their own or their clients' homes. Melinda is definitely of this second species, generally encountering ghosts in her own or other peoples' immaculate houses, and highly critical of the manipulative showman Carey, who eventually and predictably learns that telling the truth is far more important than impressing or even comforting people. Interestingly, the programme's multimedia apparatus is similarly concerned with a dual ideology that upholds both a sort of sanctified privacy and a commitment to revealing the truth. A quick trawl through Google and Wikipedia reveals a bewildering world of spin-off websites, including secret sites

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wobbly camerawork, which claim to allow us to experience what death is like for the dead. Living's decision to confine these slightly more disturbing and visually innovative episodes to the web suggests an uneasy attitude towards frightening images, which are generally only permitted a few seconds of screen-time in the programme itself. Indeed, its post-*Ring* flickering revenants produce nothing even vaguely akin to numinous dread, a situation not exactly improved by its repeated assertion that the evil dead can be transformed into the faithful departed by a perceptive young lady administering a psychic talking cure. For all its labyrinthine invocations of the mysteries of the grave, then, it would seem that the show's exploitation of Gothic iconography functions as little more than edgy window dressing.

Much the same can be said of *Most Haunted*, the Living TV website of which includes discussion forums, interviews, behind-the-scenes clips and even a page that allows viewers to send "white noise" messages to their friends that, allegedly, accurately test psychic ability. While this apparently limitless surplus of information and comment flickering across the computer screen heightens the sense that there is so much more going on than the audience can ever fully comprehend, it also serves a more reassuring purpose, suggesting that information (and, by extension, the "truth") will always be at our fingertips. Indeed, despite attempts to expose it as the fake it quite obviously is, *Most Haunted* remains a potential source of comfort, assuring its devoted audience that there is some sort of existence after death. What is more, the cosiness of the format, flipping as the live version does between a warm, well-lit studio and embedded shots of underground tunnels, reminds the viewer of his or her comparative safety while distracting from any real problems that might be lurking in the darkness surrounding the television set. And if this doesn't work, they can always log onto the website and get beauty tips, relationship advice and celebrity gossip while leaving forum posts about how scary last night's programme was.

Ultimately therefore both programmes disappoint. While a female protagonist permits an exploration of cultural unease that is rarely attached to male characters in similarly popular productions such as *Supernatural* or *Moonlight*, in which muscles and decisiveness are very much to the fore, there is little sense that either show is concerned with addressing what fear and death mean in the Western world in the early twenty first century. I am beginning to suspect, however, that this is rather the point.

DARA DOWNEY

Casting the Runes
(Network/Yorkshire TV/Granada, 1979)

Despite certain recent and generally unwelcome developments which need not detain us here, British television may still be said to enjoy an enviable reputation as the world's leading purveyor of quality programming, particularly in the field of literary adaptation. In the past, this position was achieved by the eschewal of any attempt to compete with Hollywood in terms of star performers and high production values, and by concentrating instead on the fundamentals of good writing and good performances – the "sense and sensibility" approach, as it were. Thus, while the period details of *I, Claudius* may have been rather less convincing than those of *Carry On Cleo*, the drama and acting were of the highest possible standard. And if Hollywood failed to meet expectations, as, for example, in the case of Sherlock Holmes or *The Forsyte Saga*, then British television could generally be relied on to make up for its deficiencies.

In the case of M.R. James's *Casting the Runes*, therefore, it seemed reasonable to suppose that Yorkshire television's 1979 adaptation, made for the ITV Playhouse slot and now released on DVD by Network, would differ significantly from *Night of the Demon*, Jacques Tourneur's classic film version of 1957 which, whatever its many virtues, could not be described as a model of fidelity to James's original. In a British television adaptation there would, presumably, be no poker-faced American leading man, no scenes between the warlock Karswell and his mother, no credulous peasants, and, most certainly, no twenty-four-foot-tall, fire-breathing monster. Indeed, one could almost see the story unfolding in its understated yet eerie way, with Mr. Dunning, suitably attired in Edwardian frockcoat, pointing out the mysterious blue letters on the window of a suitably period omnibus to a suitably deferential conductor and driver . . .

