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'A devout but nearly silent listener': dialogue, sociability, and Promethean individualism in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818)

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The Romantic period has often been characterised as marking a shift towards the inward and individual, and away from the public reason and sociability seen as characterising the Enlightenment era. As much recent work on this period shows, to posit such a simplistic break between earlier eighteenth-century thinking and Romanticism, with the latter characterised as a retreat from public life into lone interiority and individualism, is misleading.[1] Marilyn Butler argues that the second wave of Romantic poets, such as Byron, Keats, and Percy Shelley, pursued a neoclassical critical rationalism that retained the spirit of Enlightenment radicalism in contrast to, say, the later Wordsworth and Coleridge.[2] Moreover, many writers in the Romantic period cultivated a sociability that was, in some ways, a continuation of the public rationality of the earlier period.[3] Note, for example, the eminently social, communicative role the poet has in Percy Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry* (1821): '[T]he pleasure resulting from the manner in which [poets] express the influence of society or nature on their own minds, communicates itself to others, and gathers a sort of reduplication from that community.'[4]

This article argues that Mary Shelley's 1818 novel, *Frankenstein*, continues that dialogism. Born out of conversation — the famous talks at the Villa Diodati in 1816 (the 'year without a summer'), where Mary Shelley was an ambivalent listener — and out of the Jacobin novel, this novel features formal dialogues that, I argue here, function as an echo of radical dialogues that demanded universal human rights.[5] *Frankenstein* is subtitled 'The

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[1] Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite's edited collection *Romantic Sociability* is an excellent example. See *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840*, ed. by Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[2] Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background, 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 113-37.

[3] Butler talks of 'the rejection of the way of solitude for the poet' by the younger poets in opposition to the celebration of reclusiveness by Wordsworth (p. 141).

[4] Percy Bysshe Shelley, Preface, *A Defence of Poetry*, in *The Major Works*, ed. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 674-701 (p. 676)).

[5] A huge volcanic explosion in Indonesia in April 1815 had caused darkness and cold across the northern hemisphere throughout 1816 and after, with almost apocalyptic consequences. Examples of radical dialogues are Sir William Jones, *The Principles of Government; in a Dialogue Between a Scholar and a Peasant. Written by a Member of the Society for Constitutional Information* ([n.p.]: Society for Constitutional Information, 1783); and Thomas Day, *A Dialogue Between a Justice of the Peace and a Farmer* (London: John Stockdale, 1785).

Modern Prometheus'; as this article argues, Shelley uses the ambiguous Romantic avatar of Prometheus to dramatise uneasy tensions between Enlightenment ideas of progress and sociability, and a destructive bourgeois individualism. Rather than opposing scientific and social progress, *Frankenstein* is critical of those constraints that, in Jürgen Habermas's view, have made the Enlightenment an unfinished project.[6] These tensions coalesce around the figure of Prometheus who, with some Romantic-period writers, bore a number of contradictory aspects that, drawing on Herbert Marcuse's account of Prometheus, I set out below. This conflict, between a destructive Prometheanism and the liberating potential of a socialised urge to knowledge, fuels the tragic plot of the novel. Frankenstein's creature inherits his creator's isolating individuality, but through no fault of his own. He is exiled from conversation, from dialogic exchange and society, by others. Dialogue is a key concept in this dialectic of the social and the individual, both as a genre and as the practice of a communicative rationality that aims to overcome the competitive individualism of capitalist society.

I begin, then, by setting out the background of dialogism that shapes the novel. Then I introduce the figure of Prometheus, favoured by radical Romantics for his rebellious humanism, and invoked by Marcuse, whose dual-edged critique of Enlightenment may illuminate Shelley's novel. I then return to the actual dialogues embedded in the novel; notably, the creature's claim of universal rights. Finally, I glance at the utopian adventurism of the narrative; this, too, is distorted by the anti-dialogic forces that I observe being critiqued throughout.

Dialogism in *Frankenstein*

The formal dialogue, as much as the novel, is arguably the dominant genre of the eighteenth century. This was a period that fostered and valued dialogue in itself, which was sustained through the institutions described by Habermas as forming the public sphere: the dialogue genre itself proliferated; a great many dialogues were written on a wide range of topics. And the genre permeates and modulates the early English novel.[7] The novel is defined in part by

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[6] These derive from the contradiction between the utopian promise of early liberal thought and the potential of technology, with the actual exploitation of capitalism and the application of a narrow, functionalist reason to the 'lifeworld' in the service of that exploitation. See Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity: An Unfinished Project', in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, ed. by Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 38-58.

[7] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

its generic hybridity; it is constructed, as J. Paul Hunter shows, out of component genres such as the confession, the letter, and the essay.[8] The dialogue, too, can be one of these components — many eighteenth-century novels feature embedded dialogues.[9] And the dialogue form was revitalised and gained new energies amidst the political controversies and tensions of the 1780s and 1790s. Formal dialogues — representations of political and philosophical debates on the model of Plato's Socratic dialogues — are qualitatively different to novelistic conversations, which aim rather at verisimilitude and the representation of character. Such structured exchanges of ideas can be found inserted within many novels of the late century, particularly the 'Jacobin' novels by writers such as Robert Bage, Thomas Holcroft, and Mary Shelley's father, William Godwin.[10] This communicative reason was practiced among the Shelley circle, and dialogism and the dialogue genre play an important part in *Frankenstein*.[11]

Frankenstein itself emerged out of dialogue; in her 1831 Preface to the third edition, Mary Shelley recalls the background of the novel's genesis, which will be very familiar to many readers. She writes, '[m]any and long were the conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley, to which I was a devout but silent listener'.[12] She is referring here to the summer of 1816, when Byron, accompanied by his physician, John Polidori, had rented the Villa Diodati near Lake Geneva; Percy Shelley and the then Mary Godwin were frequent visitors. Alongside fervent conversations on science and supernaturalism, 'on 16 June three members of the group each agreed to write a ghost story': Godwin's story would be worked up as her novel *Frankenstein*.[13] Butler, too, notes the dialogic background and the origin of the work in

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[8] J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990).

[9] This was especially the case in Jacobin novels but also elsewhere: Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) is a fine example; Sarah Fielding's *The Cry* (1754) foregrounds the genre; Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) makes use of the device, though more to parody it. Other novels bear traces of the form, as I demonstrate with regard to Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) in 'Jane Austen's Conversational Pragmatics: Rational Evaluation and Strategic Concealment in *Sense and Sensibility*', *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal On-Line*, 32.2 (Summer 2012) <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol32no2/hughes.html> [accessed 2 October 2017].

[10] See Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 121-22, 163-65. Notable examples are Thomas Holcroft, *Anna St Ives* (1792); Robert Bage, *Hermsprong* (1796); and John Thelwall, *The Daughter of Adoption* (1801).

[11] 'Communicative reason' refers to Habermas's notion of a rationality 'ingrained in the use of language oriented to reaching understanding' inter-subjectively. See Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Vol. 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functional Reason*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge: Polity, 1985), p. 397.

[12] Mary Shelley, 'Author's Introduction to the Standard Novels Edition (1831)', in *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text*, ed. by Marilyn Butler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 192-97 (p. 195).

[13] Butler, Introduction, *Frankenstein*, p. xv. See further for the story's origin, pp. xx1-xxxiii.

'sophisticated, satirical conversations' in the Enlightenment spirit.[14] Thus the dialogues that Mary Godwin eagerly listened to (while not always participating in directly) and a more general current of literary dialogism fostered her novel. And there are intertextual 'conversations' in the novel with William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, too, as Elisabeth Bronfen reveals.[15] The allusiveness of Mary's multifarious readings of and exchanges with others and other works can be seen as a form of discursive chaos that has to be shaped, as Prometheus moulded humans out of clay, from 'dark, shapeless substances' that are, Bronfen claims, analogues of 'the *component parts*' of a creature.[16]

Prometheus

Prometheus is the Trickster figure who aids humankind (even, in some versions, creating them first from clay), who bestows on them all the gifts of civilisation, including fire stolen from the gods.[17] This is the liberating Prometheus — a rebel against tradition and tyranny, who defies the tyrannical Zeus and is punished for it. As Hephaestus tells Prometheus when he is binding him to the rock face in punishment: 'Such is your reward for favouring mankind; for as a god you did not cower before the gods when you bestowed privilege upon men beyond what was just.'[18] What is 'just' here is, of course, problematised by Aeschylus, and with considerably more force and plainness by Percy Shelley. In Percy's verse drama *Prometheus Unbound*, 'averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind', he envisages the overthrow of the tyrant Zeus and a new republic of emancipated individuals in social harmony. Perhaps it is cheating a little to invoke *Prometheus Unbound* (which was published slightly later, in 1820), but it is not unreasonable to see these themes circulating among the dialogic exchanges at the Villa Diodati in 1816.

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[14] Butler, Introduction, pp. xvii-xviii (p. xxvi).

[15] Elisabeth Bronfen, 'Rewriting the Family: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in its Biographical/Textual Context', in *Frankenstein, Creation and Monstrosity*, ed. by Stephen Bann (London: Reaktion Books, 1994), pp. 16-38.

[16] Shelley, 'Author's Introduction', p. 195; Bronfen, p. 29.

[17] The main source for the creation of human beings by Prometheus out of clay is in Ovid (see *Metamorphoses*, trans. by David Raeburn (London: Penguin, 2004), I. 76-88, pp. 8-9). The theft of fire is found in Hesiod; Protagoras in Plato's eponymous dialogue adds that Prometheus steals the technical skills of Hephaestus (forge work) and Athena (spinning, weaving, pottery), but Aeschylus amplifies this into a long catalogue of cultural and technological benefits bestowed on humanity by Prometheus, including numbers, writing, domesticating cattle and horses, navigation, medicine, augury, and mining. See Hesiod, *Theogony*, pp. 18-21, and *Works and Days*, pp. 38-40, in *Theogony and Works and Days*, trans. by M. L. West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Plato, *Protagoras*, trans. by C. C. W. Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 320c8-322d5, pp. 17-19; and Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, in *Persians and Other Plays*, trans. by Christopher Collard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 101-29 (pp. 113-24).

[18] Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, p. 102.

The Romantics were fond of Prometheus. As Chris Baldick asserts, '[t]he widespread cult of Prometheus in Romantic literature is often only a slightly Hellenized variant' of Milton's Satan as 'sublimely heroic rebel'.[19] In Byron's poem 'Prometheus' (1816), the Titan's

> Godlike crime was to be kind,
> To render with thy precepts less
> The sum of human wretchedness,
> And strengthen Man with his own mind.[20]

Likewise, in Percy Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, Prometheus is 'impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends'.[21] And those ends are potentially a reconciliation of sociality and individuality; humanity here is seen as

> a chain of linkèd thought,
> Of love and might to be divided not
> [...]
> Man, one harmonious soul of many souls,
> Whose nature is its own divine control [...]. (IV. 394-95, 400-02).

Shelley qualifies the equation of Satan with Prometheus here, depicting Satan as a distortion of the emancipatory figure of Prometheus, as a result of his own egotistical self-seeking:

> The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgement, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement.[22]

And this tainted rebel will, in fact, appear as a variant of Prometheus in Mary Shelley's novel.

In Percy Shelley's journal entry of 22 June 1816, he describes his visit to the Alps: 'All was as much our own as if we had been the creatures of such impressions *in the minds of others*, as now occupied our own'.[23] This poetic vision is Promethean creation, rebelling against the (absent) divinity and creating in his stead, exemplified in the poem 'Mont Blanc'

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[19] Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 41, 40.
[20] George Gordon Lord Byron, 'Prometheus', in *The Major Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 264-65 (ll. 35-38).
[21] P. B. Shelley, Preface, *Prometheus Unbound*, in *Works*, pp. 229-32 (p. 230).
[22] Ibid., p. 230.
[23] P. B. Shelley, note to 'Mont Blanc', in *Works*, ll. 142-44, p. 723, emphasis added.

(1816), which is a response to Coleridge's intuition of the divine in this same landscape. And this is a *social* creativity, inspiring thoughts in 'the minds of others', just as the poet's mind is in dialogue with nature: 'My own, my human mind […] | Holding an unremitting interchange | With the clear universe of things around'.[24] Amidst these ideas of creative sociability, of dialogic 'interchange', continuing the Enlightenment notion of a public rationality, roams the figure of Prometheus.

But Prometheus has other faces. *Frankenstein* is subtitled 'The Modern Prometheus' and Mary Shelley draws out less benign aspects of the Titan, with Victor Frankenstein as the creator of a subject who is denied his freedom. For Mary Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, the myth of Prometheus' theft is one of many ideological strategies used by priests to exorcise the prospect of political change, by denying the perfectibility of humankind and 'to persuade us, that we are naturally inclined to evil'. Wollstonecraft enumerates such 'wild traditions of original sin' as 'the eating of the apple, the theft of Prometheus, the opening of Pandora's box'.[25] In the Genesis story, the transgression of Adam and Eve leads them and their descendents to be cursed with labour, death, and childbirth.[26] In Greek myth, Zeus has denied humanity fire but Prometheus steals it for them from the gods. This defiance is punished by his being fettered to a rock while an eagle devours his immortal liver, which renews itself overnight. And the punishment, as with Adam and Eve, is perpetuated down through the generations (through the gods' trickery in creating the woman, Pandora, as a gift to mankind who bears all the evils of human life).[27] Though Prometheus for Wollstonecraft is still a symbol of human agency and innovation, and of liberation from archaic tyranny (as he is in *Prometheus Unbound*), the priesthood have therefore cast this very revolt as sin.

