BOOK REVIEWS
Literary and Cultural Criticism

Tony Williams, *Hearths of Darkness: The Family in the American Horror Film*
(Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014)

Meals have long been seen as a means of uniting family and friends. As the adage insists, 'the family that eats together, stays together.' Conventional, optimistic images of a family sitting down at the table tend to picture the family members sharing particular events that occurred during the day, asking and giving advice, and laughing. Norman Rockwell's 1943 classic painting 'Thanksgiving Dinner', part of his 'Freedom from Want' series, is a case in point. Rockwell's painting is a quintessential depiction of the American family happily celebrating an abundance of food and love together. This glossy depiction, however, is frequently inverted in horror film. One need only think of the parodic depiction of the Sawyer family sitting down to dinner with their 'guest' Sally in Tobe Hooper's *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974). For the Sawyers, it seems, 'the family that *slays* together, stays together.' Their world is one that celebrates violence and highlights the underside of the American Dream, one where consumer capitalism has forced people to live on the margins and eek out a meager living literally on the flesh of others.

Within the horror-film genre, the Sawyer family is not unusual. We see similar scenes of family violence and discord throughout the history of the horror in film and television. Season One of FX's *American Horror Story* (2011) features not one but three dysfunctional families: the Harmons, the Langdons and the Montgomerys. The focus on the depiction of the family in horror in Tony Williams' book *Hearths of Darkness* (2014) (an updated edition of the original 1996 release) is therefore a welcome one. Much like critic Robin Wood, Williams' focuses in this book on horror as an internal rather than an external threat to the family.[1]

Hearths is an interdisciplinary work that draws on, and combines, Freudian-Marxist theory with feminist critique. This criticism examines the ways in which patriarchal social structures construct repressive gender and societal roles, which by extension foster deviant behaviour in individuals. Williams grounds his argument by situating the films within their cultural and historical milieu. This provides a valuable context that highlights how the films

[1] See Robin Wood 'An Introduction to the American Horror Film', in *The American Nightmare: Essays on the Horror Film*, ed. by Robin Wood and Richard Lippe (Toronto: Festival of Festivals, 1979), pp. 7-28.

reflect the socio-political period in which they were produced. He divides his work into twelve chapters plus an 'Introduction to the New Edition' and a 'Postscript'.

Examining approximately 300 films, from the 1930s to the present day, Williams begins with Universal's classic *Frankenstein* films from the 1930s and Val Lewton's productions with RKO Pictures in the 1940s. However, he glosses over 1950s horror films for no apparent reason and moves straight to a discussion of 1960s horror, positing Hitchcock as a seminal influence on the overall genre of family horror. In other words, Williams situates the 1960s as the moment when the 'material factors behind horror become prominent' (p. 71). It is only with his discussion of 1970s horror films, such as *The Exorcist* (1973), *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), *The Omen* (1976), and *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977), that Williams's real passion becomes evident. Williams states that '[t]he family horror films of the 1970s represented an important movement within a genre that then had the potential of operating as a powerful cultural counterforce influence to suggest the necessity for fundamental change in human society' (p. 4). He continues by contending that, from the end of the 1970s onward, horror becomes mostly a display of 'self-indulgent exercises in gore and special effects' (p. 5). His tendency to dismiss later films is unfortunate, given the many examples of distorted and deformed families represented in horror over the last thirty years, such as *The Shining* (1980), *Poltergeist* (1982), *The Fly* (1986), *Near Dark* (1987), *The People Under the Stairs* (1991), *Vampires* (1998), *Insidious* (2010), *Sinister* (2012), and *House at the End of the Street* (2012), to name but a few.

Nonetheless, Williams offers an excellent reading of Larry Cohen's neglected *It's Alive* series (1973, 1978, and 1986). In this chapter, 'Sacrificial Victims', Williams concludes that the films rest on the parents' ability to accept their children's deformities, an acceptance which results in a cohesive, loving family. Williams contends that 'Cohen's films reveal social perversion. Contaminated by capitalist structures, the family is a manipulated unit. It produces everyday monsters […] [yet] is capable of redemption if it accepts the monstrous and moves toward new forms' (p. 184). Williams's analysis of Cohen's work therefore asserts that the horror genre subverts patriarchal hegemonic ideology through offering counter-narratives. Unfortunately, however, Williams does not provide enough of this type of close analysis throughout the text.

Overall, Williams criteria for what constitutes a good horror film is somewhat narrow. He argues that good horror films are those that suggest a break from confining social patterns and that depict what he sees as an enlightened and progressive message about society. As a result, he disregards films such as *Friday the 13th* (1980), *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984),

Scream (1996), and many more. Indeed, in his 'Introduction to the New Edition', Williams laments the current 'ahistorical trends' in academic criticism, which he sees as 'justifying "torture porn,"', and, as noted above, he argues that since 'the late 1970s onwards, the horror film mostly became self-indulgent exercises in gore and special effects' (p. 5). Yet his criticism of torture porn, and those who argue for its importance, overlooks and ignores the extent to which these films have been under attack by patriarchal conservatism for what is seen as their excessive violence and troubling subject matter — not so unlike the films he defines as representing 'good' horror. What is more, these films can be interpreted as reflections on and critiques of the decade's socio-political ideology, characteristics which Williams praises in earlier films. For instance, in *Hostel II* (2007), Stuart is introduced as a belittled husband. While his wife and children are sitting down to their morning breakfast, Stuart is seen standing in the kitchen with an apron on cooking breakfast for his family. Stuart's subsequent violent actions arguably stem from tensions relating to economic and gender roles that have, the film asserts, been repressed and inverted, only to return in the form of violence against other women. An analysis of this inversion can lead to discussions of how traditional gender roles are being redefined and how new meanings need to be ascribed to the concepts of femininity and masculinity.

Williams has added very little to this new edition of *Hearths of Darkness*, aside from his condemnation of the horror genre in recent years. Moreover, Williams's scope of examination is too general to provide any original insight. While he does introduce some lesser-known works, his overall examination of the genre tends to gloss over the majority of horror films identified in the text, stopping to focus only on a few select films. One new addition is Williams's use of the *The Sopranos* to draw some interesting parallels between the show and the horror genre. However, Williams's overall argument would have been stronger had he discussed the first season of *American Horror Story*. Not only would this have been better suited to his subject matter, but it would have also provided a stronger conclusion to his argument. A discussion of *American Horror Story* would have furthered his analysis of dysfunctional families and the influence of American patriarchal and consumer ideology on horror more generally, while a comparison with families in the 1970s could have allowed for a deeper analysis of societal changes. That said, *Hearths of Darkness* is, as it stands, an impressive survey of the horror genre that offers a strong resource for those newly interested in horror studies.