And, it must be admitted, with regard to differing significantly from Tourneur's film, *Casting the Runes* does not disappoint, the most obvious dissimilarity being that, while the former can justly be termed a minor masterpiece, the latter can most accurately be described as a major catastrophe on a minor scale. Set in the present-day, i.e., 1978 (so no frockcoats then), it opens with a flashback to 1968. John Harrington (Christopher Good) is walking his dog in a wintry, bleak rural setting (Yorkshire, presumably), unaware of being watched by what looks like a cardboard cut-out of Godzilla propped against a barbed-wire fence. Catching sight of the Thing, Harrington attempts to flee, only to find himself menaced by a close-up, negative-image of a man in a gorilla suit. And then, before the poor chap can even say "Yes, we have no bananas", he is suddenly seized by an invisible force and hurled repeatedly to the ground (looking, it need hardly be added, pretty damn silly in the process).

Cut back to 1978: Prudence Dunning (Jan Francis), a TV producer, has made a programme debunking various dabblers in Things Best Left Undabbled In, including "a middle-aged American of somewhat obscure background" named N.I. Karswell (Iain Cuthbertson). Later on, rewatching the programme in an editing suite, she is surprised to discover, on the end of the reel, mysterious yellow letters which read "In memoriam John Harrington 1937-1968. One month was allowed."

Researching witchcraft in a library, Prudence attaches no significance to an incident in which a large, sinister man dressed in black knocks over and then retrieves her books, but later that night, she is alarmed to find Something Horrible lurking in her bed. When she confides in her boss, Derek Gayton (Bernard Gallagher), he insists that she stay with him and his wife, Jean (Joanna Dunham), who used to work in publishing with John Harrington and who remembers that Harrington had died not long after rejecting a history of witchcraft submitted by none other than the mysterious Mr. Karswell.

Deciding to visit Harrington's brother, Henry (Edward Petherbridge), Prudence learns that, prior to his death, John had discovered a slip of paper covered with runic symbols inside a music programme given to him by a large man at a festival hall concert. Before either man could examine it further, the paper was blown into the fireplace by an inexplicable, warm gust of air, and burnt. Speaking to Derek, Prudence recalls the encounter at the library, and, sure enough, soon discovers a similar slip of paper hidden inside one of her books. Having read a chapter in Karswell's tome on "Casting the Runes", she realises she must return the spell to Karswell before the passage of a month.

Presenting herself as a member of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, Prudence visits Karswell on the pretext of giving him a questionnaire, but the warlock easily sees through her disguise. As time passes, and Prudence's nerves unravel, she and Derek finally learn that Karswell, who has since remained in seclusion, is due to leave for Caracas. At the airport, Derek approaches Karswell at the ticket desk and kicks over his case. After a brief verbal exchange, Karswell turns back and takes his ticket, only to see that Prudence has switched places with the real ticket desk clerk. Inside the ticket are the Runes. Unable to return them, Karswell proceeds to board his flight. Later on, Prudence sees a news report about the loss, over the Bristol Channel, of a Brazilian jumbo jet *en route* to Caracas.

As can be seen then, *Casting the Runes*, despite changes in time, place, gender, and nationality, certainly adheres more closely to the details of James's story than *Night of the Demon*. Unfortunately, however, a screen adaptation requires more than mere fidelity to its source material (welcome in principle though that may be) in order to be deemed a success – namely a certain inspiration in the writing (to draw out and explore elements of the subtext, for instance) and in the visual presentation (translating prose into pictures). In both these areas, *Casting the Runes* must be judged a lamentable failure.

The key, it would seem, to a successful adaptation of *Casting the Runes* lies in the character of Karswell, a fact immediately grasped by Charles Bennett, scriptwriter of *Night of the Demon*. In James's story, Karswell remains, until the final scene, an off-page presence, a device which works perfectly well in prose but which is obviously a complete non-starter for the screen. Thus liberated from fidelity by necessity, Bennett went on to create one of the great screen villains. By contrast, the late Clive Exton (who would later do such splendid work on ITV's *Jeeves and Wooster*), despite introducing Karswell early on in the story, succeeds only in making him sinister and weird, as opposed to human and compelling – a standard bogeyman, in short (why he should be an American, as opposed to a British bogeyman, is left unexplained). As for the preposterous ending (Of course! Have her change places with the ticket clerk – that's plausible), the less said the better.