Percy Shelley pursues these themes elsewhere, suggesting the pathology of asocial individualism. Butler notes the genesis of Percy's poem *Alastor* of 1815 in introspective practices by the poet that were closely involved with the dialogue between Mary and Percy Shelley.[28] In this poem, the spirit of solitude is a malignant spirit.[29] And, incidentally, that

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[24] P. B. Shelley, 'Mont Blanc', ll. 37, 39-40.

[25] Mary Wollstonecraft, *An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, in *Political Writings: A Vindication of the Rights of Men, a Vindication of the Rights of Woman, an Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, ed. by Janet Todd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 285-371 (p. 294).

[26] Genesis 3.

[27] The Pandora story can be found in Hesiod; it is absent from the *Protagoras* and *Prometheus Bound*. See Hesiod, *Theogony*, pp. 20-21; *Works and Days*, pp. 38-40. In the *Theogony*, Pandora is a burden solely because she is a woman; in *Works and Days*, she opens the notorious jar (or 'box') of evils.

[28] Percy Shelley 'shows a new interest in keeping records of the processes of his own mind'; Mary Shelley 'claimed to have been present when this [record] was written'. See Butler, Introduction, *Frankenstein*, p. xvii.

other monster from the class of 1816, Polidori's vampire Lord Ruthven, is, like Victor Frankenstein, 'a man entirely absorbed in himself'; the figure of Romantic solitude is frequently rendered as unhealthy in these related texts.[30] Romantic monsters, without Promethean emancipation, are asocial, 'self-consumed', exhibiting an atomised individualism. But in Percy Shelley's socially engaged manifestation of Prometheus, the interiorisation of tyranny has been overcome and the isolated, solipsistic individual emancipated; the repressive reality where the subject is 'a soul self-consumed' creeping as 'a vampire among men | Infecting all with his own hideous will' has been transformed.[31] Thus, in the utopian vision of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, the human being is no longer the 'subject of a tyrant's will', and this liberation is also the liberation into a more communal life.[32]

By contrast, Byron's 1816 outcast, Manfred, has an alienated view of knowledge, where '[t]he Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life'; life and knowledge have been severed from their original Edenic unity.[33] Byron's poems around this time often stress that human beings are clay — their dull matter drags them down until sublimated by that Promethean spark. Like Frankenstein, Manfred pursues 'sciences untaught | Save in the old time' (II. 2. 84-85) and has 'dived [...] to the caves of death | Searching the cause in its effect' (II. 2. 80-81). He seeks oblivion, to be free from the curse of knowledge. Manfred's spirit is a 'Promethean spark' (I. 1. 154) 'though coop'd in clay' (I. 1. 157). Thus the solitary individual here is both creator and creature — an instability that is found in Shelley's novel too and of which I will say more later.

The Godwinian ideal of a qualified individualism, one that through the exercise of reason is free from tyranny, allows for the possibility of a myth of Promethean theft that is emancipatory rather than a constraining admonition. This ideal will emerge more fully in Percy's drama; though I do not explore this in detail, that ideal hovers behind *Frankenstein*. In Mary Shelley's novel, it is adumbrated as a potential against which contemporary heroic individualism is measured critically. Yet *Frankenstein* also gives voice to a more repressive kind of Prometheanism.

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[29] As an example of the older view of Romanticism as uncomplicatedly introverted, Butler says that 'the Victorians [...] found the hostility of the "young Romantics" hard to credit', leading to a misreading of *Alastor* as inward and asocial (*Romantics*, p. 141).
[30] John Polidori, 'The Vampyre', *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*, ed. by Baldick (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1-235 (p. 5).
[31] P. B. Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, in *Works*, III. 4. 146-48.
[32] P. B. Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, II. 4. 130.
[33] Byron, *Manfred*, in *Works*, I. 1. 12.

Repressive Prometheanism

It is illuminating here to look at the work of the Frankfurt School philosopher Herbert Marcuse, who analyses the constraints I have mentioned which prevent the full realisation of the promise of Enlightenment in capitalist society. Marcuse seeks the 'historical truth value' of 'the "culture heroes" who have persisted in imagination as symbolizing the attitude and the deeds that have determined the fate of mankind'.[34] Sharing concerns expressed in the novel, he identifies a more Satanic version of Prometheus as the isolated, self-seeking modern bourgeois individual — the antithesis of the utopian model of sociality that the radical Romantics upheld. Marcuse's use of the figure can help reveal the critical force of *Frankenstein*. As Marcuse says of this version of Prometheus, '[h]e symbolizes productiveness, the unceasing effort to master life; but, in his productivity, blessing and curse, progress and toil are inextricably intertwined'.[35] Thus, whereas toil in the Greek myth was the gods' punishment for human transgression, here, the gift of technology and retribution are dealt from the same hand. Marcuse continues, 'Prometheus is the archetype of the performance principle'.[36] The performance principle is what represses the pleasure principle in Marcuse's account of the irrational restraints by capitalist society on the human drives for an erotically charged freedom. Marcuse adds, '[a]nd in the world of Prometheus, Pandora, the female principle, sexuality and pleasure appear as curse [...]. The beauty of the woman, and the happiness she promises are fatal in the work-world of production.'[37] Thus Prometheus's values in this account are both masculinist and utilitarian. Marcuse's Promethean repression, the surplus repression of drives (that is, over and above what a healthy society might require) parallels Baldick's description of a process whereby 'the triumph of [Frankenstein's] ascetic masculine heroism is a conquest over his own social and sexual being, fulfilled in a creature to whom social and sexual ties are denied'.[38] Thus, he cuts his ties with family and friends to create the monster, and even abandons his wife on their wedding night to obtain further knowledge of his foe. In this manner, Shelley's 'modern Prometheus' shares the asociality delineated by Marcuse. The epithet 'modern' is an ironic diminishment of its original, in that it points to a figure of lesser stature than the Titanic

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[34] Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1987), p. 161.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow*, p. 51.

Greek original, though it does not imply an antipathy towards modernity as such: it is a criticism of the contemporary alienation that Marcuse exposes as inherent in capitalism.

Emphasising the repressive aspect of Prometheus, where knowledge becomes enslavement rather than liberation, many readers of *Frankenstein* have seen the text as an attack on the hubris of science itself. I want to distance myself from this approach, which, for one thing, is more persuasive when applied to Mary Shelley's revised 1831 edition rather than that conceived in 1816, as Butler has shown.[39] Ironically, Mary Shelley's later revisions to *Frankenstein*, and many interpretations since, cause the novel to revert to the ideological purpose of restricting human ambition that her mother had unveiled. The original, more dialectical myth-making of the first edition is less closed and suggests possibilities for human emancipation in the pursuit of knowledge while being critically ambivalent about such knowledge. I agree with Butler's arguments that *Frankenstein*, in the first edition of 1818 at least, was not the condemnation of science and technology that some critics still claim, and that it is not a counter-Enlightenment text. It is a matter, not of science in itself, but of how it is produced under specific social conditions. Baldick suggests that from her father, Godwin, Mary Shelley perhaps gets the idea that 'the detachment of science from social ties' is harmful.[40] David McNally, too, sees Frankenstein's science as antisocial: 'The great weakness of Victor Frankenstein is not that he thirsts for scientific knowledge but that he pursues it in unhealthy, even dangerous, isolation from social affections and interactions.'[41] Likewise, Markman Ellis shows how Frankenstein's pursuit of knowledge 'is not scientific in its nature, as it remains a secret. Scientific knowledge [...] was knowledge that was verifiable in public.'[42] Enlightenment science is therefore social, in that it is subject to public validation (as in Habermas's idea of a communicative, dialogic rationality that involves validity claims for truth, which are evaluated consensually).

However, for Ellis, the anti-scientific character of Victor's work is also owing to the pre-Enlightenment vestiges of alchemy that cling to his enquiries. This certainly supports the view that *Frankenstein* is not a denunciation of Enlightenment rationalism, but it complicates my picture of the novel as portraying the repressive force of science as existing in contradiction with its emancipatory potential. Yet if we see the dark occult processes of alchemy as standing in for the other dialectical moment of Enlightenment — its antisocial

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[39] Introduction, p. li; and 'Note on the Text', pp. lii, liii.
[40] Baldick, pp. 28-29.
[41] David McNally, *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires, and Global Capitalism* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2012), p. 93.
[42] Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 150.

atomism and privatisation of knowledge in the service of capital — my analysis still holds. This points to the constraints that individual interest places on reason under capitalism, where reason is instrumental and not practiced consensually, and suggests that the premodern sources of Frankenstein's science can be interpreted as a somewhat uncertain metaphor. That is, it is not so much alchemy as unenlightened precursor of science that is denounced, as that darkness within modern science itself that works against the human liberty that this very same knowledge may enable. This darkness is made visible in the novel through Frankenstein's refusal to grant rights to his creation and his secretive possessiveness over knowledge.

This draws attention to the production of knowledge, to the division of labour between manual and intellectual, and to production in general. These are concepts that are central to Marx's critique of capitalist society. In Franco Moretti's well-known Marxist analysis, the literature of terror dramatises 'the fear of bourgeois civilization'.[43] Conceived together (in 1816 — as mentioned above, Polidori's 'The Vampyre' famously originates in the same dialogic encounters at the Villa Diodati as *Frankenstein*), the monster and vampire as we know them today are the inseparable figures of a split society. Frankenstein's monster, denied a name, is the proletariat. But Moretti is, I think, mistaken in saying that Mary Shelley constructs a scheme 'of simplification and splitting', the split being the division of labour between mental and physical, scientist and monster, with Shelley being acquiescent in this split.[44] Rather, she complicates that splitting by knowingly exposing the destructive consequences and also, as I show below, by making the monster protean, shifting roles across that fissure. I am not convinced by Moretti's reading of the novel, which renders it more ideological, less critical than I think it is. I do not see this novel as promoting a 'feudal idyll' as Moretti claims — it envisages instead a way of life that is communal while critiquing a narrow version of individual interest. This vision is not necessarily feudal, and the text does not envisage a regression to a lost pastoral ideal.[45] There is a utopian dimension as well as an ideological one to the world conjured up by Mary Shelley, in Fredric Jameson's formulations.[46] Moretti's conclusion that the literature of terror wants to deny, illiberally, the

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[43] Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Literary Forms*, trans. by Susan Fischer and David Forgacs, rvsd edn (London and New York: Verso, 1988), p. 85.
[44] Moretti, p. 88.
[45] Moretti, p. 187.
[46] Jameson's dialectical strategy seeks to be aware of a text's potential to be simultaneously emancipatory and oppressive; Jameson calls the poles of this antinomy 'utopian' and 'ideological'. See Jameson, 'Conclusion: The Dialectic of Utopia and Ideology', *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 1983), pp. 281-99.

urge '[t]o think for oneself, to follow one's own interests' is more plausible (though I am wary of generalisations like this; not all such literature can be dismissed thus, surely).[47] That denial is part of the novel's ideological component, and Moretti's complaint that the monster's demands are reformist — limited to appealing for rights of citizenship while offering to submit to his creator — is persuasive too; the creature insists, pleadingly, 'I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king'.[48] This works against the radical Prometheanism of revolt against authority. However, other elements of the novel have the force of a powerful critique of the foundations of the bourgeois consciousness and an affirmation of a radical sociability.

Moretti argues that, in the literature of terror, metaphors become real (as with the monster being a metaphorical proletariat). But it is more complex than that; the monster simply *is* matter transformed, or invigorated, by human science, while simultaneously being the alienated agent through which capital effects that transformation. That power to reshape the world to suit human desire is what Prometheus stole from the tyrant gods; it offers, says Marx (an avid reader of Aeschylus), '[a] dwelling in the *light*, which Aeschylus describes as one of the great gifts through which he transformed savages into men'.[49] (Note how the creature's account of his own development recapitulates this transformation in accelerated miniature as he rapidly develops language and intellect — and acquires the use of fire). Under capitalism, this light 'ceases to exist for the worker'.[50] And, likewise, the *modern* Prometheus imagined by Mary Shelley denies that light to his creature despite the latter's appeals for justice. This Prometheus, through his very modernity (personifying as he does capitalist technology), is at once both repressive and potentially liberating, unlike his ancient precursor or that revived by Percy Shelley.

Thus, though Moretti's figuring of Frankenstein's creature as the working class is pertinent, Shelley's text capitulates less to the fear of that class than he argues for and, in fact, displays an alignment with their interests. David McNally claims that the human body, for capital and to anatomists, is reduced to 'a mere collection of parts'. He draws attention to the special horror of raiding working-class graves for anatomical specimens and how it informs *Frankenstein*. Shelley, he says, makes an 'acute representation of this bourgeois worldview

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[47] Moretti, p. 107.
[48] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ed. by Butler, p. 77. All further references are to this edition and are placed in parentheses in the body of the text. See Moretti, p. 86.
[49] Karl Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844)', in *Early Writings*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), pp. 279-400 (p. 359).
[50] Marx, p. 359.