Lee Baxter

***The Victorian Book of the Dead,* ed. by Chris Woodyard**
(Dayton, OH: Kestrel Publications, 2014)

In Chris Woodyard's introduction to *The Victorian Book of the Dead*, she states that she had a threefold purpose for writing the book: 'it is an historical look at the ephemera and material culture of mourning, a reflection of some popular Victorian attitudes towards death and the bereaved, and a macabre scrapbook of ghoulish anecdotes reported by the press' (p. x). She further clarifies her purpose by stating that she had not intended to write a scholarly book covering every aspect of Victorian death and mourning practices, but instead to put together an 'idiosyncratic collection of the morbid and the mournful' from the United States and Britain from 1840 to 1920 (p. x). Woodyard succeeds admirably in accomplishing all of these aims, producing a fascinating glimpse into now-obsolete mourning practices.

The table of contents lists an introduction, seventeen chapters, a bibliography, a general index, a list of websites and blogs, and an index by location. It's a well-rounded survey of primary source material that is well organised. Woodyard claims the book is an 'idiosyncratic collection', but the indexes and bibliography may make it useful to scholars and history aficionados as well as casual readers. The collection is, moreover, divided thematically into numbered and titled chapters. Each chapter begins with a short introduction that puts the material into context. What then follows is a collection of newspaper articles, excerpts from books, and magazine snippets from various publications for the years 1840-1920 that address various aspects of death and dying in Victorian and Edwardian culture. The illustrations that accompany many of the selections add authenticity, as they are reproductions of actual Victorian photographs or antique book and newspaper illustrations.

The first two chapters are illustrative of how the book as a whole is structured. Chapter 1, 'I Am the Death Angel: Victorian Personifications of Death', covers newspaper accounts, magazine articles, and morsels from books that engage with the various personifications of death popular during the Victorian era. Stories in this chapter deal with ghostly visitors who search for souls ready to depart this world; the more well-known figure of the scythe-carrying skeleton (which leads to an interesting explanation of the origin of the figure of the Grim Reaper); the Angel of Death referred to by the chapter's title; and other angelic manifestations. Also included in this chapter is a sidebar cataloguing various descriptors of death and providing representative dates for each one. Some of these descriptors include personifications of death not mentioned in the stories, as well as death as

sleep imagery, Heaven as another country, and even the various less-mournful figurative means of referring to death, such as 'pushing up daisies' or being 'six feet under'.

Chapter 2, 'A Baby's Coffin in the Air: Banshees, Black Dogs, and Other Harbingers of Death', deals with a range of omens of impending death. Included with the more traditional omens listed in the title are some that are somewhat more obscure. One story tells of a white dove that flew into a stable one day causing an old man to say he didn't like to see it there. According to the story, he died in the stable a few minutes later. There is also a story about a successful doctor who was visited by a small white butterfly every time one of his patients died. This chapter includes strange stories of interior voices foretelling the deaths of children, and the unexplained breaking of phonograph records indicating an imminent death. Having grown up in an area of the United States from which some of these stories came, I found these particularly fascinating because I have never previously heard of them. More generally, I found that as a whole they offered an intriguing array of sometimes bizarre, sometimes creepy glimpses into Victorian-era society in Britain and around the world. Indeed, despite the fact that Woodyard claims that the collection of materials is primarily from the UK and the US, the book does contain material from numerous other countries, making the book especially useful for research, as well as more entertaining for the casual reader.

The only practical suggestion that I would make that might render the book more accessible would be to differentiate between the chapter introduction and the actual beginning of the material. They are both printed in the same font with very little space between. It would be helpful for the reader if there were some differentiation between the two parts. However, this is a relatively minor point.

Overall, Woodyard's collection is wide ranging, giving the reader a broad understanding of just how prevalent the topic of death was at that time. It's also informative, and just plain fun. The book will be of use to anyone looking to enjoy some slightly creepy reading, and to those who seek more in-depth knowledge of the cult of death and mourning that was such a large part of society in the long nineteenth century.

Dana Benge

M. Jess Peacock, *Such a Dark Thing: Theology of the Vampire Narrative in Popular Culture*
(Eugene, Oregon: Resource Publications, 2015)

In *Such a Dark Thing*, M. Jess Peacock, recipient of the 2013 Ronald L. Williams Book Prize in Theology and Ethics, provides an engaging exploration of the vampire's representation in popular culture, focusing mainly on horror films and novels, while developing an original theological reading. This book sets itself the ambitious aim of analysing the vampire, not merely as the epitome of evil that is invariably vanquished by the supreme power of good, but also as a creature endowed with both divine and malicious characteristics. Well-researched and easy to follow, this is a must-read for any student interested in the complicated relationship between vampires and religious symbols.

The book consists of five chapters, an epilogue, and an extensive sequence of appendices which review the novels, films, and series that Peacock refers to throughout his work. By approaching the vampire through the lens of a theological framework, *Such a Dark Thing* offers an original analysis that contrasts with the general shift towards technological developments and secularisation that have dominated vampire fiction and films such as Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013) and Anne Rice's *Prince Lestat* (2014). Rice's latest novel explores the opportunities that medical advancements might offer to vampires; while Jarmusch accentuates on the artistic qualities of vampires in a self-destructive world, devoid of any trace of divinity.

In emphasising, by contrast, the association of the vampire with evil and the demonic, as well as with human uncertainty regarding the afterlife, the author also discusses what he terms the 'Monstrous Divine'. He argues that 'God represents the most diabolical, violent and bloodthirsty monster of all, an otherworldly ancient deity that takes no issue with the detached murder of countless innocent lives in order to punish those deemed as irretrievably wicked' (p. xxiii). The duality of the divine is obvious in the Hebrew Bible: Yahweh is both Creator and Destroyer. What is more surprising is the way in which Peacock interprets Communion, as both a symbolic and literal consumption of Jesus's flesh and blood in remembrance of his sacrifice, as a practice destined to appease the presumed wrath of God. Within this theological context, the author reads the vampire as the embodiment of not only theological but also societal issues, as an antagonist that questions divinity, while nonetheless confirming its existence.