The direction, by Lawrence Gordon Clark, is excruciatingly flat and heavy-handed, a surprising fact in view of his previous experience in bringing James to the screen in the BBC's annual *Ghost Story for Christmas* slot (a festive fixture throughout the early Seventies, some of which have been released on DVD by the BFI). To some extent, of course, it would be pointless to draw attention to the horrible combination of grainy, 16mm. footage used for the exteriors and the harsh, hideously over-lit interiors shot on video because that's just the ways things were done back then. Nonetheless, the director appears to have made no attempt whatsoever to convey the necessary sense of dread, either through lighting, composition, editing, or, indeed, the exercise of imagination. The performances, meanwhile, can best be described as adequate – though the imposing Cuthbertson (best remembered for the mid-Seventies' series *Sutherland's Law*) might have made a very good Karswell, given the chance.

The DVD also contains what, on brief inspection, appears to be an equally unlovely, 17-minute adaptation of James's *Mr Humphreys and His Inheritance*, made by Yorkshire TV in 1976, and a 48-minute Anglia TV documentary from 1995, entitled *A Pleasant Terror: The Life and Ghosts of M.R. James*, featuring contributions from Christopher Lee (who, in 2000, appeared as James to introduce and narrate the BBC's *Ghost Stories for Christmas*), Ruth Rendell, Jonathan Miller, and James's biographer, Michael Cox.

It goes without saying, of course, that anyone unfortunate enough to have come into possession of this sadly inadequate offering should proceed, without further delay, to place the Runes (otherwise the receipt) inside the box, and return it from whence it came. Within one month, of course. And if you later see a report about a DVD store and all its customers being mysteriously engulfed in a ball of fire, just sit back, ruminate on the Seventies' irony of it all, and remember... it could have been YOU!

JOHN EXSHAW

Dead Again: *Pushing Daisies*
(ABC, 2007-present)

For those already familiar with the work of writer/producer Brian Fuller, the odd mix of morbid black humour, unabashed whimsy and imaginative word play found in his latest show *Pushing Daisies* will be nothing new. Formerly a writer on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (which was for a couple of seasons at least, amongst the finest small-screen space operas ever, at least until the incomparable *Battlestar Galactica* came on the scene), Fuller also, somewhat less auspiciously, worked on *Star Trek: Voyager* and a made-for TV version of Stephen King's *Carrie*. More recently, he contributed to the popular but erratic Heroes, which has just about survived a poor second season.

In addition, Fuller has created two of the most interesting, if most under appreciated, fantasy television shows of the past decade: *Dead Like Me* and *Wonderfalls*. Both featured cynical, misanthropic protagonists granted special powers which obliged them, albeit reluctantly, to engage with the world around them for the benefit of others. George Lass, heroine of *Dead Like Me* was an aimless eighteen year old killed by debris from the Mir Space station is instantly resurrected as a so-called 'Reaper', one of the select group of unwitting immortals who escort the recently departed to the other side. A slacker philosophy grad with a bracingly acerbic world-view who becomes a reluctant modern-day Joan of Arc is the heroine of *Wonderfalls* (briefly shown on TV 3, but alas, not yet available outside the US on DVD). The show starred Caroline Dhavernas as Jaye Tyler, a gift store clerk whose mundane existence is upended one day when a dented wax lion suddenly begins to speak and demands that she carry out seemingly odd but cosmically significant tasks that lead those around her to seriously question her sanity. (Indeed, if the show had been granted a reprieve the second season would apparently have seen Jaye confined to an asylum – this was definitely not your typical US fantasy series then).

Dead Like Me was, at its finest, a very good show indeed, featuring as it did an likeably caustic lead in Ellen Muth (as far from the air-headed, Stepford-esque starlets of the typical US TV series as it was possible to get) and an excellent ensemble cast able to deliver the show's rapid fire, bracingly foul-mouthed dialogue with gusto. If the show had one major flaw, it was that the ongoing focus upon George's grieving family meant that far too much airtime was devoted to her irritating mother and little sister as they tried to rebuild their lives without her. Still, the show managed to survive for two seasons before being cancelled.