— of reified body parts and beings detached from the organic wholes in which they appear'.[51] The radical alienation of workers' bodies in the process of production even extends to after their death and to the production of knowledge. The chaos that the creature is formed from is thus quite literally the product of this alienation, which is now subsumed under a reifying Prometheanism, one which steals from the people rather than emancipating them. And this, McNally says, would have had both a contemporary resonance and a personal one for Mary Shelley: 'In an era in which anatomy had become a flashpoint over the commodification in life and death, this fictional account of proletarian bodies being stolen, dismembered, and monstrously reassembled would have carried a potent charge.'[52] In Shelley's novel, however, the mutilated labouring body argues back, and this is where we return to the issue of the dialogue.

The Dialogue in *Frankenstein*

The dialogue form — a key resource for eighteenth-century novelists, as I have said — is conspicuous in *Frankenstein*. Like Frankenstein himself, the creature has immense 'powers of eloquence and persuasion' (p. 188). A reviewer in the *Quarterly Magazine* points to the rhetorical power of the monster, repeating Shelley's phrase, 'the eloquence and persuasion [...] are so because they are truth'.[53] This highlights the novel's concerns with argument and exchange; Baldick discusses the '"dialogical" openness' of *Frankenstein*, where 'the moral framework of the novel is dissolved into an open debate between Victor and the monster'.[54] Thus, here, the dialogism is explicit. The first encounter between Frankenstein and his creature is a set piece of embedded dialogue of the kind to be found in the Jacobin novels, which form an intertextual exchange with Mary Shelley's writing; here, the dialogue highlights the justice of the monster's pleas for his inclusion in the speaking commonwealth of humankind. There is an elision of roles, as the monster casts himself as the being denied rights by his tyrannical creator, Zeus (as humans are in the myth), but also as Milton's rebellious Satan (who is akin to Prometheus, humankind's benefactor): 'I am thy creature: I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed' (p. 77). His master has bequeathed him the joyless existence that results when the pleasure principle is unjustly and irrationally suppressed in the name of utility. The monster has, of course, read *Paradise Lost* in his initiation into the communicative entanglement of

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[51] McNally, p. 97.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Cited in Baldick, p. 58.
[54] Baldick, pp. 43-44.

individuals, embodied and reproduced by language and, especially, literature, that is human life.

Though the creature, through this membership of a linguistic community, has expectations of rights owing to him, Frankenstein initially denies any reciprocity between him and his creature, declaring that '[t]here can be no community between you and me', and makes room only for strategic, even violent, action rather than consensual reason.[55] 'Begone', he says, 'or let us try our strength in a fight, in which one must fall' (p. 78). The monster, countering this, appeals for the preconditions of dialogue to be established, for the liberal rights to a fair trial, and for his inclusion in the human community: 'Listen to my tale [...]. The guilty are allowed by human laws, bloody as they may be, to speak in their own defence before they are condemned' (p. 78). Frankenstein grants him that rational examination of discourse; as he relates, he 'weighed the various arguments that [the creature] had used, and determined at last to listen to his tale' (p. 79). So the structures of mutuality are tentatively established, despite Frankenstein's reluctance. The creature then justifies the foundations of that mutuality by recounting his development as a reasoning, dialogic being, in an account which echoes quite a few Enlightenment speculative narratives about the origins of consciousness and language (pp. 88-92).[56] His principal, passionate appeal to Frankenstein concerns above all his need for an other with whom he can have 'the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being' (p. 118) (that is, a female companion); he is *more* humanly sociable here than Frankenstein, who had isolated himself from domesticity.[57]

During the course of this dialogue, Frankenstein is partially convinced: 'I was moved. I shuddered when I thought of the consequences of my consent; but I felt there was some justice in his argument' (p. 120). The creature presses his case rationally, demonstrating that he is no threat; he is less voracious than mankind, even: 'I will go to the vast wilds of South

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[55] Habermas contrasts strategic with communicative action; the former is antithetical to dialogue: 'The fundamental form of coordination through language, according to Habermas, requires speakers to adopt a practical stance oriented toward "reaching understanding", which he regards as the "inherent telos" of speech. When actors address one another with this sort of practical attitude, they engage in what Habermas calls "communicative action", which he distinguishes from strategic forms of social action. [...] In strategic action, actors are not so much interested in mutual understanding as in achieving the individual goals they each bring to the situation.' See James Bohman and William Rehg, 'Jürgen Habermas', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2014) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/habermas/> [accessed 16 February 2017].

[56] In particular, those of Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733), Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714-1780), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), and Adam Smith (1723-1790). These theories, significantly, posit a primal dialogue between human beings as the origin of language.

[57] Butler claims that, like the hero of Godwin's *St Leon* (1799), Frankenstein is 'a selfish intellectual [who] trades domestic happiness and marital love for the chimeras of scientific knowledge, success, and power' (Introduction, *Frankenstein*, p. xv).

America. My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid, to glut my appetite' (p. 120). He appeals again to what must be presumed are shared Enlightenment principles of opposition to Zeus-like arbitrary power: 'The picture I present to you is peaceful and human, and you must feel that you could deny it only in the wantonness of power and cruelty' (p. 120). Frankenstein argues that the creature's very desire for sociality will lead to his reversion to violence: 'How can you, who long for the love and sympathy of man, persevere in this exile? You will return, [...] and meet with their detestation; your evil passions will be renewed' (p. 120). He calls for the termination of dialogue: 'cease to argue the point, for I cannot consent' (p. 120). The creature draws attention to Frankenstein's irrational breaches of dialogic conduct: 'How inconstant are your feelings! But a moment ago you were moved by my representations, and why do you again harden yourself to my complaints?' (121). He appeals to the Enlightenment principle of sympathy as the source of virtue, with a faith in human benevolence that contrasts with his creator, claiming, '[m]y evil passions will have fled, for I shall meet with sympathy' (p. 121). Further invoking this principle, with striking rationality, he argues, '[h]ow is this? I thought I had moved your compassion, and yet you still refuse to bestow on me the only benefit that can soften my heart and render me harmless' (p. 121). His argument ironically passes judgement on the source of humanity's (and Frankenstein's) evils in their atomised condition:

> My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor; and my virtues will necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal. I shall feel the affections of a sensitive being, and become linked to the chain of existence and events, from which I am now excluded. (p. 121)

There is the suggestion in this passage of a reconciled human existence based on mutuality between equals. Here, the dialogism that repressive Prometheanism annuls appears in that aspiration towards 'communion with an equal'. Frankenstein has forced his creature into sharing Frankenstein's own degraded state of solipsism, and has severed the creature's links to 'the chain of existence and events' that comprise social life (including the process of economic production).

Frankenstein considers the argument, acting out the role of the detached, critical interlocutor proper to formal dialogue, and, for the moment, is won over:

> I paused some time to reflect on all he had related, and the various arguments which he had employed. I thought of the promise of virtues which he had displayed on the opening of his existence, and the subsequent blighting of all kindly feeling by the loathing and scorn which his protectors had manifested towards him. His power and

> threats were not omitted in my calculations [...]. After a long pause of reflection, I concluded, that the justice due both to him and my fellow-creatures demanded of me that I should comply with his request. (pp. 121-22)

Authentic dialogue rests on the mutual recognition of the participants. As this passage and the exchange discussed above indicate, there is frequent mirroring and displacement of roles between Frankenstein and the creature, suggesting an affinity that Frankenstein ultimately rejects. This mirroring occurs in many places in the novel, destabilising Frankenstein's hierarchical authority and promoting sympathy for the creature. It can also serve to indicate the infectious nature of that pathological, asocial individualism of which Frankenstein is the type. Thus 'Good, Evil, Guilt, and Justice' are unsettled and 'the roles of master and slave' are 'alternating and shifting', claims Baldick, as in Hegel's dialectic of master and slave.[58] This shifting is a different, though related, kind of dialogism, more akin to the polyphony of Mikhail Bakhtin, where many perspectives are encouraged to coexist.[59] Thus the monster not only represents humankind denied rights by their creator, Zeus; he also, according to Baldick, acts as Prometheus, bringing the ambivalent tool, or weapon, of fire to the De Lacey family — gathering firewood but then burning down their home (p. 46). McNally associates Promethean fire here with plebeian revolt.[60] And the creature's final death by fire, as McNally says, is 'inverted Prometheanism'.[61] The Titan's gift of technological power over nature, rather than liberating him, has destroyed him — as the potentially emancipatory forces of capitalism destroy the worker.

In line with the fluidity of roles noted above, Frankenstein also aligns himself with Milton's Satan, declaring, 'like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in an eternal hell' (p. 180). Soon after, Frankenstein dies and the remorseful monster mirrors him in this Satanic, egotistic role, confessing to a like 'frightful selfishness' (p. 188) and even citing Milton's Satan when he says that '[e]vil thenceforth became my good' (p. 188). Earlier, he had admonished his creator for banishing him from the utopian 'joy' and 'bliss' he is entitled to: 'I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel' (p. 77). Thus Frankenstein's actions have condemned his creature into mirroring his own variety of Prometheanism, cutting him off from social pleasures and quelling his powers and agency.

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[58] Baldick, p. 44. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
[59] This polyphony, for Bakhtin, is characteristic of the novel as a genre and is not unrelated to the novel's multigeneric nature. See M. M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), pp. 259-422.
[60] McNally, pp. 103-04.
[61] McNally, p. 106.

Recall that Satan is Percy Shelley's incomplete, distorted Prometheus, tainted by 'ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement'.[62]

In a further mirroring, Walton's monomania reflects that of Frankenstein, as does his rhetoric of individualistic heroism. Like Frankenstein, he seeks mutuality and dialogue, even as his commitment to individualism undermines it. For both, their voyage of discovery is also a search for sociality and intellectual reciprocity; Walton seeks a soul-mate just as Frankenstein (and also the monster) does, asserting, 'I greatly need a friend who would have sense enough not to despise me as a romantic, and affection enough for me to endeavour to regulate my mind' (p. 9). Butler draws attention to Frankenstein's masculine individualism and solipsism. As she says, by Volume III, 'we now see Frankenstein's viewpoint for what it is, not representative of humanity in any neutral, still less noble way, but typically insensitive and self-absorbed'.[63] She compares him to Godwinian characters such as Falkland and St Leon, where 'secrecy itself symbolises the greed and competitiveness which for Rousseau was the crime of civilised life'.[64] Frankenstein 'stands for male arrogance and the impulse to dominate, as this trait is observable domestically'.[65] The tragic note of the novel is the antagonism between this Promethean drive (in its destructive aspect) and the longing for sociality, where even those who dominate and command creative energies suffer from the alienating effects of those energies.

Instrumental Romance

A generic hybrid, *Frankenstein* incorporates the romance quest (in a gothic variant) and anticipates the adventure novels of the later nineteenth century, such as those of H. Rider Haggard. Walton tries to communicate something of the utopian wonder of discovery to his sister in their epistolary dialogue: 'Inspired by this wind of promise, my day dreams have become more fervent and vivid. I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delights' (p. 5). Angela Wright points out that 'both Walton the explorer and Victor Frankenstein are avid readers of romance and adventure themselves, and it is their reading matter that sparks their Promethean ambitions'.[66] She says further that Mary Shelley sought 'to strike a critical

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[62] P. B. Shelley, Preface, *Prometheus Unbound*, in *Works*, p. 230.
[63] Butler, Introduction, *Frankenstein*, p. xl.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., p. xli.
[66] Angela Wright, 'The Gothic', in *The Cambridge Companion to Women's Writing in the Romantic Period*, ed. by Devoney Looser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 58-72 (p. 70).

balance between the "love for the marvellous" with "the common pathways of man"'.[67] I would add that it is perhaps a critical dialectic rather than a balance; Shelley's novel dramatises the desire for marvels that is one aspect of the Promethean urge, but places it in conflict with ordinary human existence. Shelley's version of gothic adumbrates ways of redirecting the energies fired by that Promethean ignition.

There is, too, the double-edged nature of science, which may have a social utility beyond individual gratification. Walton is not necessarily in bad faith here: 'You cannot contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind [...] by discerning a passage near the pole to those countries [...] or by ascertaining the secret of the magnet' (p. 6). And even Frankenstein's scientific explorations may have a similarly humanitarian and progressive component before their goal becomes distorted. But even Frankenstein's attempt at expiation through pursuing his creature in order to remove the threat to humankind is compromised by his egotism. For his Promethean rhetoric, though laden with utopian promise, is undemocratic, employed strategically to subvert the consensual voices of the near-mutinous crew of Walton's ship, who want to turn around and abandon the quest. 'Even the sailors', Walton tells his sister, 'feel the power of his eloquence: when he speaks, they no longer despair; he rouses their energies, and, while they hear his voice, they believe these vast mountains of ice are mole-hills, which will vanish before the resolutions of man' (p. 181).