The first chapter, entitled 'OMG! The Vampire as "Mysterium Tremendum"', is probably the most compelling. Here, Peacock transfers and attaches to the vampire the

theological concept of 'mysterium tremendum', which Rudolf Otto describes as a 'combination of fascination and terror, wonder and dread' (qtd p. 2). This is said to arise when one is confronted with the 'numinous' — defined as the sense of the ineffable that characterises an encounter with the divine. This process of reassigning these two religious concepts to the vampire is particularly thought provoking, especially since the author raises two important questions, the first regarding the vampire's possible divine essence, and the second, conversely, concerning the potential status of the horrific as part of an inherently benevolent divinity. This discussion leads to the assertion of striking similarities between the horror genre and Christianity, since both consist of 'unfathomable *numinous* entities' (p. 4), which do not hesitate to take innocent lives. Peacock further argues that the angel, as a representation of religion, and the vampire, who stands for the horror, are not that different: both possess a human-like appearance and are agents of destruction: '[t]he typical response of the corporeal cast of characters to the *mysterium tremendum* of the vampire is indistinguishable from the typical response of the mortal to angels in Scripture: fear, awe, horror and foreboding' (p. 6). Admittedly, the analogy between Christ and the vampire drawn by Peacock is also to be found in Nina Auerbach's *Our Vampires Ourselves* or in Susan Clements' *The Vampire Defanged*. Nevertheless, Peacock accentuates the common aspects that these seemingly antagonistic figures share, since they are neither dead nor alive and both promise eternal life, although the implications of the vampiric afterlife are obviously very different.

The second chapter, entitled 'The Vampire as Agent of Theodicity', focuses on the problematic existence of evil and sin that the undead represent. Peacock addresses here the aforementioned controversial questions regarding the relation between God and evil, or more precisely why God permits the existence of evil. Intriguingly, he suggests by way of an answer that 'the vampire may serve as a window into the nature of God […]. The mortal individual, when faced with evil, demands to know where God is amidst the evil' (pp. 17-18). Regardless of the social and cultural changes that each new age triggers, for Peacock, the vampire therefore remains a religious symbol that both challenges and reestablishes the existence of the divine. The undead thus reiterates perennial questions, such as why God would allow the existence of evil, how one can protect oneself from evil, and what one might find in the afterlife.

Drawing on numerous references to Stephen King's *Salem's Lot* (1975), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and cinematic vampires from horror films, Peacock's work provides an impressive exploration of religious tropes, including Communion, different levels of sin,

temptation, and the power of the cross in relation to the vampire. Nevertheless, the limited amount of space he allocates to such a considerable selection of films and novels is regrettable, as the discussion bounces back and forth haphazardly between cinematic and literary vampires. Some readers might be disappointed that certain vampires like Marius, Saint-Germain, or Akasha were overlooked, but fans of the horror genre will surely be pleased to find that Peacock includes in his book numerous vampire horror movies such as Stephen Norrington's *Blade* (1998), David Slade's *30 Days of Night* (2007), and Jim Mickle's *Stake Land* (2010).

While the first half of the book consists of original and persuasive arguments regarding the theological and monstrous aspects of the vampire, the enterprise of drawing up a 'best of' list of what the author considers the most representative films and novels is in itself risky. Nonetheless, it is interesting to see what Peacock extracts from each of them in order to trace the various aspects that make the vampire 'such a dark thing'. In spite of its shortcomings, this is a book that scholars of both horror and theology will surely appreciate.

Laura Davidel

***Women and the Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion,* ed. by Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik**
(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016)

One of the many strengths of *Women and the Gothic* is its timing. Edited by Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, the book has emerged as 2016 unfolds as a period of tremendous change, particularly in respect to politics and women. Women have recently gained significant political power, and the chance to alter the course of Western history dramatically. *Women and the Gothic* therefore appears at a crucial time, and is an excellent contribution to the ongoing conversations concerning women, feminism, and gender.

The above events may appear unrelated to gothic literature but, as Horner and Zlosnik outline in the book's introduction, the analysis presented here is contextualised within wider political discourses. The editors muse upon the changing face of feminism, with recent online activities such as the Everyday Sexism Project reflecting a general movement to 'revive feminism' (p. 2). The events listed above very much contribute to this, as discussions about feminism are evident within mainstream debate. It is against this backdrop that the book re-engages with the gothic and seeks to analyse women's place within it. The central argument in Horner's and Zlosnik's introduction — which is reinforced by every chapter — is simple:

the gothic provides a highly effective mode through which writers can interrogate women's (dis)enfranchisement within patriarchal systems of power.

Horner and Zlosnik invite us to explore the gothic from a woman's perspective on all levels: the book focuses on gothic texts written by women, about women, and for women. This fact is one of the reasons the book is a pleasure to read; the collection is very much a celebration of literature's gothic women in all their guises. Inevitably, this focus begins by engaging again with the term 'Female Gothic', as coined by Ellen Moers and, indeed, Moers's work is influential for much of the analysis in the book, including Lucie Armitt's essay 'The Gothic Girl Child' and Gina Wisker's 'Female Vampirism'.[1] However, along with the notion of feminism itself, the essays move beyond any simple definition of the 'Female Gothic' in order to interrogate and, in the end, complicate the ideas associated with it. This movement is indicated by the book's structure, which organises the chapters into three sections. The first, 'Family Matters', examines collectively the conventional identities afforded to the gothic heroine, identities which reflect her status within a family structure, such as 'orphan' or 'mother', and how this enables her literal or psychological confinement. 'Trangressions', the second section, focuses on gothic or monstrous women, such as the vampire or witch, who push against such rigid identity and behavioural boundaries. The final part of *Women and the Gothic*, entitled 'New Directions', then posits fresh ways for analysing the gothic heroine — through an engagement with 'queer Gothic', and by analysing representations of age — or alternative forms through which she may experience the gothic, such as the virtual spaces created by new technologies, including computer games.