Wonderfalls, co-created by former *Angel* show runner Tim Minear was not quite so lucky and only managed thirteen episodes (of which just 4 where aired in the States). Nevertheless, it remains one of my favourite shows of all time: witty, inventive, silly but in an imaginative way, and, like its predecessor, an immensely humane, likable programme despite (or perhaps because) of the unalloyed misanthropy of its exhilaratingly sarcastic protagonist. For instance, consider this characteristically bracing exchange from the pilot episode:

Little Girl: You're not supposed to steal.
Jaye: You're not supposed to talk to strangers. Piss off!

So what of *Pushing Daisies* then? If anything, the show could be described as Brian Fuller-lite. Gone is the strong language of *Wonderfalls* and *Dead Like Me*, in which the phrase "mother fucker" or some imaginative variation there-of was employed roughly every two minutes or so: this is strictly

family-friendly stuff. It's also unlikely that *Pushing Daisies* will ever feature a leading character quite as messed up as George's junkie Reaper colleague Mason. However, the basic premise is very similar indeed to *DLM*, whilst the deeply whimsical and, at times, outright silliness of the shows plotlines owes much to *Wonderfalls*. Fuller's fondness for Hitchcockian pastiches is also much in evidence here as well: both *Spellbound* and *The Birds* have been playfully spoofed.

Once more, we have a leading character who has an unwanted gift that comes with a considerable catch. In a rather neat reversal of George's abilities in *DLM*, the neurotic, self-contained hero of *Pushing Daisies*, Ned (Lee Pace, who also played Jaye's Theologian brother in *Wonderfalls*) can resurrect dead things – including people – with the merest touch. The problem is, if Ned touches anyone he has resurrected ever again, they die instantly, and permanently. Furthermore, a life regained is a life lost elsewhere: if Ned doesn't extinguish the life force of someone he has risen from the dead within a minute, someone else nearby will drop dead. So far, so high concept. Having teamed up with a cynical Private Detective named Emerson Cod (Chi McBride), Ned makes extra cash on the side by waking murder victims long enough to find out whom killed them and then pocketing the reward by solving the mystery. However, when he is asked to investigate the murder of his childhood sweetheart Chuck, his heart overrides his head and Ned cannot bring himself to let her stay dead. And so, the show's main premise is neatly established: it's the story of two people very much in love who cannot so much as kiss without fatal consequences.

Given the Technicolor mise-en-scene (kind of like Tim Burton crossed with a live-action cartoon), vaguely retro-50s set design and costuming, deliberately syrupy music, and deeply sentimental premise, it could well be argued that in *Pushing Daisies*, Fuller has watered down his work with a large dose of Amelie-style saccharine in order to (successfully) appeal to a wider audience. Certainly, at least so far – and to be fair, due to the US writer's strike, the first season contains only nine episodes – the show isn't quite as bleakly funny, or as morally complex as some of his earlier work. And yet, prepared though I was to loathe it from the moment that I saw the immensely twee, calculatedly sentimental looking preview, I find myself quite liking my weekly dose of whimsy after all.

Part of this is due to the fact that Fuller has again assembled a very likable cast. As the deeply un-sentimental Emerson Cod, Chi McBride provides a much-needed dose of sarcasm to help puncture what would otherwise be an unbearably sentimental premise. Similarly, Kirstin Chernowith impresses as Ned's love struck but ruthless waitress Olive. Lee Pace is agreeably twitchy and self-contained as the melancholic hero whose unconventional abilities have rendered him emotionally retarded, whilst Anna Friel, who plays Chuck, is, if not quite as witty and bracingly acerbic as Fuller's earlier heroines, still a likable, amiable presence. Her performance is certainly much more appealing than that of fellow Brit-Soap star turned US fantasy show heroine, Michelle Ryan, whose dour and sorely miscast turn in the dull *Bionic Woman* remake was surely a key factor in that show's rapid demise.