The sailors make 'a demand, which, in justice, [Walton] could not refuse' (p. 182), echoing the creature's own rational demands to his maker. But Frankenstein addresses the sailors 'full of lofty design and heroism' (p. 183), which, here, are manifestations of a distorted, instrumental Prometheanism. The episode is ambivalent, though: the revolt of the sailors means that Walton loses his 'hopes of utility and glory' (p. 184) — and remember, those hopes, at the beginning, have promised benefits ('utility') to humanity. Frankenstein's final admonition to Walton captures that ambivalence in motion, and enacts the restless dialectical contradictions of the Promethean urge for discovery: 'Seek happiness in tranquillity, and avoid ambition, even if it be the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed' (p. 186).

In summary, rather than exposing the hubris of Enlightenment science, *Frankenstein* reveals impediments to social and scientific emancipation, and it carries out that critique by picturing as its protagonist the flawed, divided Prometheus of Marcuse's reimagining of the

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[67] Wright, p. 71.

Titan. Frankenstein's creature is coerced into the same pathological, distorted individualism, barred from mutuality, dialogue, and agency in the production of knowledge. Thus asociality reproduces and perpetuates itself. If the monster is the proletariat (as Moretti claims), then the workers, too, are divided amongst themselves and expelled from the possibility of an authentic, truly human social life. But the creature, conceived in a year of darkness illuminated by dialogue, is also an index of the liberating potential of dark, shapeless matter transformed through marvellous human knowledge and imagination, yet constrained by an oppressive, asocial individualism.

'I say to you that I am dead!': Medical Experiment and the Limits of Personhood in Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar' (1845)

Hannah Lauren Murray

Bricked up in walls, hidden under floorboards, or left in unmarked graves, Edgar Allan Poe's dead and dying bodies suffer continual violation and exploitation. Poe's fascination with inappropriate burial and exhumation reflects pressing antebellum fears of bodysnatching — a trade in dead bodies to supply medical schools, which targeted the corpses of the nation's noncitizens: African Americans, Native Americans, the institutionalised, and the itinerant. In this article I contend that Poe's tales of human mesmeric experiment, framed in the context of medical grave-robbing and exploitation, examine marginal states of being that are constructed as 'beneath' the status of full citizenship. Routinely subjecting his white protagonists to near-death or fatal experiences, Poe asks what it means for citizens to lose their self-possession and instead become the property of others.

I focus on 'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar' (1845), a horrifying scientific tale about the terminally ill Valdemar, whose dying and then dead body is subject to the mesmeric control of an unnamed researcher, the narrator. A dying man suspended in a mesmeric state for several months, Valdemar impossibly proclaims his own death and speaks of his continued suffering after doctors declare him dead. The terrifying prospect of dissection and display usually experienced by the nation's non-citizens here afflicts an educated white male citizen. Subjected to mesmeric experiment, this body serves as a stark reminder that white men could lose their self-ownership. The experiment discovers the limits of personhood — that is, the negation of selfhood, where one experiences absolute loss of power and self-determinacy. In 'Valdemar', Poe therefore employs medical experiment to offer a pessimistic view of a precarious white male citizenship, one in which an idealised autonomous self is not assured and can be negated by the will of another.

As a text centred on an inexplicable voice, 'Valdemar' is often discussed in regards to Poe's approach to authorship and writing. Indeed, more generally, Poe's mesmerism tales ('A Tale of the Ragged Mountains' (1844), 'Mesmeric Revelations' (1844) and 'Valdemar') show him exploring how writing operates in the context of new scientific developments. For example, Adam Frank reads animal magnetism as an analogy for the telegraph and contends

that 'mesmerism offered Poe a way to theorize what a medium for writing could be or do' during the emergence of electrical communication.[1] Furthermore, structuralist and post-structuralist critics employ Valdemar's inexplicable voice to exemplify their arguments regarding language, life, and the self.[2] Much less attention has been given to the exploitative relationship between the narrator P— and Valdemar, or to reading Valdemar himself as a figure of loss, exclusion, and suffering. As a body used for medical education, Valdemar shares the same fate as the bodies of those from non-white and marginal groups that medical schools usually acquired for dissection and experiment. Employing antebellum medical science as a frame enables us to read Poe's anxieties concerning fragile citizenship, via situations where white male characters lose their abilities, faculties, and vitality, and therefore their social rights and privilege.[3] Valdemar's proximity to death and states of powerlessness render him, I argue, less than white and less than a person.

Personhood — the experience of individual autonomy and self-determination — depends on the conscious ability to recognise a 'sense of self' that can make choices and determine actions.[4] In the antebellum period, this ideal existed as a gendered, ableist, and racialised concept. The able, white, male body alone in the mid-nineteenth century marked the legal boundary of personhood.[5] In particular, whiteness denoted an inalienable property-in-oneself — the ability to control and govern one's body and labour. Whiteness meant not being a piece of property, but nevertheless became a property in itself that white Americans could use to assert their social dominance over non-white groups and to enjoy exclusive

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[1] In addition, in thinking specifically about Poe's philosophy of the 'single effect', Bruce Mills argues that the short-story form 'would not have emerged without the psychological (and mesmeric) truths that legitimized the form's brevity, its concentration of narrative choices, and its peculiar repetition of sensation'. See Adam Frank, 'Valdemar's Tongue, Poe's Telegraphy', *English Literary History*, 72 (2005), 635-62 (p. 636); and Bruce Mills, *Poe, Fuller, and the Mesmeric Arts: Transition States in the American Renaissance* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), p. 66.

[2] Notably, Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida disagreed on Valdemar's proclamation 'I am dead!' In 'Analyse texteulle d'un cone d'Edgar Poe' (1967), Barthes read the 'impossible utterance' as a 'blind spot of language structure', whereas Derrida argued that 'I am dead' made grammatical sense, even if it is not physically possible. Valdemar's ability to use language to assert 'I am dead' therefore marks his status as living. See Roland Barthes, 'Textual Analysis of a Tale by Edgar Poe', trans. by Donald G. Marshall, *Poe Studies*, 10 (1977), 1-12 (p. 10); and Jacques Derrida, 'Discussion: Barthes — Todorov', in *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and The Sciences of Man*, ed. by Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 145-56 (p. 156).

[3] Peter Coviello notes that Poe's characters who are close to death 'become slave-like, alarmingly *less* white' because they lose control of their own bodies and faculties. See Peter Coviello, *Intimacy in America: Dreams of Affiliation in Antebellum Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 72.

[4] Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers: Volume 1 — Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 85.

[5] Here I draw on the work of legal historian Barbara Young Welke, who ties citizenship to 'able white men alone' as 'fully embodied legal persons'. Those outside of this category existed on the 'borders of belonging' in early-national and antebellum society. See Barbara Young Welke, *Law and the Borders of Belonging in the Long Nineteenth Century United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 2.

social privileges.[6] Only members of this group were afforded the rights of citizenship — physical, legal, and economic freedoms — that allowed them to actualise the concept of personhood fully. Explicitly and inextricably linking citizenship and whiteness in 1836, James K. Paulding wrote in *Slavery in the United States*, 'the government of the United States, its institutions and its privileges, belong by right wholly and exclusively to white men; for they were purchased, not by the blood of the negroes, but by that of our fathers'.[7] Paulding's use of financial language clearly indicates a framing of citizenship in terms of property: to be able to acquire property, one must have property-in-oneself. Paulding's 'fathers' demonstrate their self-ownership by claiming independence apart from Britain, and due to their position as free men, can transfer these rights to their descendants.

Those outside this group of able white men experienced legal and social limits on their personhood, from white women, who had restricted freedom and suffrage, to African-American slaves, who experienced a 'social death' in being viewed as pieces of human property incapable of owning themselves or of actualising personhood.[8] The slave represented the complete absence of autonomy and self-ownership. Writing in 1839, Alexis de Tocqueville stated, 'the Negro has lost all property in his own person', in opposition to the able white man who could control his labour and, by extension, acquire and transfer capital.[9] For Colin Dayan, this 'negative' or erased personhood experienced by slaves occurs when 'living, willful, sentient, believing persons' are treated as and transformed into 'inanimate, rightless objects'.[10] She extends this condition of social or civic death to the prisoner, confined and dehumanised by their jailer, and the cadaver, discarded or exploited by the living. In her earlier work on Poe, Dayan asks that critics attend to Poe's characters who inhabit the 'margins of civilisation', where rights and privileges are 'compromised or threatened' — in other words, scenarios in which white characters experience the limits of personhood, and become less than white.[11]

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[6] This framing of the self through the language of property enabled European Americans to take ownership of African Americans as human property, and to colonise land belonging to Native-American tribes. See Cheryl L. Harris, 'Whiteness as Property', *Harvard Law Review*, 106 (1993), 1707-93 (pp. 1721, 1718).

[7] James K. Paulding, *Slavery in the United States* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1836), p. 42.

[8] I take the idea of 'social death' from Orlando Patterson's landmark study *Slavery and Social Death*, which conceives enslavement as a state of living or social death. Slaves are not dead, but they are 'natally alienated' from kinship structures and therefore cannot claim the rights afforded to free men and women, in particular the right to inherit. See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[9] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. by Henry Reeve, 3rd American edn, 2 vols (New York: George Adlard, 1839), I, p. 332.

[10] Colin Dayan [formerly Joan Dayan], *The Law Is a White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. xii, 33.

[11] Joan Dayan, 'Poe, Persons, and Property', *American Literary History*, 11 (1999), 405-425 (pp. 408, 405-06).

Dayan's work enables us to move beyond the scholarly question of a 'racist or nonracist Poe', which Poe studies has often pursued, to more complex and nuanced issues of racial, civic, and legal identity in the antebellum period.[12] This racist/nonracist enquiry borders discussions of the past three decades that often take a binary reading of Poe's black characters and symbols against white figures. For Toni Morrison in *Playing in the Dark*, 'no early American writer is more important to the concept of African Americanism than Poe'. In situating 'images of impenetrable whiteness' against Africanist presences, she asserts, Poe's work demonstrates that white American writers depend on blackness simultaneously to threaten and strengthen white character, and to shape national literature.[13] An edited collection entitled *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race* (2001), indebted to Morrison, has furthered her work, discussing how Poe expressed anxieties surrounding white fragility and black violence through literary form and style.[14] In these readings, black figures—whether slaves, indigenous populations, or animals — represent the master-slave relationship and the fear of African-American revolt in Poe's tales.[15] As Teresa Goddu notes, however, the danger in taking too literally Morrison's call to pursue a 'singular hunt' for racial figures and non-white signifiers has 'constrained Poe studies', producing scholarship too reliant on Poe's use of symbolism, instead of recognising 'the nexus of multiple cultural discourses' that Poe's writing occupies.[16] Although critics pay considerable attention to non-white characters as figures of otherness, they attend less to Poe's white male characters as racial figures themselves, in particular in regards to the formation of the citizen and their personhood.

Recent Poe criticism has returned to Dayan's discussions of personhood. Animal-studies works read Poe's texts as limning the threshold of what it means to be a person, a

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[12] Dayan, 'Poe, Persons, and Property', p. 412. For example, there has been much debate over whether Poe wrote a pro-slavery review of Paulding's *Slavery in the United States* while working as editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* in April 1836, and to what extent this influenced his portrayal of black characters. For a summary of this debate, see Terence Whalen, 'Average Racism: Poe, Slavery, and the Wages of Literary Nationalism', in *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race*, ed. by J. Gerald Kennedy and Liliane Weissberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 3-40.

[13] Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 32, 33.

[14] For example, Betsy Erkkila's essay examines Poe's symbolic 'fetishization of whiteness and purity' in his poetry as a response to fears of black violence and miscegenation, while Leyland Person considers Poe's racial signifiers within the 'complex aesthetic surface of his fiction', such as the gothic genre and the first-person psychological narrative, that actively obfuscate race. See Betsy Erkkila, 'The Poetics of Whiteness: Poe and the Racial Imaginary', in *Romancing the Shadow*, pp. 41-74 (p. 52); and Leland S. Person, 'Poe's Philosophy of Amalgamation: Reading Racism in the Tales', in *Romancing the Shadow*, pp. 205-24 (p. 206).

[15] These figures include the emancipated Jupiter in 'The Gold Bug' (1843), enslaved manservants called Pompey in 'A Predicament' (1838) and 'The Man that was Used Up' (1839), the Tsalal islanders in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), the orang-utan in 'Murders in the Rue Morgue' (1841), and the eponymous feline in 'The Black Cat' (1843).