Several trends emerge across the chapters which, together, highlight the book's key strengths. First, the importance of historically and politically contextualising the gothic text is underlined regularly within the collection: for example, Laurence Talairach-Vielmas outlines the medical thinking behind locking up women in the nineteenth century, and Sue Chaplin reflects upon women's changing legal status from the eighteenth century onwards. Across the book's various sections, a particular emphasis on new readings is also evident, whether this takes the form of revisiting classic texts from new perspectives (such Ann Radcliffe's works or Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898)) or analysing less famous stories (like Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897) and the figure of the *soucouyant*, a transformative figure from Caribbean and African folklore often compared to Western ideas of the witch or vampire). Additionally, the chapters regularly draw on a central body of

[1] Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (London: The Women's Press, 1976).

research, including Barbara Creed and Julia Kristeva, although Freud's essay on 'The "Uncanny"' is referenced the most frequently here.[2]

It is for this reason that, as one progresses through the book, it becomes increasingly difficult to continue to see the boundaries between each section — and, at times, between each essay — as separate and distinct. This, however, is not a criticism; rather, the richness of each contribution stems from its full engagement in the broader dialogue concerning gothic women, an engagement that allows one to see links between topics and texts which would otherwise remain hidden. For example, the theme of age punctuates the book's narrative, with notable contributions including Armitt discussing the representation of youth, while Horner and Zlosnik reflect upon the portrayal of old age. Wisker picks up on these ideas again by historically situating the figure of the immortal vampire. Although these chapters belong to different sections, it is clear how these works complement and mutually reinforce the thorough analysis performed by each writer. It is, then, rather apt that 'The "Uncanny"' should be a theory central to this discussion; Freud's idea of the return of the repressed emerging from the blurring of boundaries — whether this is between fantasy and reality or the living and the dead — becomes a meta-commentary for the book's topics, where feminism and the 'Female Gothic' are shown to be increasingly *unheimlich*. As Wisker pertinently notes in Freudian language, '[t]he Gothic revisits, replays and returns […] an exciting return of the familiar and the repressed' (p. 151).

If there is one question which remains (deliberately) unanswered by the collection it is how we should *judge* the women in gothic texts. Moreover, the problem of whether these gothic texts participate in or criticise the continued oppression of women is one which haunts the book. This controversy is particularly marked in those chapters which analyse contemporary works or explore the gothic in different media. The latter is a particularly stimulating addition to the debate but, out of fourteen chapters, only two of them focus on this exclusively — Ginette Carpenter's film analysis and Tanya Krzywinska's essay on gothic games. It will be interesting to see how the arguments outlined here extend to include other media texts such as film, TV, games, and music.

Horner and Zlosnik comment at the beginning of *Women and the Gothic* that they see the book as part of the current feminist 'revival', although the comment does not stress enough this collection's importance to feminist discourse and gothic studies, as well as to

[2] Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); and Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny"' (1919) in *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2003), pp.121-162.

literature scholarship more broadly. As remarked above, the central argument in the book is simple, but its application across the chapters is anything but straightforward. With lively contributions extending the discussion to include ideas around race, queer identity, and age, the book presents timely, crucial, and complex views on women in the gothic.

Frances A. Kamm

Dara Downey, *American Women's Ghost Stories in the Gilded Age*
(Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014)

The common reading of American gothic, particularly the ghost story, is that its lack of history and its focus on the future force the external threats typical of European gothic inward: horror stems not from supernatural ghosts or tyrannical villains but from the ghosts of the psyche. However, Dara Downey offers a convincing alternative reading of the American ghost story that complicates this straightforward psychoanalytical interpretation. She demonstrates in *American Women's Ghost Stories in the Gilded Age* that American ghost stories by female authors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are all about physical *things*.

In her introduction, Downey explains, 'a remarkably large number of ghost stories by American women writers […] engaged directly with the material and visual culture that played a prominent, even constitutive, role in the social and cultural life of the United States' (p. 9). Throughout the book, she examines the haunting relationships between women and the home, representation and objectification, commodity and morality, objects and memory, frontier and history, and economics and death. As Downey herself points out, there has been an increased interest in the ghost story as well as in women's position within domestic spaces at the turn of the century, but this is the first extensive study of both, and her integration of sexuality and the body adds another layer to a typically simplified sub-genre. She writes, 'such tales dramatize both the intimate bond and the vicious struggle between the overwhelming plethora of commodities that crowded the nineteenth-century home, and the woman enjoined by social structures to keep them in check' (p. 4). This book therefore poses new and important readings of a wide range of examples within an old and popular form of literature.

As such, each of the six chapters covers several works, predominantly short stories, offering easy-to-follow plot synopses and an analysis that is both deep and wide: a mixture of detailed close readings and confident arguments about wider trends and their implications, as

well as a rich historical context. The first two chapters introduce the woman's function in the home, particularly her decorative responsibilities, and the tension within those responsibilities between an economic environment that encouraged the ownership of excessive commodities and moral/social judgment. In the chapter entitled '"Fitted to a Frame": Picturing the Gothic Female Body', Downey considers texts in which male artists and viewers attempt to control and own female sexuality through visual representation, victimising the woman of the house by making her an *object* within her own home. On the other hand, the emphasis on objects, decoration, and dress all but makes the woman invisible amongst such material goods. It is also in this chapter that Downey observes a possible solution for such women: the power of invisibility. Supernatural tropes expose the dangers of visibility in the context of objectification, ownership, and containment. She suggests, therefore, that women who embrace their role amongst such commodities have the potential to subvert the control exerted over them by men and by poisonous, repetitive pasts. In subsequent chapters, she returns to this lesson regarding invisibility and to the stories discussed in these opening chapters — Edna Underwood's 'The Painter of Dead Women', Elia Peattie's 'The Story of an Obstinate Corpse', Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wall-Paper', and Emma Frances Dawson's 'An Itinerant House', to name just a few — contributing to the coherence of the book as a whole.