In a twist that is again highly reminiscent of *Dead Like Me*, the newly resurrected Chuck, like George Lass, cannot allow her family to know that she has returned from the dead lest Ned's power be revealed. However, here, the ongoing presence of Chuck's grieving aunts, the magnificently eccentric Lilly and Vivian Charles (formerly known as "The Darling Mermaid Darlings" due to their previous lives as a famous synchronised swimming act) adds a tart jolt of genuinely affecting melancholy to proceedings which may otherwise have proved unbearably whimsical. Gleefully exaggerated though their costumes and dialogue may be, and despite the inherent cartoonishness of their characters, Swoozie Kurtz and Ellen

Greene still manage to convey the genuine devastation at the loss of the most important person in their lives. Furthermore, despite the use of devices which some viewers may find excruciatingly cute – the resolutely chaste and idealised central romance, the story-book style narration, constant use of alliteration, light-as-air plotting and bad puns – *Pushing Daisies* retains the core of genuine humanity and wit which characterises Fuller's work at its best. Ultimately, there's something so playfully good-natured and agreeably witty about the whole thing that it's hard to resist, although, as with any other sugary confection, the novelty may well wear off. For now, despite the risk of tooth decay, I recommend giving the show the benefit of doubt, and having another slice of morbidly cheerful whimsy after all.

BERNICE M. MURPHY

Masters of Horror: Series 2
(Showtime, 2008)

Now into its second series (and with a short-lived sci-fi based spinoff) Showtime's *Masters of Horror* represents an attempt to update the horror anthology format for a contemporary audience. While overseen by series creator Mick Garris (who will also supervise the upcoming NBC spinoff, *Fear Itself*), each episode hands over the directorial reigns to a different genre luminary who is tasked with telling a standalone self-contained story. Yet, although such a concept promises much, in practice the unique demands of television often produce less than successful results. Budgetary constraints, the need to establish likeable, nuanced characters, and the requirement to tell interesting and original genre stories has proved a difficult balancing act for many. Contributors to series two of *Masters of Horror* include both returning directors such as John Carpenter (*Halloween*, *The Thin*g) Stuart Gordon (*Re-animato*r) and Dario Argento (*Suspiria*, *Profondo Rosso*) and new participants including Rob Schmidt (*Wrong Tur*n) and Tom Holland (*Child's Play*, *Fright Night*).

The second series gets off to a decidedly mediocre start with Tobe Hooper's *The Damned Thing*. Based loosely on the creepily effective Ambrose Bierce short story of the same name, the episode fails on a number of levels. The wooden Sean Patrick Flannery plays Kevin Reddle, sheriff of Cloverdale, Texas. We are told how, as a child, Kevin witnessed his father brutally shooting both his mother and then himself in an entirely uncharacteristic outbreak of insanity. This event has made Kevin into something of a paranoiac who's convinced that one day he'll be afflicted by whatever affected his father. Sure enough, it's not long before "the damned thing" of the title begins to turn the other residents of Cloverdale into murderous psychopaths and Kevin must try and survive long enough to find out what's going on. While the basic premise of the episode is an effective one (as it should be given the source material), Hooper's execution is poor, managing to remove most of the suspense of the set-up through the repeated use of overly gory set-pieces. Hooper's attempts to instil the story with contemporary relevance (it is suggested that the town's oil money has been attained as a result of immoral practices) also seem somewhat under-developed, leading to an episode in which the audience is more likely to be gleefully cheering on the murderous townsfolk than they are rooting for the supposed protagonist.

The Damned Thing's uneven tone and quality exemplify one of the series' chief failings, namely that the confines of an hour long television format seem to allow for very little character development or depth to the storytelling. As a result, *The Damned Thing* becomes little more than a succession of ever dwindling shocks, doing a disservice to the original material and suggesting yet again that Hooper's sublime debut *The Texas Chain-Saw Massacre* may represent something of a fluke in directorial ability.

Ernest Dickerson's *The V Word* represents something of a nadir for the second series. Wildly unoriginal (the premise of suburban youngsters finding that one of their neighbours is a vampire was done in both *Fright Night* and *The Lost Boys* to much better effect) the episode seems to think it is much cleverer than it actually is. Consequently, the audience is left with a clichéd mess of a story that attempts to swing between *Scream*-style self-reflexiveness and more serious scares yet manages neither. Throw in some truly appalling dialogue and a lumpen performance by Michael Ironside and one is tempted to re-title the episode *The S word*.