[16] Teresa A. Goddu, 'Rethinking Race and Slavery in Poe Studies', *Poe Studies*, 33.1-2 (2000), 15-18 (p. 15).

concept delineated along racial lines.[17] Concurrently, scholarship on Poe's prisons and asylums reads them as spaces of exclusion and marginalisation, in which white characters transform into less-than-white noncitizens.[18] This article builds on these works on Poe's carceral imagination, to focus on medical exploitation as another context that Poe uses to discuss the limits of personhood. In the first part of the article, I read Valdemar as an exploited medical subject, by outlining the racial politics of antebellum bodysnatching, dissection, and medical experiment. Within this context, the mesmerised body serves the same function as the dissected cadaver — Valdemar becomes a powerless less-than-white figure controlled by a professional white male. Using mesmerism as an analogue, the tale realises the frightening possibility that anyone, including educated white men, can lose possession of their body to those in pursuit of medical or scientific knowledge. In a society where the voice marks an autonomous self who can speak for himself and participate in a civil group, unusual or unexpected voices — ventriloquism, cries, shrieks, howls, interruptions, shouts — act out in resistance.[19] Valdemar's inexplicable voice articulates what Russ Castronovo terms 'discorporation' — the exclusion from a community and the loss of the rights and privileges of the citizen.[20] Speaking of his entrapment and suffering, Valdemar undermines the expectation of an autonomous and self-possessed antebellum citizenship, while simultaneously protesting the exploitation he experiences as a dying-then-dead medical subject.

In the second part of the article, I discuss how Valdemar significantly challenges the narrator's mesmeric control. Valdemar's voice from beyond the grave disrupts the professional white male community around him. The narrator's success is predicated not only on controlling Valdemar's body but also on comprehending it. The narrator's confounded responses to the misbehaving body mark a failure of rational manhood to assert its civic

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[17] Colleen Glenney Boggs, *Animalia Americana* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Dominic Mastroianni, 'Hospitality and the Thresholds of the Human in Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*', *Studies in American Fiction*, 40 (2013), 185-202; and Christopher Peterson, *Bestial Traces: Race, Sexuality, Animality* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

[18] Erin Forbes tracks depictions of social death, namely incarceration and slavery, in Poe's tale of living death, 'The Premature Burial' (1844). Aaron Matthew Percich reads asylum tale 'The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether' (1845) as a commentary on antebellum prejudice against less-than-white Irish immigrants. See Erin E. Forbes, 'From Prison Cell to Slave Ship: Social Death in "The Premature Burial"', *Poe Studies*, 46 (2013), 32-58; and Aaron Matthew Percich, 'Irish Mouths and English Tea-Pots: Orality and Unreason in "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether"', *Poe Studies*, 47 (2014), 76-99.

[19] Nancy Ruttenburg identifies these 'unanticipated, inarticulate, [and] uncontainable' voices emerging in antebellum literature as resistant to a written and spoken discourse privileging white men. See Nancy Ruttenburg, *Democratic Personality: Popular Voice and the Trial of American Authorship* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 6.

[20] Russ Castronovo, *Necro Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 3.

identity, bolstered by the observation and classification central to medical and scientific phenomena.

Antebellum Medicine and the Racial Politics of Grave-Robbing

From the late eighteenth century, a drive towards professionalisation in American medicine increased the desire for and procurement of cadavers. Simultaneously, by the antebellum period, the doctor had become a figurehead of middle-class masculinity, who observed, manipulated, and managed the bodies of others. As a result of Jacksonian public distrust of educated professionals and elitist qualifications, middle-class doctors feared that medicine could become a classless field, diluted by untrained physicians, quackery, and alternative treatments such as homeopathy.[21] In order to distinguish medicine, particularly surgery, as a science rather than a trade, the body, living or dead, became a site of knowledge, which could be studied in detail. 'The exemplary methodology of medical science', dissection programmes encouraged professionalism by offering medical students tactile knowledge of human anatomy and providing surgeons with bodies for practice.[22] Students and staff expected schools to provide cadavers for dissection and often criticised shortages in the pages of medical journals. For example, in an 1840 essay, Dr Andrew Boardman of Geneva College, Pennsylvania complained, '[n]ot *a single subject* was provided for dissection during the *whole session*' of an anatomy course, although students had paid $40 each to secure bodies.[23] In an inaugural lecture to Pennsylvania College medical students, author and doctor Robert Montgomery Bird bemoaned the fact that public distaste for dissection and a lack of legislation meant that the anatomist was 'in almost constant fear of the *penitentiary*' for relying on illegal grave-robbing to satisfy demand.[24]

To avoid prosecution, grave-robbers and medical students (who were sometimes the same people) targeted the poor, the homeless, the institutionalised, itinerant workers, sailors, African Americans, Native Americans, and recent immigrants. Ironically, disposable bodies

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[21] Richard Hofstadter summarised Jacksonian anti-intellectualism as a 'distrust of expertise', a 'desire to uproot the entrenched classes', and a doctrine asserting that 'important functions were simple enough to be performed by anyone'. See Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage, 1962), pp. 155-56.

[22] Michael Sappol, *A Traffic of Dead Bodies: Anatomy and Embodied Social Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 53.

[23] Andrew Boardman, 'An Essay on the Means of Improving Medical Education and Elevating Medical Character', in *Medical America in the Nineteenth Century: Readings from the Literature*, ed. by Gert H. Brieger (London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1972), pp. 24-36 (p. 26), emphasis in original.

[24] Robert Montgomery Bird, *The Difficulties of Medical Science: An Inaugural Lecture, Introductory to a Course of Lectures* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Medical College, 1841), p. 17, emphasis in original. There were a number of public riots against medical dissection in New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Vermont. See Sappol, *A Traffic of Dead Bodies*, p. 107.

that seemed to be accorded very little or no importance or respect when alive became incredibly valuable for the medical profession and those who supplied the trade. States trafficked socially dead cadavers to provide for medical schools across the nation, in particular transporting bodies from northern cities into the South.[25] The practice was public enough in some cities that Harriet Martineau observed in 1838, '[i]n Baltimore the bodies of coloured people exclusively are taken for dissection "because the whites do not like it, and the coloured people cannot resist"'.[26] This illicit trade in bodies was well known in Baltimore, with reports of disturbed graves and stolen body parts appearing in city newspapers. A Baltimore resident, Poe channels stories of resourceful dentists into 'Berenice' (1835), in which the obsessive narrator disturbs Berenice's premature grave to extract all her teeth.

Although this practice targeted African Americans, a body of literature in the mid-century expresses *white* anxiety regarding loss of personhood through medical bodysnatching. For example, in Bird's *Sheppard Lee* (1836), the eponymous protagonist uses cadavers for social mobility or survival, transferring his spirit into recently deceased bodies, including that of Virginia slave, Tom. Executed after a failed revolt, Tom's body is exhumed and examined by a group of students 'desirous to show their skill in anatomy' in front of a dozen 'respectable gentlemen'. Sheppard is able to escape into another body before the dissection, but at the novel's conclusion, he finds that his original unattended body has been stolen and embalmed by German doctor Feuerteufel 'for the especial benefit of science and the world'. When confronted with his own exploited corpse, Sheppard is horrified that his *white* body could be treated with such little dignity. His stolen cadaver signals the terrifying possibility that he could have more value in death — as Feuerteufel's educational and entertaining property — than in life. His 'sorrow and affliction' compel him to re-enter his body, reclaim his family estate, and reassert his property-in-himself.[27] Similarly, in George Lippard's *The Quaker City* (1845) and J. H. Robinson's *Marietta* (1846), doctors and students are themselves depicted as reliant on stealing poor and vulnerable bodies of any race.[28]

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[25] For more on dissection of African Americans in the South, see *Bones in the Basement: Postmortem Racism in Nineteenth-Century Medical Training*, ed. by Robert Blakely and Judith M. Harrington (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).

[26] Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel*, 3 vols (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), I, p. 231.

[27] Robert Montgomery Bird, *Sheppard Lee: Written by Himself*, ed. by Christopher Looby (New York: New York Review Books, 2008), pp. 371, 372, 406.

[28] In *The Quaker City*, Devil-Bug stalks Philadelphia to procure fresh cadavers for the mysterious doctor Ravoni, describing with glee the 'jolly business' of 'mash[ing] the coffin lid into small pieces with a blow o' the

Broadly, these snatched bodies were unclaimed by friends or family, left unsecure in municipal spaces, or housed by the state, and so considered acceptable for dissection.[29] For white citizens, as these stories imply, the dissection table carried great stigma because it meant they had died without friends or finances to protect their body after death. In Poe's early farce 'Loss of Breath' (1835), an opportunistic publican takes advantage of the abandoned and seemingly dead narrator, by selling his 'corpse' to a local surgeon. Similarly, the narrator in 'The Premature Burial' describes the horror of being buried 'as a dog — nailed up in some common coffin […] some ordinary and nameless *grave*', because he has lost his friends' protection.[30] Furthermore, the intra- and inter-state circulation of medical corpses bore frightening resemblances to the slave trade, compounded by the fact that a large number of cadavers were African Americans who 'cannot resist'. To be dissected after death was to be treated in the same way as the noncitizen; it negated the rights and privileges that the white citizen had assumed during life. In a context of debates over human dissection in the 1830s and 1840s, Poe's medical experiments reveal alternative anxieties that a *white* male citizen could be exploited, lose possession of his body, and become subject to volition by another professional white male. Under the doctor or researcher's gaze, white male citizens in Poe's medical tales are reduced to parts; their bodies are the means to the end of medical discovery.

In 'Valdemar', a white, educated male degenerates into another marginalised body used for medical research. Valdemar inhabits a liminal position — he is subjected to painful mesmeric experiment, yet as an editor and writer he is part of the professional male community who have staked their civic identity on scholarly pursuits. At the beginning of the tale, Valdemar consents to the experiment, declaring 'feebly, yet quite audibly, "Yes, I wish to be mesmerized"'.[31] When discussed with P— his interest in the experiment is 'vividly excited'; although previously dismissive of earlier experiments, at this point he shares with

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spade' and 'drag[ging] the stiff corpse out from its restin' place'. In *Marietta*, doctors and grave-robbers discuss the best bodies to procure for experiment. Medical student Levator cannot bring himself to dissect a beautiful female cadaver and pays the body-snatchers to return her to the grave. See George Lippard, *The Quaker City, Or, The Monks of Monk Hall: A Romance of Philadelphia Life, Mystery, and Crime* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), p. 368; and J. H. Robinson, *Marietta, or the Two Students: A Tale of the Dissecting Room and 'Body Snatchers'* (Boston: Jordan & Wiley, 1846).

[29] In the 1830s and 1840s, legislation passed in some states bolstered educational access by allowing dissecting programmes access to prisons, poorhouses, and asylums, reinforcing the link between social death and post-mortem exploitation. For example in Michigan, physicians could acquire the bodies of all criminals who died in prison or were executed. See Sappol, *A Traffic of Dead Bodies*, p. 123.

[30] Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Premature Burial', in *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. by Thomas Ollive Mabbott, 3 vols (New York: Random House, 1978), III, pp. 953-72 (pp. 967-68).

[31] Poe, 'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar', in *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, III, pp. 1228-44 (p. 1236). Hereafter references to this edition will follow in parenthesis.

the narrator a pursuit of scientific knowledge (p. 1234). As a means of establishing autonomy and power, middle-class masculinity tied itself to discourses of 'rational objectivity' and the 'scientific, civic management' of the natural world and the human body.[32] For example, the early anthropologist Samuel George Morton amassed a vast collection of human skulls from around the globe in the 1830s, often without consent, in order to construct a hierarchy of the natural world in which the Caucasian race were ascendant. Using craniometry, cranioscopy, and craniography (measuring, observing, and describing skulls), he sought to classify and categorise the world's populations systematically.[33] In Poe's tale, Valdemar is another 'case' in the unnamed narrator's continuing interest in mesmerism, a burgeoning pseudo-science, and it is established early on that this case report is born of a desire to dispel 'a garbled or exaggerated account' and 'unpleasant misrepresentations' already in press of what occurred (pp. 1233, 1234).

Although it is unclear what, if any, scientific or medical qualifications the narrator holds, from this opening he establishes himself as a member of the professional, rational, white middle class, who use scientific observation to bolster their claim on civic authority. When the narrator claims that 'there had been a very remarkable and most unaccountable omission: — no person had as yet been mesmerized *in articulo mortis*', he aspires to fill empirically this gap in contemporary studies on mesmerism (p. 1233). Mesmerism, or animal magnetism, originated in the work of German doctor Franz Mesmer (1734-1815). He theorised that magnetic fluid in the body could be controlled to heal illness and mental agitation, such as hysteria. French mesmerist Charles Poyen introduced the practice to the United States in the mid-1830s, delivering lectures and writing pieces for the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*.[34] By the time Poe's tale was written, mesmerism was increasingly used in America to treat illness and induce altered states of consciousness, including clairvoyance. For example, in the mid-1840s, mesmerist Phineas Quimby rose to prominence for his partnership with teenager Lucius Burkmar, who could read minds, and diagnose and treat illnesses, when hypnotised.[35]

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[32] Dana D. Nelson, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 103.

[33] Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 17.

[34] Eric T. Carlson, 'Charles Poyen Brings Mesmerism to America', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 15 (1960), 121-32.