Chapter Two, 'Handled with a Chain': Gilman's 'The Yellow Wall-Paper' and the Dangers of the Arabesque,' extends the problematics of seeing and being seen while examining the complex tyranny of the home. Chapter Three, '"Dancing Like a Bomb Abroad": Dawson's "An Itinerant House" and the Haunting Cityscape', extends the idea of home into the city streets to explore the relationship between the female corpse and women's increasing mobility and independence. Chapter Four, '"Solemnest of Industries": Wilkins' "The Southwest Chamber" and Memorial Culture', places the ghost story in the context of women's roles within the mourning and Spiritualist markets that blurred the lines between public and private, providing an extensive history of both. I found Chapter Five, '"Space Stares All Around": Peattie's "The House That Was Not" and the (Un)Haunted Landscape', to be one of the most original sections for its reading of Western frontier stories, haunted because of a lack of landmarks and denial of history in a land that has seen trauma and death. Again, the invisibility of the ghosts in such spaces makes them impossible to confront yet also impossible to escape. Chapter Six, '"My Labor and My Leisure Too": Wynne's "The Little Room" and Commodity Culture', expands on earlier ideas within the historical context of the increased display of commodities, women's power, and bonds with personal

belongings around the end of the nineteenth century. Downey ends the book with a brief afterward, which I found to be somewhat anticlimactic, about the direction taken by ghost stories into the twentieth century and some of the aspects — such as race — not included in her study.

Overall, this book establishes that homes can be haunted not just by ghosts but also by the objects intended to make the house a home and by the women charged with obtaining and maintaining them. Objects can be dangerous or powerful allies, but they are always agents of control. As this text claims,

> rather than bringing the reader out of 'normal reality', Gilded-Age American short stories in the female gothic mode assert, through the medium of the supernatural, that the everyday is itself problematic, even dangerous — that it is more than possible to be oppressed, even deformed by social structures that have been naturalized by familiarity and ubiquity. (p. 11)

Downey's readings would be valuable for any instructor or student studying the ghost story, American gothic, or gender in the Gilded Age. Her clear discussions of literary and historical context make the book accessible and engaging for advanced and undergraduate scholars alike, and her productive use of repetition and a reflective format make it useful as a whole or in teachable excerpts. Particularly in lieu of recent interests in media and technology in relation to ghost stories, hauntings, and mourning practices, such as the 2015 collection edited by Xavier Aldana Reyes and Linnie Blake entitled *Digital Horror*, Downey's text makes arguments that would expand the conversation into historical and gendered spheres, and change the way American gothic is discussed, from a sub-tradition of the haunted mind to one of the haunted home, and all the expectations and material objects that oppress it.

Laura R. Kremmel

Derek Johnston, *Haunted Seasons: Television Ghost Stories for Christmas and Horror for Halloween*
(Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

Derek Johnston's *Haunted Seasons,* which comes as a welcome, if narrowly focused, addition to the literature on the gothic, the supernatural, and our media landscape, starts by posing a question about the venerable annual UK series *A Ghost Story for Christmas*: namely, why? Why ghosts at Christmas? Of course, Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843) is a major part of that answer, but that novella was far from the original Yuletide ghost story. Johnston's work excavates a fascinating history of these seasonal hauntings, locating them

within the role that seasonal days like Christmas and Halloween play in the lived experience of communities on both sides of the Atlantic.

While the central focus here is on television, the book begins by exploring historical connections between ghost stories and the holidays of Christmas and Halloween. Johnston's inquiries begin back in the Middle Ages and indeed earlier, and then move on to the Victorian revival of Christmas, and to the immediate context of Dickens's famous Christmas stories and the legacy of such tales. More briefly, Johnston also chronicles the largely North American rise of Halloween as a major cultural event and its increasing affiliation with horror themes, over the course of the twentieth century.

The second chapter is called 'A Broadcast Tradition' and explores how these holiday spooks have taken up residence on radio and television. It hits high points like the 1938 broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* by Orson Welles and the Mercury Theater on the Air and *Ghostwatch* (1992), but locates them within a much more elaborate history of such programming. It is a welcome and informative chapter. Johnston goes on to offer some critical frameworks for understanding these seasonal traditions. The third chapter, entitled 'Irruptions of the Abnormal', concerns the intrusion of the abnormal into the normal as 'central to the conceptions of the weird tale in general and the Gothic in particular' (p. 94) and, by extension, to the seasonal horror story. Johnston also notes here that both Christmas and Halloween offer opportunities for television programmes to feature episodes that go against the shows' usual formats, such as the 1967 *Star Trek* episode 'Catspaw'. The 1973 Halloween episode of *Star Trek: The Animated Series*, 'The Magicks of Megas-tu', would also have fit Johnston's formulation nicely, staging as it does a surprising 'irruption of the abnormal'. It takes the *Enterprise* to a universe where magic works and science doesn't, and even has Spock drawing pentagrams, in a break from the usual routine of the show that would have contributed significantly to the argument of *Haunted Seasons*.

The fourth chapter, 'Seasonality, Nostalgia, Heritage and History', takes on a set of issues about the temporality of the gothic and its denaturalising of the relationship between past and present. Television is a liminal form, Johnston notes, and its status as simultaneously a part of everyday life and removed from it, 'allow[s] for the presentation of and engagement with ritualized narratives, which come with a sense of being heightened and significant, urging us to connect them with our lives' (p. 119). Many seasonal ghost stories consequently adopt a Victorian or Edwardian setting, which remain stock eras for British 'heritage' entertainment; Johnson argues that the presence of ghosts and hauntings can work to deflate

and expose the nostalgia for tradition and empire upon which these seasonal settings often rely.

The final chapter of *Haunted Seasons* takes on two, rather oddly matched case studies: *A Ghost Story for Christmas* (both its initial run from 1971 to 1978, and the revival starting in 2005); and *The Simpsons*'s annual 'Treehouse of Horror' Halloween episodes, starting in 1990. The treatment of *A Ghost Story for Christmas* is very thorough and often fascinating, even for a reader who has seen only a few examples of the series, which was largely composed of adaptations of that quintessentially English author of ghostly short stories, M. R. James. It is clear that Johnston has established himself as a key writer on this series. The same cannot quite be said of *The Simpsons* and its Halloween episodes, which only gets about three pages, and these contain disappointingly few specific actual examples from the series. Johnston builds on a claim by Steve Jones that, '[i]n breaking from the comparatively realistic social-satire that characterizes the series as a whole, the Halloween specials cast a reflexive gaze back onto "The Simpsons" itself' (qtd. p. 174). This much is true, but *The Simpsons* is a highly reflexive (and continuity-light) series to begin with, and more could have been done to demonstrate specifically how Halloween enables the show to do something special and different. Johnston mentions that the segment 'Life's a Glitch, Then You Die' from 1999's 'Treehouse of Horror' episode shows Homer's usual incompetence leading to a global apocalypse, something no 'standard' *Simpsons* episode could depict. The off-format seasonal nature of the episode allows it to pursue a long-standing character trait to its logically disastrous conclusion. This is good point; however, it is confined to a single sentence — rather amazingly, the only specific reference to any 'Treehouse of Horror' segment that Johnston provides. Stations syndicating *The Simpsons* often show old Halloween episodes (some of them now more than twenty-five years old) in October, and it would be interested to explore the role that this seasonal tradition plays in the lives of the viewing public. Overall, and in addition to these omissions, the connections drawn between *A Ghost Story for Christmas* and *The Simpsons* are slight enough that separate chapters might have better served these two case studies.