Despite the series' patchiness there are, however some gems. Though perhaps not reaching the heights of the first series' *Homecoming*, Joe Dante's contribution *The Screwfly Solution* manages to successfully negotiate the potential pitfalls of the television format to tell an interesting story with political underpinnings. Based on a short story of the same name by Alice Sheldon (better known as James Tiptree Jr), *The Screwfly Solution* charts the effects of an alien-created virus that changes the male population of America into violent psychopaths. The eponymous solution becomes a device through which Dante (and the episode's writer Sam Hamm) explore the links between sex and violence in American society. Of particular interest in this regard is the episode's handling of the role that religion often seems to play in justifying violence towards women, with Dante using the infected men's concurrent increase in religious belief to critique the more conservative 'fire and brimstone' sectors of Christianity. Alongside its grander scale depiction of an apocalyptic America driven into a state of chaotic discordance, the episode humanises the problem by charting the deteriorating relationship between Alan and his wife and daughter. While Alan tries to produce a cure he must separate himself from the rest of his family lest he succumb to the virus and try to kill them. Though there is perhaps a little too much environmental moralising, Dante manages to depict a genuinely horrific situation, realising the breakdown of the possibility of loving relationships between men and women in a truly disturbing manner.

Another series highlight is Gordon's *The Black Cat*; a witty fictionalisation of the events which might have led Edgar Allen Poe to write his story of the same name. Though very different to *The Screwfly Solution* the episode works largely due to its contained and original premise, a literate and genuinely humorous script and a great central performance from Jeffrey Combs. In fact, while not terribly scary, the episode stands out when compared to the rest of *Masters of Horror: Series 2* because it refuses to substitute characterisation and good storytelling for cheap shocks and gore as many of the other episodes do.

The same can perhaps be said of Brad Anderson's taut *Sounds Like* and Peter Medak's revisionist *The Washingtonians*. The former tells the story of Larry Pearce, who is driven to violent action when he gains a hyper-sensitive sense of hearing, while the latter details one man's discovery that George Washington was a cannibal. However, while both episodes seek to avoid some of the hackneyed conventions of the genre they are arguably less successful than Gordon's with Anderson's containing a lack of characters to empathise with and Medak's episode relying a little too heavily on a camp aesthetic that seems at odds with the more gruesome elements of the story.

The overriding impression one is left with after watching *Masters of Horror: Series 2* is that of the missed opportunity it represents. While in many ways, the series must have been a dream from a marketing perspective; (with many of the directors involved – including genre luminaries such as Carpenter and Landis – producing their first significant work in the genre for a number of years) the end product fails to live up to this promise. Part of the problem may be that because of the series' over reliance on gore and violence it cannot help but seem somewhat infantile in comparison to much of contemporary cinematic horror. When judged against the more subtle chills of films such as *The Blair Witch Project* and *The Sixth Sense* or the boundary pushing of 'gorenography' like *Hostel* and *Saw*, *Masters of Horror: Series 2*'s 1980's horror aesthetic cannot help but seem tired and antiquated. Ironically, if anything, the show serves to undermine the credentials of many of those involved, proving that once-noted genre luminaries such as Hooper, Carpenter and Argento are long past their directorial best.

DAVID SIMMONS

Count Dracula
(BBC/2 Entertain, 1977)

When *Count Dracula* first aired on the BBC in December 1977, the two-part, 150-minute adaptation of Bram Stoker's immortal novel was widely acclaimed as the most faithful screen version yet seen, an accolade likely to be reiterated following its recent no-frills DVD release on the Corporation's 2 Entertain label. Not, of course, that *Count Dracula* has been unduly troubled by competitors for that particular distinction in the ensuing years, but that, as they say, is another story . . .