[35] James C. Whorton, *Nature Cures: The History of Alternative Medicine in America* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Having read Charles Hare Townshend's comprehensive *Facts in Mesmerism* (1844) and Rev. Gibson Smith's *Lectures on Clairmativeness, or Human Magnetism* (1845), and attending lectures by prominent mesmerist Andrew Jackson Davis, Poe was well aware of mesmerism as scientific enquiry and medical practice.[36] In 'Mesmeric Revelation', the narrator employs mesmerism to induce altered states of mind and discover the limits of consciousness. His subject, the dying Vankirk, produces long clairvoyant statements on the nature of God and the soul when hypnotised. Similarly, in 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains', the ailing Bedloe recalls a past life, which he experiences when mesmerised. Like Quimby and Burkmar, the tale's physician Dr Templeton uses the practice as medical treatment in order to alleviate Bedloe's neuralgia. By contrast, in 'Valdemar', the narrator engages in pure experiment, professing no hope of curing the ailing man. For the narrator's '*in articulo mortis*' experiment to have a suitable subject, it is necessary that Valdemar is terminally ill and cannot be saved; from the outset he views Valdemar as a dead body. Although P— is not a physician himself, he has the full co-operation of Valdemar's doctors; he claims that D— and F— 'opposed no objection' to his experiment. On the contrary, they encourage his mesmerism. Their curiosity is 'greatly excited' and, by the latter stages of the experiment, they are in collaboration with the narrator, deciding how to continue (p. 1238). This is not a mere invention of Poe's; although physicians were wary that unqualified men such as Davis, Quimby, and Burkmar would dilute the class status of professional medicine, they themselves were increasingly interested in experiments that utilised the body's magnetism. For example, physician Henry Hall Sherwood routinely dismissed as quackery Davis's medical claims regarding animal magnetism, but nonetheless developed his own treatments applying 'rotary magnetic' machines to the body.[37] The doctors in 'Valdemar', knowing that Valdemar is hours from death, and that they are absolved of the physician's healing responsibility, similarly turn their attention to satisfying professional curiosities about the bodily effects of mesmerism.

The narrator's mesmeric experiment mirrors the power relationship between the doctor and patient. This hierarchical relationship depended on the submission of the mesmeric body to the magnetiser's influence, just as a patient submits to the physician's instructions or manipulations, or as a dissector completely controls a cadaver. In Poe's mesmerism tales, the patient or subject is under complete control of the doctor or researcher.

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[36] Steve Carter, 'A Possible Source for "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar"', *Poe Studies*, 12 (1979), 36.
[37] Henry Hall Sherwood, *The New-York Dissector*, 4 (1847), p. 247, quoted in Sappol, *A Traffic of Dead Bodies*, p. 156.

In 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains', Bedloe's will 'succumbed rapidly to that of the physician […] sleep was brought about almost instantaneously by the mere volition of the operator'.[38] Valdemar's body, initially resistant to the narrator's passes, becomes more receptive the closer he is to death, and P— recalls that 'his arm very readily, although feebly, followed every direction I assigned it with mine' (p. 1238). Valdemar thereby loses possession of his own body and is subsumed into the narrator's research agenda; the mesmerised body loses its autonomy and becomes just as pliable as the cadaver.

What is more, Valdemar is so thoroughly diseased that he blurs the boundary between a body and a corpse: we could be reading an autopsy. When the narrator sees his friend at the beginning of the tale, the night before his experiment, he describes the dying Valdemar in dense medical detail. The text becomes an imitation of a pathologist cutting through the body, as the gaze pierces the skin and we see that parts of Valdemar's lungs are in a 'semi-osseous or cartilaginous state' and 'entirely useless for all purposes of vitality', and there are places in which 'permanent adhesion [of the lung] to the ribs had taken place'. The deterioration of his body takes place with 'very unusual rapidity […] the adhesion had only been observed during the three previous days'. He is decaying in front of the doctors' eyes: his cheekbones break through his skin and his pulse is 'barely perceptible' (p. 1235). Valdemar is subject not only to a medical experiment, but also to a kind of living dissection. He is so corpse-like that his body functions the same way as a cadaver in medical science: it is there purely to educate. This narrative of living dissection acts as pedagogical tool by providing both a map of compartmentalised human organs, and, in the case of ill bodies, drawing the eye to where disease has ruptured these boundaries — the blurring of tissue and bone through the lung adhesions and emaciated face. The observer must overcome the challenge of this increasingly incoherent bodily mass to understand the pathology of the disease. The emotion that P— may feel in seeing his dying friend is completely absent, replaced by objective medical surveillance, what Michel Foucault calls the 'medical gaze'.[39] Medical student Mr L—l's presence evinces the pedagogical nature of the experiment. His role is not only as a 'reliable witness', but also as a note taker, aiding his own education as well as providing the narrator with memoranda (p. 1236). These professional medical men exemplify a 'disembodied and disinterested observing subject, surveying, evaluating and categorizing local others'.[40] The

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[38] Poe, 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains', in *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, III, pp. 935-53 (p. 941).
[39] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock Publications, 1973), p. 8.
[40] Nelson, *National Manhood*, p. 124.

body of medical experiment, living or dead, is a source of knowledge that only men of science can read and comprehend.

Again, as the narrator and medical professionals continually survey Valdemar, Poe replicates this process through dense descriptive passages dwelling on the mesmerism's effect. Towards the end of the tale, P— states, '[f]rom this period until the close of last week — *an interval of nearly seven months* — we continued to make daily calls at M. Valdemar's house, accompanied, now and then, by medical and other friends' (p. 1241, emphasis in original). His peculiar state renders Valdemar a medical specimen and entertaining curiosity. The semi-public display of Valdemar's almost-dead body in front of an educated white audience has clear parallels with both public autopsies and the burgeoning 'freak show' in the antebellum period. The case of Joice Heth illuminates how the cadaver could function as a continually looked-upon site of both knowledge and entertainment during this period. In 1835, P. T. Barnum purchased Heth, an elderly black woman, and claimed she was George Washington's 161-year-old 'mammy'. Blind and paralysed, she existed as a living corpse that Barnum displayed at venues across New England as a supposed relic of colonial America. Newspaper reports described her emaciated body as 'a mere skeleton covered with skin […] her whole appearance very much resembles a mummy of the days of the Pharoahs [*sic*], taken entire from the catacombs of Egypt'.[41] A source of 'sensation among the lovers of the curious and the marvellous', she was also examined by 'the most learned and scientific men in this country' who sought to verify and explain her age. Upon her death in 1836, she was publicly autopsied in Manhattan's City Saloon to 1500 paying spectators, in an effort to determine how she had lived so long. The autopsy proved Barnum a liar — Heth 'could not have been more than *seventy-five*, or, at the utmost, *eighty years of age!*' — and the newspapers felt it in the public interest to reprint the detailed intimate descriptions of her corpse being opened up and inspected.[42]

Heth's body was paraded around while she lived, displayed publicly upon her death, and further publicised through the print media. Her exhibition and subsequent autopsy sit at the interstice between popular culture and medical education. Heth's corpse became a

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[41] *New York Baptist*, 16 September 1835, quoted in Benjamin Reiss, *Showman and the Slave: Race, Death, and Memory in Barnum's America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 2.
[42] *The Life of Joice Heth, the Nurse of Gen. George Washington, (the Father of Our Country,) Now Living at the Astonishing Age of 161 Years, and Weighs Only 46 Pounds* (New York, 1835), pp. 10, 8 <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/heth/heth.html> [accessed 24 February 2017]; and 'Dissection of Joice Heth — Precious Humbug Exposed', *New York Sun*, 26 February 1836, p. 13, emphasis in original, in *The Lost Museum Archive*, City University of New York <http://lostmuseum.cuny.edu/archive/dissection-of-joice-heth-precious-humbug> [accessed 24 February 2017].

resource that allowed professional men to stake their claim within medical science; in the City Saloon and across the pages of New York newspapers, each scientist and editor 'pick[ed] apart the body to enhance his cultural prestige'.[43] Their respected public voices (both spoken and written) depended on Heth's continued silence; they inscribed their racialised medical theories onto her dying-then-dead body. For Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Heth is the first American freak, 'the direct antithesis of the able-bodied, white male figure upon which the developing notion to the American normate was predicated'.[44] The white middle-class 'normate' male, such as the doctor, displaced his fears of post-mortem loss of personhood onto African-American and other marginal cadavers, bodies to which that state already denied selfhood while alive. In the case of Valdemar, these anxieties are not deflected onto the black body, but reflect back onto the dying body of white male citizen.

It is worth paying attention to how Valdemar's whiteness is delineated in the tale, which supports reading him as a liminal white person. Valdemar is a recent Polish immigrant, but is part of an intellectual community. He is referred to as 'the well-known compiler of the "Bibliotheca Forensica", and author (under the *nom de plume* of Isaachar Marx) of the Polish versions of "Wallenstein" and "Gargantua"', texts originally written in German and French (p. 1234). From this description, the reader can infer that Valdemar is Polish and possibly Jewish. A recent immigrant, living in Harlem since 1839, bachelor Valdemar has 'no relatives in America who would be likely to interfere' with the experiment, or claim his corpse, a fact that the narrator celebrates (p. 1234). Valdemar's dying, and later dead, body is the narrator's to do with as he pleases. Yet, although his ethnic identity places him on the peripheries of whiteness, his authorship and translation work incorporates him into a professional male sphere inhabited by the narrator and his doctors. Through his scholarly pursuits, Valdemar 'becom[es] Caucasian', Matthew Frye Jacobson's term for the potential of Central Europeans to be seen as white in the mid-nineteenth century.[45] In contrast to African Americans like Heth, Valdemar's ethnicity denotes the capacity for autonomy and self-possession, making him white enough to be considered a potential citizen.[46] It is this property-in-oneself that is negated through the mesmeric control and exploitation of his body.

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[43] Reiss, p. 155.

[44] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 59.

[45] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 8.

[46] Living in the United States for at least five years, Valdemar would qualify to apply for legal naturalisation and citizenship. See *Native and Alien. The Naturalization Laws of the United States: Containing Also the Alien Laws of the State of New York* (Rochester, NY: D. M. Dewey, 1855), pp. 30-34.

When he is suspended and observed in this liminal state for several months, the white, educated Valdemar transforms into one of the many marginalised bodies laid open and experimented on in the antebellum period. In this regard, it is particularly noteworthy that, as he approaches death, Valdemar himself becomes blacker, an effect of his body's decay and disease. He takes on a 'leaden hue', his eyes are 'utterly lustreless', and the ossification turns his internal organs black and putrid (p. 1235). In his proximity to death *and* blackness, Valdemar is treated by the white, rational community purely as a medical specimen. The image of a group of educated white men surveying and manipulating a prone body is deeply uncomfortable. Anatomised and surveyed, Valdemar is dehumanised and reduced to a utility by and for a community of professional and rational white men. However, the tale is not a commentary on African-American medical slavery, and I avoid a symptomatic reading that would suggest that his darkened body acts as a stand-in for systematically scientifically exploited African Americans. Instead, to read Valdemar's decaying and observed body in this context of publicly known racial exploitation is to realise a terrifying possibility for the white male 'normate' citizen — the loss of personal will, self-possession, and autonomy. Unlike Heth, Valdemar has the capacity to agree to the experiment, but through his inexplicable voice, he withdraws this consent, and with increasingly aggravated speech, he challenges the narrator's control and comprehension of his body as a medical specimen.

An Inexplicable Voice and the Failure of White Rational Manhood

As the white body of the educated Valdemar grows darker in appearance and stranger in action, the narrator's reactions to him notably shift away from the scientific, rational discourse of the text's opening. Blackness permeates Valdemar's white body, rendering him repulsive. When the doctors and narrator see the black tongue, so visible against Valdemar's cadaverous white skin, they are horrified:

> The upper lip, at the same time, writhed itself away from the teeth, whist it had previously covered completely; whilst the lower jaw fell with an audible jerk, leaving the mouth widely extended, and disclosing in full view the swollen and blackened tongue […] so hideous beyond conception was the appearance of M. Valdemar at this moment, that there was a general shrinking back from the region of the bed. (p. 1239)

At this point in the text, Valdemar begins substantially to unnerve the rational community surrounding him, as his decaying body is so unusual (even for those accustomed to death) that it is beyond the narrator's cognitive capability to imagine even something that is so immediately present to his senses. The black tongue is so alarming because it is so visible, 'in

full view', whereas previously it has been concealed. The exposure of the uncanny tongue uncovers the universal truth of the body's vulnerability and decomposition after death. Like the living autopsy at the beginning of the text, in which Valdemar's individuality is stripped away to render him just another diseased body, the black tongue protruding during the experiment reveals the material self that is vulnerable to manipulation and surveillance by other citizens. At the same time, the tongue is the first sign of Valdemar's body acting independently from the narrator's control and defying his rational approach, in order to protest his liminal state.