The frustratingly vague treatment of *The Simpsons* spotlights a weakness running throughout the book: Johnston seems more interested in and knowledgeable about UK phenomena of seasonal horror than its North American equivalents. Perhaps *Haunted Seasons* should have been solely about British broadcasting and jettisoned any broader international claims; it could have done so, in fact, without losing too much material. It seems odd to ask that a book so narrowly focused be narrower still, but Johnston's own strong

interventions might have been more in the foreground had the book maintained an exclusively British focus. Also, *Haunted Seasons* is arguably somewhat heavy on literature review throughout, especially of the scholarship on the gothic. This material is welcome in its own way, especially for an uninitiated reader, but the sheer volume of it often works to obscure Johnston's original contributions.

'The Abominable Bride', the 2015 Christmas special of *Sherlock* (2010-present), is introduced in a postscript to Johnston's *Haunted Seasons*. The programme consciously places itself within the lengthy British tradition of UK ghost stories at Christmas, especially on television, and its neo-Victorian recasting (inverting the updated format of the rest of the series) takes that tradition back to its nineteenth-century roots. The propinquity of the book's release and that of 'The Abominable Bride' serves as a kind of retroactive endorsement of the value of the issues Johnston has raised, yet raises questions of its own as to the currency of the seasonal ghost story. Johnston's postscript also discusses the relative failure of the revived version of *A Ghost Story for Christmas*, which he connects to the American-influenced migration of ghost stories to Halloween (p. 173). So one wonders, what remains of the British tradition of Christmas ghosts? On the evidence of 'The Abominable Bride', it may be doomed to clever but empty pastiche.

Murray Leeder

***Reading in the Dark: Horror in Children's Literature and Culture*, ed. by Jessica R. McCort**
(Mississippi, USA: University of Mississippi Press, 2016)

The term 'horror in children's literature' might initially seem like a cultural misnomer. One surely has nothing to do with the other — in fact, many would say that one *should not* have anything to do with the other. Certainly, it was not until the early 1990s, with the rise of series like *Point Horror* and *Goosebumps*, that horror was recognised as a distinct and even mainstream strand in children's literature, and the category of horror stories for children (as opposed to young adults) did not exist, as Katherine Shryock-Hood has noted in her wonderfully named thesis *On Beyond Boo!: Horror Literature for Children from 2008*. Texts were simply not quantified as horror stories when it came to children's reading.

Matters are, however, by no means so straightforward. Take the more violent of the classic fairytales, written by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, where the horrific elements of the narratives are central to their success: Snow White's stepmother wants to consume her stepdaughter's heart; Little Red Riding Hood is physically eaten by a wolf, and

then cut from its stomach; Bluebeard's murdered wives hang from the walls of his secret chamber. Critics such as Marina Warner and Maria Tatar have written extensively on the symbolism of violence in fairy tales — what are these tales if not horror stories? So much a part of cultural landscapes around the world as they are, it seems that we are no longer sensitive to or even aware of the visceral nature of these tales, yet question the integrity of books that set out to scare their young readers. Books perceived as scary or horrific, such as R. L. Stine's *Goosebumps* series (1994-present) feature prominently on the American Library Association's list of most frequently challenged children's books, as do Alvin Schwartz's *Scary Stories* series (1981-1991), Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (1983), and Harry Allard's *Bumps in the Night* (1996).

Nonetheless, perceptions of horror and the ways in which it functions in children's literature and culture have changed significantly in the past three decades, and those changes have revealed gaps in literary debate, as texts that employ horror themes, tropes, and archetypes to engage children through narrative have often been ignored by critics. Jessica R. McCort's edited collection aims to address that gap by focusing on the functions of horror in children's literature, and on the intersections between horror, popular culture, and children's cultural productions. In investigating both the positive and the more troubling aspects of books, films, and television shows that set out specifically to scare their child readers and viewers, the academics whose work is collected here interrogate the mechanisms by which horror narratives communicate their explicit messages and their implicit agendas.

As McCort quips in her introduction to the collection, horror has been lurking in the canon of children's literature for centuries. Horror, for McCort, functions as a kind of literary play area, a discursive space within which child readers can engage with the concept of the Other, monstrous or not, and explore their own place in the world. This view would seem to promote the horror genre in children's literature as a series of positive developmental narrative experiences. Yet McCort is not simply attempting to cheerlead a beleaguered genre by constructing a kind of critical underdog story. She acknowledges the tensions surrounding the perception, production, and consumption of horror stories for children, citing specifically the unease with which adults contemplate the actual content of these stories, which they often deem to be inappropriate. Yet is it on this kind of 'inappropriate' content that horror stories are built. Fundamentally, the subject matter of horror in general is outside the confines of what children, as perceived by contemporary Western, middle-class culture, should have access to, or be able to experience — and restricting such access is often perceived as a laudably protective or even pre-emptive gesture. There is an urge to prevent any

psychological or emotional damage, from which children are seen as being at risk when engaging with horror stories. It is this tension between the possibilities held out by the horror genre — which provides what Robert Hood terms safe forums for examining and lightening the darker sides of the human experience — and the urge simultaneously to suppress it, and shield children from it, that McCort finds so fascinating.[1]

As a collection, the essays brought together here are as diverse as the texts they interrogate, yet this is the book's greatest strength. From an exploration of body horror in Hoffman's *Struwwelpeter* by Justine Gieni, to A. Robin Hoffman's aesthetic treatment of childhood death in the work of Edward Gorey and Charles Dickens; from a focus on performativity, monstrosity, and masculinity in narrative picture-books by Rebecca A. Brown, to a take on horror in contemporary revisionist fairy-tales by McCort herself, the collection engages wholeheartedly with the breadth and depth of the horror genre. Other essays by Peter C. Kunze, and by Nicky Levey and Holly Harper, examine postmodern revisionism in contemporary children's films, and collective responsibility in YA horror novels respectively, while Janai Subramanian and Jorie Lagerwey tackle issues of race and gender in horror-based television shows. Emily Hiltz's essay on *The Hunger Games* series (2008-2010) explores the concept of body horror in terms of hybridity and physical agency, and the book concludes with Kirsten Kowalewski's discussion of the place of horror titles in children's libraries. This diversity of subject matter is what makes the collection so compelling.