Since first being adapted for the screen by F.W. Murnau in 1922, Stoker's *Dracula* has tended to inspire a remarkably cavalier attitude in film-makers who have often seemed quite happy – even eager – to drive as many stakes through the heart of their source material as has taken their fancy. Thus, while Murnau's *Nosferatu* and Tod Browning's 1931 version (an adaptation of Hamilton Deane's stage play rather than the book itself) undoubtedly possessed many virtues, fidelity to Stoker was not foremost among them. Hammer's 1957 version, hampered by severe budgetary constraints, also played fast and loose with Stoker (most notably in setting the entire story in or near Transylvania, and by presenting Jonathan Harker not as an innocent abroad but as a doomed avenger), yet nonetheless remained remarkably faithful to the spirit of the book, thereby demonstrating that an adaptation need not be slavish to be successful. Twelve years later, a seemingly sincere effort by Jess Franco to present the story as written was doomed, rather than merely hampered, by inadequate funding. This was followed, in 1973, by a flaccid TV adaptation, directed by Dan Curtis, which conspicuously failed to capture both the tone and thrust of the novel. Later big-screen versions, by John Badham in 1979 and Francis Ford Coppola in 1992, proved unsatisfactory in many respects, the former being lifeless and effete, the latter overblown and preposterous, while Werner Herzog's *Nosferatu* of 1979 revealed itself as a reworking of Murnau rather than Stoker.

In 1977, therefore, former Hitchcock collaborator Gerald Savory found himself in the happy position of being able to write a version of *Dracula* that would not only keep faith with Stoker's original vision (he was a great admirer of the novel), but could also claim, with considerable justification, to be a radical departure from his predecessors' efforts by the simple – and cost-free – virtue of its very fidelity. And so it proved. The story begins, proceeds, and concludes as it should, with none of the pathetic pandering to TV executives' notions of "contemporary relevance" which so fatally blighted the BBC's astoundingly awful adaptation of 2006, while the major characters are, on the whole, more recognisably those as conceived and written by Stoker than had previously been seen.

Nonetheless, there are a few deviations – of varying degrees of importance – to be found in Savory's work, the most obvious of which is the blending of Lucy's fiancé, the Hon. Arthur Holmwood (later Lord Godalming) and her former suitor, Quincey P. Morris, into a single character named "Quincey P. Holmwood", a composite who fulfils the function of the latter as Lucy's betrothed while retaining the external characteristics of the somewhat bumptious Texan. As the novel's Holmwood is little more than the obligatory titled love interest of Victorian fiction, and Morris a supposedly colourful character largely required to dispense folksy Americanisms and Winchester bullets in roughly equal measure, this is a perfectly legitimate device on Savory's part, one which helps to focus and streamline the narrative while losing none of the essential functions of either character.

Other changes, such as the excision of the "Escaped Wolf" interlude and various other contractions and elisions, are mainly employed to tighten the storyline, though it is somewhat surprising to find Jonathan and Mina being dropped off on their return from the Continent by Dracula himself (apparently

moonlighting as a cabbie), a sequence obviously intended to replace the admittedly contentious one in the novel in which Jonathan spies the Count playing the *grand boulevardier* in Piccadilly in broad daylight. The ending too has undergone some revision, including a rather more elaborate shootout with Dracula's band of gypsies (improbably, and inaccurately, armed with Winchesters) than features in the book, the killing of Dracula being performed by Van Helsing (instead of Jonathan and Quincey), his dissolution in a voluminous puff of smoke, and the survival of the Quincey Holmwood character.

More significantly, however, the character of Dracula has been altered in a number of key scenes, most particularly his rescue of Harker from the three female vampires, and his confrontation with Van Helsing & Co. in London. In the latter, Dracula not only shows no fear of the crucifix brandished by the Dutchman but is allowed to present a defence of his actions together with a bracing contempt for Christianity in general. From a dramatic point of view, this sequence works quite well – not least because Van Helsing's fervent religiosity has becoming rather annoying by this stage – but, while the notion of vampire-as-atheist may be intriguing, it goes without saying that a supposedly faithful adaptation of *Dracula* is not an appropriate vehicle for its introduction. (Interestingly enough, in Savory's novelisation of his script, published by Corgi in 1977, Dracula not only "cowers back" from the crucifix but has dialogue different from that in the screen version – suggesting, perhaps, that rewrites were implemented by director Philip Saville during production.) Furthermore, the Count does not sport a moustache, and is not seen to grow younger as the story progresses (though both characteristics are retained in the novelisation).

With regard to *Count Dracula* as a production (as opposed to an adaptation), Saville's direction is competent and unobtrusive, though hardly inspired. The interior sets are what one would expect from a BBC drama of the late Seventies, functional rather than elaborate, but the exterior work is generally excellent, in particular the decision to film the Whitby and Highgate cemetery sequences on location (the latter, though not mentioned by name in the novel, can reasonably be assumed to be the location of Lucy's tomb). The special effects, on the other hand, which mainly consist of an over-reliance on negative-imaging more appropriate to a contemporary edition of *Top of the Pops* (and which looked pretty cheesy even in 1977) cannot be said to have improved with age.