When Valdemar apparently begins to speak, and the tongue itself produces hideous utterances, the narrator's alarm increases. Detailed passages describe the voice emanating not from Valdemar's vocal organs, but from his extended, vibrating black tongue and 'distended and motionless jaws':

> In the first place, the voice seemed to reach our ears — at least mine — from a vast distance, or from some deep cavern within the earth. In the second place, it impressed me (I fear, indeed, that it will be impossible to make myself comprehended) as gelatinous or glutinous matters impress the sense of touch. (p. 1240)

The cavernous timbre of Valdemar's voice suggests a ventriloquial source that cannot be mapped onto the human body, and defies the medical community's rational logic. The synaesthesia that features in the above passage is the only way the narrator can communicate a sense of what he hears, but this does not provide an explanation of the voice's origin. Again, he struggles to find the cognitive ability to process the circumstances or the appropriate lexicon to convey events, later claiming that the sound is 'indescribable' (p. 1240). His medical gaze, which has previously penetrated Valdemar's diseased body, cannot successfully read or comprehend what is now in front of him. In this scene, discourses of rational observation, which bolster white male professional autonomy and authority, start to falter.

The narrator takes pains to explain that what he heard was not nonsensical ravings or death rattles but clear 'syllabification' (p. 1240). For P—, there is a clear dissociation between what he can see (a dead body with extended mouth and swollen tongue) and what he can hear (distinct words). After his tongue begins to vibrate, the voice inside Valdemar says, '[y]es; — no; — I *have been* sleeping — and now — now — I *am dead*'. Valdemar's *unheimlich* disembodied voice leads to the narrator's cognitive dissonance, one that manifests via the narrator's strong physical reaction. Confronted by the seemingly

impossibly talking corpse, who is simultaneously alive and dead, P— cannot comprehend what he encounters and so returns to his body; the scene provokes an uncontrollable physical response, his 'unutterable, shuddering horror' (p. 1240, emphasis in original). The detached medical gaze has been overwhelmed by this subjective visceral response that cannot be processed in the written form on which men of science staked their authority. P—'s horror cannot be articulated, whereas Valdemar, inexplicably, *does* articulate his own personal torment. Valdemar's unexpected and powerful voice breaks through the rational written form to communicate that a white man can no longer be a person, a terrifying realisation for the professional, educated community that the narrator represents.

Unlike Poe's earlier 'The Premature Burial', in which a man shouts, 'I am alive' to save himself from dissection, Valdemar proclaims the very opposite.[47] J. Gerald Kennedy claims that, in contrast to P—'s detached, rational narrative voice, Valdemar 'inton[es] words empty of human content'.[48] But I would counter that, although the production of the voice is beyond rational comprehension, Valdemar's speech clearly verbalises human consciousness and desires for self-possession. Valdemar, an established translator and editor, has lost his access to print and therefore his claim on professional and rational white masculinity; instead he must rely on the more primitive, yet universal, voice. This voice articulates Valdemar's position: trapped between life and death in a dysfunctional and diseased body; treated as an object, but with an active mind inside. It speaks of a desire to be free from its bondage; Valdemar orders the narrator to end his entrapment in the corpse-body, saying, '[y]es: — asleep now. Do not wake me! — let me die so!' (p. 1238). He wrestles against the limits of personhood that the medical experiment has set. Saying 'I am dead' is Valdemar's attempt at regaining self-determination and articulating his personhood by directing the experiment to its end. The tale portrays white male citizenship as a battle for autonomy from and dominance over other white men, not just non-male non-white figures. Valdemar attempts to recover his personhood by speaking against the narrator's manipulations, while the narrator seeks throughout to assert his power through an authoritative narrative, one that is dependent on his controlling and categorising Valdemar.

'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar' is not Poe's only tale in which a highly unusual corpse defies a group of professional educated men. In 'Some Words with a Mummy' (1845), a group of Egyptologists reanimate with galvanic battery the mummy

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[47] Poe, 'The Premature Burial', p. 961.
[48] J. Gerald Kennedy, *Poe, Death, and the Life of Writing* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 208.

Allamistakeo after thousands of years' entombment. The mummy begins to converse with an unexpected eloquence, shocking the scientists by indicating that a savage, non-white corpse could not only speak so well, but also profess that his culture, science, and society are greater than theirs, 'gleefully pok[ing] holes in elite white male privilege'.[49] The humour of Allamistakeo's teasing and the white professionals' umbrage is absent in 'Valdemar', replaced with horror. Whereas Allamistakeo's resistant voice is calm and clear, presenting a well-expressed criticism of the white scientific community, Valdemar's inexplicable speech becomes increasingly violent in its articulation. His inexplicable utterances grow in anger towards the end of 'Valdemar', and he shouts, '[f]or God's sake! — quick! — quick! — put me to sleep — or, quick! — waken me! — quick! — *I say to you that I am dead!*' (p. 1242, emphasis in original). The exclamatory voice once again urges the narrator, who controls Valdemar's physical body, to give him his freedom in death. Valdemar's wishes — to be asleep or awake while being dead — are impossible scenarios and both result in his continued death. For the white educated male, non-existence — a waking or sleeping death — is preferable to an existence manipulated by others. As the experiment reaches its climax, it is clear that his previous autonomous state cannot be recuperated.

Although the narrator attempts to write an authoritative account of events, as opposed to the earlier 'garbled' sensational pieces, he sets up the gruesome climax as something truly beyond comprehension, for which 'it is quite impossible that any human being could have been prepared'. The tale ends as follows:

> As I rapidly made the mesmeric passes, amid ejaculations of 'dead! dead!' absolutely *bursting* from the tongue and not from the lips of the sufferer, his whole frame at once — within the space of a single minute, or even less, shrunk — crumbled — absolutely *rotted* away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before that whole company, there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome — of detestable putridity. (p. 1243, emphasis in original)

Here, the narrator continues to attempt descriptive observation, although events have long since departed from the expectations, raised by the beginning of the account, that this is a medical case study. As descriptive terms overlap ('shrunk — crumbled — absolutely — *rotted*'), the narrator, — editing the quick notes of Mr. L—l —, attempts to describe the state of Valdemar's corpse using an observational vocabulary. Once again the rational voice of medical discourse experiences a lexical failure. The narrator's attempts to describe him

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[49] Marcia D. Nichols, 'Poe's "Some Words with a Mummy" and Blackface Anatomy', *Poe Studies*, 48 (2015), 2-16 (p. 2). See also Nelson, *National Manhood*, pp. 204-16.

using any kind of vocabulary, let alone an observational one, are insufficient. Valdemar's protestations are so extreme that they cause the body itself to rupture and disintegrate completely. The body's rapid and grotesque decomposition destroys any post-mortem knowledge that the narrator and medical professionals might have hoped to garner, and the experiment is plunged into total chaos as a 'nearly liquid mass' surrounds the onlookers. Whereas the diseased physique earlier served a pedagogical purpose in identifying Valdemar's illness, the liquid body, rotting beyond 'natural' rates of decomposition, prevents the medical gaze from observing, categorising, and diagnosing. The body of evidence, in which the rational community invested so much, has perished. There is nothing constructive remaining: in fact, there is only total destruction.

This gruesome ending gives voice to fears of discorporation by destroying the white male citizen. Valdemar is an abject, out-of-control body leaking into the world, causing the reader to be both drawn towards him and repelled by his rotted form. Woven into this gore, which is both entertaining and revolting — and entertaining *because* it is revolting — are legitimate fears of exploitation and manipulation, which Poe deliberately chooses not to assuage. The ending provokes an almost physical reaction from the reader, just like the narrator's recoiling in the tale. However, although this body horror can be seen as a distraction in that it provokes a visceral response, instead of a contemplative one, the text's final image of male bodily destruction maps onto anxieties over the erasure of personhood. Valdemar is first reduced to a body, and then reduced to nothing. His attempts to regain self-possession and end the narrator's control come at the expense of his own survival. An early forerunner to the 'disaffirmative' contemporary horror fiction that Linda Holland-Toll identifies, such as Stephen King's *The Mist* (1986), and Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991), 'Valdemar' ends without resolution and Poe refuses to reinstate its original societal norms of white male rationality and autonomy.[50] Once the voice erupts through the body, the body cannot be reconstructed and these horrifying exclamations cannot be unarticulated. In the tale's horrific climax, the anxieties about the loss of self-possession, which Valdemar represents, and failed professionalism, which P— represents, hang in the ether like Valdemar's final explosive utterances. After the gruesome ending has faded, the reader is therefore left with the anxiety that white manhood — ostensibly an autonomous and authoritative self, bolstered by rational pursuits — is vulnerable.

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[50] Linda J. Holland-Toll, *As American as Mom, Baseball, and Apple Pie: Constructing Community and Contemporary American Horror Fiction* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2001), p. 10.

In 'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar', Poe employs discourses surrounding contemporary medical exploitation to discorporate Valdemar and show the limits of white male personhood, lost when self-possession is negated at the hands of fellow white, educated men. Poe depicts consciousness — represented through an enduring voice — as somehow present within a clinically dead body. In doing so, he voices anxieties over white men being reduced purely to bodies and material resources — just like the nation's non-citizens who routinely filled America's dissecting rooms — as opposed to fully autonomous and self-possessed citizens. In 'Valdemar', limited personhood is violently protested and destructively uttered, voicing a pessimistic and disaffirmative view of white male citizenship in the antebellum period.

Gothic Ruins and Remains: Disorderly Burials and Respectable Bodies in Irish Medieval Ecclesiastical Buildings, 1824-1900

Niamh NicGhabhann

On 5 October 1863, the *Freeman's Journal* published a statement on the desecration of burial places in Ireland by Thomas Leverton Donaldson, professor of architecture at University College London. Donaldson had undertaken a tour of several medieval Irish ruins, and called attention to their disrepair in the *Builder*, the popular trade publication of the architectural profession. Donaldson had found the floor of the abbey ruins, in Ross Abbey near Headford in Mayo, 'strewed with the scattered remains of the dead'. In an altar recess, 'where once an altar stood, and the holiest rites of the Roman Catholic Church were anciently performed', he noted that a tomb was sunk in the earth, with its covering stones cracked and broken, exposing 'the scene of desolation below'. He reported similar scenes at the medieval ruins of Athenry and Muckross, with 'fragments of human skeletons lying about to be trodden underfoot'. To conclude, Donaldson demanded, 'who has the power to remedy this state of things', and wondered at what he had seen, as 'certainly disrespect to the dead has never been an Irish failing'.[1] Donaldson's remarks reflect several strands of contemporary public discourse, including the value of ruins and their care and preservation, as well as the proper treatment of the remains of the dead in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland. These issues were complex and multi-faceted, and were based on fears for public health and sanitation due to contamination and the spread of disease caused by decomposing bodies, as well as contemporary anxieties around growing Roman-Catholic political agency, and potential Catholic repossession of medieval sites.

This essay examines the tensions between respectable and disorderly burial in ruined medieval ecclesiastical buildings throughout the nineteenth century in Ireland, and the conflict between the antiquarian and religious values associated with the sites. While it considers burials in several different ecclesiastical sites, the essay focuses on a case study of the burial ground around the Franciscan friary at Muckross in Co. Kerry, one of the most celebrated Gothic ruins of the nineteenth century, not least due to its position at the heart of

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[1] Thomas Leverton Donaldson, *Freeman's Journal*, 5 October 1863.

the popular picturesque destination of the Lakes of Killarney.[2] According to Gwynn and Hadcock, the ecclesiastical site at Muckross was first known as Irrelagh Abbey, with the foundation of the Observant order of Franciscans between 1440 and 1448 by the MacCarthy family.[3] This date is also given by Colmán Ó Clabaigh in his survey of Franciscan settlements in Ireland.[4] The friary was dissolved between the years 1586 and 1589, but, reflecting the uneven suppression of the monasteries, Muckross was listed in a 1613 parliamentary report as one of the friaries where friars publically preached and celebrated mass.[5]

The role of Muckross friary as a burial place and site of picturesque and antiquarian tourism reflects the shifting perceptions and uses of medieval ecclesiastical buildings in Ireland between 1824 and 1900. The time period of this essay is bounded by the proposal of the Easement of Burial Act in 1824, and takes the end of the century as its terminus, reflecting the Irish Church Act of 1869, the introduction of the Ancient Monuments (Ireland) Act in 1882, and the foundation of organisations such as the Fund for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead in Ireland in the late 1880s, all of which had an impact on the treatment of ruined medieval ecclesiastical buildings and their use as sites of burial.[6]

The establishment of these Acts and funds reflects the extent to which discourses of antiquarian and aesthetic concerns had become predominant by the beginning of the twentieth century, structuring the use, preservation, and management of medieval ecclesiastical sites. By the establishment of the Free State, the buildings were primarily valued for their antiquarian and picturesque qualities, rather than as sites of specific religious significance. While religious ceremonies were occasionally held at medieval ecclesiastical sites, such as the mass held among the ruins of Mellifont Abbey in 1929, these events engaged with the ruins as sites of ecclesiastical heritage, rather than as significant spaces for religious worship

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[2] The use of the word 'Gothic' (capitalised) in the context of this article refers to architectural style, rather than literary genre or convention, for which 'gothic' is used throughout Issue #16 of the *IJGHS*.

[3] Aubrey Gwynn and Richard N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: Ireland* (London: Longmans, 1970), p. 256. The *Monastic Ireland* project also notes the earlier date of 1340 for the foundation of the friary, as recorded in the Annals of the Four Masters. See *Monastic Ireland*, online resource <http://www.monastic.ie/history/muckross-franciscan-friary/> [accessed 3 October 2017].