'Reading in the dark' — as well as being the title of Seamus Deane's seminal 1996 novel — may well refer to the impossible art of attempting to read a scary book in the darkness under the covers, or the act of reading the darkness within stories, as these collected critics attempt to do here, with enlightening and insightful results. As a series of explorations of what McCort calls 'the dark aesthetic', the collection not only succeeds, but manages to break new critical ground.

Rebecca Long

[1] Robert Hood, 'A Playground for Fear: Horror Fiction for Children', 1997 <http://www.roberthood.net/scribbls/children.htm> [accessed 26 September 2016].

Emma McEvoy, *Gothic Tourism*
(London: Palgrave, 2016)

Emma McEvoy's *Gothic Tourism* centres, as its title would suggest, on the intriguing and increasingly dominant subject of gothic tourism. Closely related to 'dark tourism' — which is limited primarily to the recreational exploration of death and disaster sites — 'gothic tourism' is a much broader term, which encompasses *all* tourism that may be read as in any sense 'gothic'. This includes everything from ghost tours and scare attractions to haunted heritage sites and even Madame Tussaud's. The author argues that there are several elements inherent to gothic tourism: it is immersive, theatrical, intermedial, and it is inextricably bound up with gothic fictions. With the growing number of ghoulish tourist attractions and the increasingly common use of the term 'gothic tourism', this book is certainly a timely publication. A dozen examples of the trend immediately spring to mind, from the gruesome hospital-themed bar in Singapore (in which one sits in either a wheelchair or gurney and drinks red cocktails, or 'blood', through 'drips' overhead), through the 'honeymoon terror tour' in the opening of *American Horror Story: Asylum* (2012), to the recent conversion of the site used in the filming of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) into a cannibal-themed restaurant, complete with the invitation to 'survive the night' by taking advantage of its accommodation out back. The mounting phenomenon that is gothic tourism is therefore undoubtedly due academic attention and commentary — and most obviously in the context of gothic studies.

This book focuses exclusively on gothic tourism within England. The Introduction sets the scene through a vivid description of The Sanctuary, a current 'scare attraction' in the theme park Alton Towers, which emulates a 1960s mental asylum. This account immediately leads the reader to consider some of the essential elements at play within gothic tourism: the dualistic themes of terror and excitement, and the inescapable fact about simulated terror today — *it sells*. Thereafter, the main body of the work is divided into seven sections. In Chapter One, McEvoy focuses on Strawberry Hill, the infamous abode of Horace Walpole, author of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). This seminal fiction is generally regarded as *the* first gothic novel — and here McEvoy makes the stimulating argument that its origin is bound, too, to *the* first example of gothic tourism. She highlights the fact that Strawberry Hill — an ornate and decadent example of gothic architecture — served as the conscious inspiration for the fictional Castle of Otranto, while *The Castle of Otranto* served (and serves) as the inspiration for many of its readers to journey to see Strawberry Hill for themselves. Consequently, McEvoy underlines the intriguing symbiosis between sites of gothic tourism

and gothic fictions, a symbiosis which she contends has existed since the genre's very beginnings.

In Chapter Two, the author addresses the grotesque and fascinating history of the waxwork museum Madame Tussaud's. She acknowledges the universally uncanny nature of waxworks, but emphasises the fact that it is only in the original Madam Tussaud's in London that the gothic is so obviously celebrated. Furthermore, McEvoy outlines the institution's own somewhat gothic beginnings: Tussaud worked originally on waxworks of the dead, reputedly modelling likenesses of victims of the guillotine from severed and decapitated bodies. McEvoy highlights the fact that, while there is now a chain of Madame Tussauds' all over the world, it is only in the London branch that we find such elements as The Chamber of Horrors and the self-created wax figure of the witch-like Tussaud herself. It is therefore only in London that Madame Tussaud's functions as a specifically gothic attraction — a fact seemingly well known by those now behind it, who have recently incorporated a scare attraction named 'Scream', in which tourists are 'endangered' by disturbed prisoners on the loose.

Chapter Three centres on further examples of contemporary gothic tourism in London. It begins with a discussion of the home of Dennis Severs, an American who came to London in the 1960s and gradually turned his dwelling into a gothic sensation. McEvoy describes its various eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gothic artefacts, the house's transition into a site of gothic tourism, and Severs' immersive role as artist in residence. The book then moves through various sites of gothic tourism in London, from Jack the Ripper-themed tours and The Clink (a notorious Southwark prison), to the Necrobus (a 'haunted tour bus' that focuses on the city's 'dark and sinister past') and the London Dungeon. She draws connections between each of these examples, arguing that they are all performance-based attractions, which sit liminally somewhere between history and fiction, and that each relies on a shared awareness of gothic tropes and connotations.

Chapter Four addresses the now internationally thriving business of 'Ghost Walking' — guided walks through allegedly haunted areas — and discusses the sheer variety of these which are presently available. Chapter Five is concerned with the lure of haunted castles and focuses primarily on 'one of the most haunted castles in England', Berry Pomeroy in Devon. It studies how this castle *became* haunted in the popular cultural imagination, with the aid of folklore and literature, recording the transition from accounts of this castle as charming and idyllic, to those which tell of its terrorisation by a multitude of spectres. Chapter Six continues with the subject of haunted castles, but is concerned with the mutual support but

also the potential tensions between the gothic and heritage management. Chapter Seven addresses examples of gothic tourism in the cultural arena at large in the last few years, looking in particular at the place of the gothic in recent festivals. Citing such examples as Glastonbury Festival, McEvoy argues that we can see at these events that the gothic is both very much alive and very much desired, and consequently widely *funded*. It is clear, she argues, that 'we are all happy to bed down with the Gothic' (p. 199). Finally, the author concludes by highlighting the discrepancy between the fact that gothic tourism is now wildly flourishing, and that it has received comparatively little academic attention. She touches on our motivations as tourists of the gothic: we wish, she argues, to experience a Bakhtinian release, to entertain the *possibility* of the supernatural, as we seek — and now pay – to be frightened. Overall, then, the book invites further research in this area and a wider examination of this cultural tradition.