The casting, and the performances, of Bosco Hogan as Jonathan, Judi Bowker as Mina, Susan Penhaligon as Lucy, and Jack Shepherd as Renfield may be considered definitive, while Mark Burns and Richard Barnes, as Dr. Seward and Quincey P. Holmwood respectively, both provide solid support. Frank Finlay, not always the most subtle of screen actors, judges his performance as Van Helsing to perfection, in addition providing an interesting contrast to the better-known interpretation of Peter Cushing. Whereas the late Hammer star chose to play Van Helsing principally as a man of science and to dispense with his Dutch accent, Finlay not only tackles the accent with aplomb but is much closer to Stoker's delineation of the character as a rather unlikely combination of scientist and surrogate priest – with the latter so much to the fore that at times one wonders whether Stoker meant to put D.D. rather than M.D. after the character's name.

With so much excellence on display in *Count Dracula*, it is with a real sense of regret that one turns to the casting of Louis Jourdan in the title role – a choice so horrendously misjudged as to threaten to render the many attributes of this otherwise outstanding production null and void. More than anything else, the part of Dracula requires what is known in theatrical parlance as a King actor – that is to say, an actor who can not only be viably cast as a focus of power and authority but one who would also be unable to convincingly play characters of more humble origins. While it is accepted that Stoker based aspects of the

Count on his overbearing employer, Sir Henry Irving (very much a King actor by all accounts), the only actor to play Dracula who has undoubtedly possessed this quality has been Christopher Lee – which is why his performance, despite the liberties taken by Hammer with Stoker's original story, tends to be regarded as definitive. On the other hand, one need look no further than the casting of Gary Oldman and Marc Warren in the role to illustrate the essential idiocy of casting proletariatian actors as princes of darkness.

Louis Jourdan, it need hardly be stated, is not a King actor, so the paradoxical fact that his performance as the Count can be regarded as a highpoint of a career otherwise as shallow and insubstantial as the characters he has tended to play does nothing to negate his essential wrongness for the role. Feline instead of vulpine, creepy instead of terrifying, Jourdan lacks both the physique and the presence to accurately embody Count Dracula, warlord of the Carpathians, Hammer of the Turks, and Lord of the Undead. Interviewed in 1977, the actor offered the following observation: "I think that something like the Devil is only convincing if he is not played like the Devil. He is an angel, a fallen angel. I think Dracula should be played as an extremely kind person who truly believes he is doing good. He gives eternal life. He takes blood and he gives blood. Therefore, he gives an exchange which is symbolic of love and the sexual act . . ." Spoken, one might think, more like a true Frenchman than as an actor with any real understanding of what is required for a faithful portrayal of Dracula as written by Bram Stoker.

In the same interview, Jourdan stated that ". . . this is a *new* concept of Dracula. Our version is based on Bram Stoker's book which he wrote in 1835 [*sic*], and we are doing an almost exact adaptation." Except, he might have added, for his own interpretation, one which often seems to owe more to the Marquis de Sade than to Stoker. This is particularly evident in the scene with the three females vampires alluded to previously, in which, far from displaying either Dracula's "wrath and fury" (as described by Stoker), or even his "blazing passion" (from Savory's novelisation), Jourdan addresses the miscreant fiends in the chiding and suggestive tones of a de Franval or Dolmancé. Why, it is legitimate to wonder, did Philip Saville not instruct his star to play the scene correctly, as was almost certainly indicated in the original script? To which the most likely answer would seem to be that Jourdan was simply incapable of doing so convincingly, and that this scene, and to some extent the entire production, had to be altered to accommodate the miscasting of its ill-chosen star.

And it is that fatal flaw in the casting process – arguably the most important element in any version of Dracula – which ultimately leads to the regrettable conclusion that, despite its many virtues, *Count Dracula* remains a missed opportunity instead of the classic – and faithful – adaptation it was so clearly intended to be.

JOHN EXSHAW