The style throughout is both informative and interesting, and the narrative tone that appears intermittently throughout the discussion is not unwelcome, as this creates the effect that we, the readers, are immersed in the various tourist attractions being described. Another nice touch is the fact that that the author has personally visited many of the sites discussed, and so is able to give first-hand accounts in addition to her academic and cultural commentary. There were, however, two questions which could, to this reader, have been fruitfully explored, but were left unexamined. The first of these is the issue of taste, or 'political correctness', when it comes to these attractions. Marketing, for example, prisons and psychiatric institutions as gothic sites of mass entertainment is surely not unproblematic, and should warrant careful consideration. Secondly, though touched on lightly in the conclusion, the question of *why* gothic tourism, as a phenomenon, is such a recent trend remains for the most part unanswered. Some discussion, for example, of its relation to a world that is conceived of by many as increasingly secularised, would have been provocative. On the whole, however, this is an entertaining, educational read, which serves as an enlightening introduction to the fascinating and expanding realm of gothic tourism.

Elizabeth Parker

Diane Long Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology, Religious Hysteria and Anti-Catholicism in British Popular Fiction, 1780–1880*
(Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014)

Note: This review was written prior to Diane Hoeveler's untimely death. The editors of *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* wish to pass on their sincere condolences to her family and friends.

It is the author's style of writing that immediately strikes the reader of Diane Long Hoeveler's *The Gothic Ideology*. The text is clearly written, and the reader gets a strong, and indeed refreshing, sense of Hoeveler's personality throughout. The style is breezily conversational as the author instructs the reader to 'bear with me' and elsewhere prefaces an admission with 'to be honest'. Such phrases as these are scattered throughout the introduction. This conversational style is underlined by a sense of ongoing research and up-to-date development, reminding the reader more of a blog post, for example, than a traditional academic tract. This would, one feels, appeal greatly to an undergraduate audience in particular. We can almost hear Hoeveler whispering from the pages as secrets are confessed to the reader, such as when she confides, 'but now I am forced to make a confession: I love to scour old libraries for forgotten tomes as much as I fancy wandering around old cathedrals, and, in particular, ruined abbeys' (p. 11). Hoeveler also admits that her current position does not strictly adhere to her own prior arguments, and may in fact contradict past assertions (pp. 9-10), and any limitations or obstacles are constantly recognised and acknowledged. There is a sense that such admissions and interjections, such shared knowledge, allow the reader to form a relationship with the writer, who appears as warm and inviting.

The writer's main aims, unsurprisingly, are very clearly outlined, and kept to the fore throughout. The primary question at the heart of this work is 'why does Catholicism assume such a prominent role in Gothic texts intended for the lower and middling classes [...]?' Hoeveler's argument is that what she terms the 'Gothic ideology' ('an intense religious anxiety caused by the aftershocks of the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Counter-Reformation, and the dynastic upheavals produced by both events in England, Germany, and France') is deeply historically relevant and is in fact a species of propaganda going right back to the Reformation, one that produced, and also exploited, this intense anxiety (p. 5). In addition to situating a variety of British Reformation and propagandistic texts as source material, Hoeveler argues that gothic writing also owes much to anti-clerical French texts.

This anti-Catholic sentiment was encouraged in order to create a strong sense of the 'Other', so as to concomitantly establish a concrete awareness of the British Protestant self. By extension, both anti-Catholicism and related prejudices held by members of the lower classes were carefully reinforced by popular gothic texts. Ruined abbeys, chapbook nuns, autos-da-fé, and tribunals are all highlighted for particular attention, and their centrality in constructing the gothic ideology is explicitly highlighted in the individual chapter titles themselves.

Hoeveler's study gives attention to both novels and chapbooks — for example, Isaac Crookenden's *The Vindictive Monk; or, The Fatal Ring* (1802) — as well as mentioning films from the United States, Europe, and Japan, such as *The Devils* (1971) and *Goya's Ghosts* (2006). Each chapter is divided into subsections, where different texts are summarised and then analysed in relation to the gothic ideology and its historical context. The summaries can run quite long. However, there are very few surviving copies of many of these texts, with only three copies of the anonymously published *The Inquisition* (1797) in existence, for example, and often no other critical reading, an absence that somewhat justifies this tendency. These more obscure texts — including *The Horrors of Oakendale Valley* (1797), which is experiencing a resurgence due to a new edition in 2006, published by Zittaw Press — are usefully considered alongside the stalwart gothic authors familiar to students, Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis. Most of the texts chosen for summary and analysis, until the end of Chapter Four, focus on the period 1780 to 1830, rather than the later nineteenth century signalled in the work's title.

Overall, the text would appear to be aimed distinctly at an undergraduate audience. The introduction recites the basics of the Protestant Reformation and explains the essentials of dissolution and the Gordon Riots (pp. 18, 29). The possibility of religion's links with politics and political allegiances is suggested towards the start (pp. 21, 22) with mention of Henry VIII and the Glorious Revolution, while another section begins by asking, 'why are monks and nuns in gothic novels?' There are also a number of minor errors regarding Ireland and Irish history, which are of course more noticeable to those of us living in Ireland. Maynooth College is mentioned briefly as being in Dublin rather than Co. Kildare, while a slip of the pen causes Wolfe Tone's name to be misspelt. These are unequivocally only very trifling faults, however, and perhaps the main quibble this reviewer has with the text would be the many instances of repetition. The chapters can be read independently, as each comes with a set of explanations and interpretation that can be understood autonomously, without the need to read each preceding chapter, another feature that would render the book appealing to an undergraduate audience, one feels. However, those who read the book as a whole may