[4] Colmán Ó Clabaigh, *The Friars in Ireland, 1224-1540* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), p. 63.

[5] Michael O'Neill, 'Irish Franciscan Friary Architecture', in *The Irish Franciscans, 1534–1990*, ed. by Edel Bhreathnach, Joseph MacMahon OFM, and John McCafferty (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009) p. 322.

[6] The Irish Church Act (1869) is outlined in Raymond Refaussé, *Church of Ireland Records* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), pp. 43-44. The introduction of the Ancient Monuments (Ireland) Act is detailed in Christiaan Corlett, 'The Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland and the Protection of Monuments' (Part 1), *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 139 (2009), 80-100. The objectives of the Fund for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead are outlined in the *Irish Times*, 26 December 1891.

and congregation.[7] Although there continued to be some tension between antiquarian and religious perceptions of early Christian and medieval architectural heritage throughout the first half of the twentieth century, and the twenty-first-century visitor will frequently find contemporary memorials in ruined parish churches or monastic buildings, their value as places of picturesque and historical tourism has remained preeminent.[8]

This essay uses evidence drawn from contemporary travel accounts and newspaper reports in order to trace the competing uses made of and narratives around medieval ecclesiastical sites throughout the nineteenth century, reflecting the tensions that existed between religious and antiquarian values prior to the establishment of legislation surrounding their use and management. The role of burial as signifying a kind of alternative 'ownership' over a particular site or place is considered, with the presence of the remains of the dead used as the basis for contesting the legal ownership of a site. Within the context of Muckross, the challenges faced by individual landowners in caring for burial grounds on their property are examined, as well as the responses of other civic groups and organisations responsible for the maintenance of burial grounds. The essay considers the significance of medieval ecclesiastical sites as a site for the performance of social and religious identity, and the gradual closure of the sites by the end of the nineteenth century to all but a few families. The emphasis on burial in this essay reflects the social importance of rituals of death and burial throughout nineteenth-century Ireland, but also specific legislative changes and resulting concerns around burial during the period, outlined in more detail below. These changes can be considered as part of the broader systematic organisation of society during this period, through and against which the Irish population defined itself throughout the nineteenth century.

Legislating for Roman-Catholic Burial in Nineteenth-Century Ireland

The study of ecclesiastical history in Ireland during the early-modern period reveals, in many instances, considerable gaps between the letter and the spirit of the law, as individuals and communities negotiated between legislation and the operation of daily life. This was certainly the case regarding burial, which was regulated by a series of laws that required Roman

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[7] The mass at Mellifont Abbey, celebrating the first Irish Cistercian foundation, is detailed in Niamh NicGhabhann, *Medieval Ecclesiastical Buildings in Ireland, 1789-1915: Building on the Past* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015), p. 20.

[8] For an exploration of the tensions between religious and antiquarian values in the preservation of the church of St Lua at Killaloe, see NicGhabhann, 'Medieval Ireland and the Shannon Hydro-Electric Scheme: Reconstructing the Past in Independent Ireland', *Irish Studies Review*, 25 (2017), 425-43.

Catholics and other Dissenters to seek permission for the burial of their dead in graveyards and consecrated grounds that had been transferred to the Established Church of Ireland following the sixteenth-century Reformation. As outlined by John A. Murphy and Clíona Murphy, Roman Catholics and Dissenters therefore had no dedicated burial grounds, and had to inter their dead in official graveyards that were the property of the Established Church of Ireland and subject to burial fees. As Lisa Marie Griffith and Ciarán Wallace note, Roman-Catholic clergy were prohibited in legislation from saying funeral prayers in churchyards.[9]

Roman-Catholic burials also took place within graveyards associated with ruined medieval ecclesiastical sites on private lands. These were, for the most part, the ruined remains of the friaries, monasteries, and convents that had been transferred to private ownership following the suppression of the monasteries. Despite the fact that an Act of William III explicitly prohibited such burials, many landowners continued to allow burials to take place in the church grounds associated with medieval monastic houses, friaries, or convents on their properties. The Easement of Burials Act repealed this prohibition in 1824, and stated that burial in medieval sites was permitted where that site had been used for that purpose within the last ten years.[10] Some burials also took place on unconsecrated grounds, such as the interment of unbaptised babies in *cillíní*.[11] Despite the existence of legislation controlling burial practices, therefore, it is clear that a reasonably high level of toleration had existed around the shared use of burial grounds prior to the early nineteenth century.[12]

While Roman-Catholic ceremonials and prayers had been tolerated within Established Church of Ireland graveyards, the fractious atmosphere between denominations during the episcopate of Church of Ireland archbishop William Magee (1766-1831) challenged this toleration, leading to greater tension and anxiety around Roman-Catholic burial rites.[13] The politicisation of burial, and the rise of tensions around the legal arrangements that had managed to accommodate denominational difference throughout the preceding centuries, reflects the broader political tensions of the early nineteenth century, including O'Connell's assertive leadership of Irish Catholicism and the rise of Protestant evangelicals advocating a

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[9] Lisa Marie Griffith and Ciarán Wallace, *Grave Matters: Death and Dying in Dublin, 1500 to the Present* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016), p. 35.
[10] John A. Murphy and Clíona Murphy, 'Burials and Bigotry in Early Nineteenth-Century Ireland', *Studia Hibernica*, 33 (2004/2005), 125-46 (p. 126.)
[11] Eileen M. Murphy, 'Children's Burial Grounds in Ireland (*Cillíní*) and Parental Emotions Toward Death', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 15 (2011), 409-28.
[12] Murphy and Murphy, 'Burials and Bigotry', p. 126.
[13] Ibid.

'second Reformation'.[14] The use of ruined medieval ecclesiastical buildings as places of burial was the subject of government debate in 1824 and 1825, as part of ongoing controversies around burial rights and rites for Roman Catholics and other Dissenters from the Established Church of Ireland.

While the debate and dissent that accompanied the legislation around burial rights for Roman Catholics and Dissenters related, for the most part, to burial in churchyards and cemeteries that were associated with church buildings in the ownership of the Church of Ireland that were in active use, the subject of burial within ruined medieval ecclesiastical buildings was also raised in debates throughout 1824 and 1825. Indeed, as Murphy and Murphy note, Archbishop Magee responded to debates on the lack of Roman-Catholic burial grounds with the argument that Roman Catholics were in fact well served in terms of burial places, having 'a great number of places of sepulture which are ancient ones', in reference to ruined churches and deserted churchyards.[15]

When medieval or ruined buildings did feature in the House of Commons debates on the issue, the emphasis was on those sites that were in private ownership and on private lands. While burials within these private ruins had often been permitted on an ad-hoc basis, the proposed new Bill on the issue highlighted the fact that there were clear anxieties around the inclusion of such rights to burial on private lands. The issue of potentially increased numbers of burials within privately held medieval ruins was raised on 29 March 1824 by William Conyingham Plunkett, Irish attorney general, who addressed the House of Commons on the subject of the Burials in Ireland Bill. He noted that the issue of Roman-Catholic burial in Ireland, relating to the 'moral feelings, passions and prejudices of the great bulk of the population of Ireland', would also be of interest to those who 'felt an interest in the security of the Protestant establishment'.[16] Plunkett's speech is valuable in this context, as he brought together the different strands of the debate, including the rights to private property, and the picturesque and antiquarian value of the medieval sites, as well as the need to revise the legislation regulating burial for those outside the Established Church of Ireland, while acknowledging the extent to which it was ignored in practice by the majority of the population.

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[14] For further context on the religious tensions of the early nineteenth century, see Irene Whelan, *The Bible War in Ireland: The 'Second Reformation' and the Polarization of Protestant-Catholic Relations, 1800-1840* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).

[15] Murphy and Murphy, 'Burials and Bigotry', p. 126.

[16] William Conyingham Plunkett, "Burials in Ireland Act', in *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* (29 March 1824), X, cols. 1453-66 <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1824/mar/29/burials-in-ireland-bill> [accessed 16 October 2017].

Plunkett's statement was largely focused on the position of the medieval ecclesiastical ruins, which he described as being 'looked on with considerable respect, if not reverence, by all classes of people in Ireland'.[17] Despite the fact these buildings were no longer used for religious worship, he noted that they were 'much resorted to as places of burial not merely for the Roman Catholics of the country, but very frequently for the Protestants'.[18] He also noted the touristic and picturesque value of these buildings, describing them as 'not the least interesting objects of contemplation to those persons who visited Ireland'.[19] Plunkett argued that the co-existence of burial across religious denominations should be celebrated as a mark of tolerance in a country torn by political and religious disturbance. His speech reflects the shared use of burial sites in Ireland, despite the existence of legislation that specifically aimed to regulate it. Referring to the ninth Act of King William III, which forbade burial in these ruined medieval sites, Plunkett admitted that it was largely to control any attempts by Roman Catholics to lay claim to the properties. According to Plunkett, this act 'fell still-born, as all measure must do when opposed to the feelings and sentiments of a country', and it had never been enforced.[20] However, he argued that a clause regarding private ownership must be taken into account in reshaping legislation around burial in Ireland, as 'many of those places were diverted from their original purpose, and were possessed by individuals; and care should be taken, that no interference with private property was admitted under this measure', particularly if 'persons who were not in the habit of using particular places of this description for burying grounds, were suffered to do so now'.[21] This comment reflects the complex legacies of the sixteenth-century Reformation, and the transfer of religious lands with extant ruins into private ownership.

The remainder of Plunkett's contribution comprised a compassionate defence of Roman-Catholic rights to burial with their family members and ancestors, and to the rites of burial in accordance with their beliefs. As Plunkett outlined, the Williamite Act had little real impact on burial practices in medieval ruined buildings. However, as the case study of the use of Muckross friary as a burial ground demonstrates, Plunkett's theoretical concern for the owners of the medieval ecclesiastical buildings had equally little connection with the reality of the situations that the owners dealt with on the ground, as they attempted to maintain good relations with those living in the locality, to preserve the picturesque quality of their planned

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

demesne landscapes, and to avoid censure at the hands of the local board of guardians and burial boards regarding public-health measures and the proper management of burial grounds. As will be explored below, legislation regulating social issues such as burial and the uses of religious land had to be negotiated carefully by communities, and could result in cooperation and toleration, or tension and division.

It is clear from the debates surrounding it that the issue of burial acted as a signifier for more far-reaching social reforms regarding Roman Catholics throughout the nineteenth century. For example, the *Freeman's Journal* reported on William Monsell's representation to the House of Commons on the issue of burial rights for Roman Catholics in 1868. Monsell argued that Plunkett's earlier Bill did not adequately improve the situation, leaving Roman-Catholic citizens at the mercy of the Protestant clergy regarding the right to bury their dead and to carry out appropriate burial rites. Arguing against Monsell, Anthony Lefroy stated that burial was being refused in specific sites due to overcrowding, and that further graveyard land should be purchased. A further argument against Monsell was made by Edward Greene, member for Bury St Edmonds, who stated that Roman Catholics were

> dissatisfied because they were not allowed to grasp the reversion of all the church property they possessed before the Reformation. What, he asked, was the use of the Reformation if all those concessions were to be made to the Roman Catholics (hear, hear).[22]

By the third quarter of the century, therefore it is clear from this report that the issues of ownership and the threat of Roman-Catholic repossession and resurgence were taken into consideration when framing legislation around burial rights, particularly on the eve of the Irish Church Act of 1869, and the Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. Further legislation surrounding burial and the maintenance of burial grounds was passed in the Public Health (Ireland) Act of 1878.[23] The legislative framework around burial that had to be negotiated by landowners and local communities, therefore, was shaped by concerns around religious freedoms and civil rights, the rights to private property, public-health management, the changing role of the Established Church of Ireland, and the desire to maintain the picturesque and antiquarian value of the medieval sites in question.

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[22] *Freeman's Journal*, 24 April 1868.
[23] Public Health (Ireland) Act (1878), Irish Statute Book
<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1878/act/52/enacted/en/print.html> [accessed 8 October 2017].

Bodies, Rights and Ownership — Contested Sites of Burial

Following the achievement of Catholic Emancipation in 1829, the number of burial grounds for Roman Catholics increased in tandem with the expansion of church building, and particularly due to the establishment of large-scale urban graveyards such as Goldenbridge (opened 1829, closed 1868) and Glasnevin (opened 1832), both in Dublin, or Mount St Lawrence in Limerick (opened 1849).[24] Despite these new provisions, cemeteries remained a source of concern throughout the century, particularly due to overcrowding and poor maintenance. During this period, local government, in the form of burial boards, attempted to regulate cemeteries, and to oversee sites that were overcrowded, badly managed, or that posed a danger to public health. There are several instances, such as at Aghadoe in Co. Kerry, where the burial board intervened in the continuing, and hazardous, use of a medieval site for burial, deciding on the provision of a new site.[25] However, it appears that, at Muckross, burial practices continued regardless of the law, rather than in defiance of it, and the management of the site reflected local negotiation and accommodation rather than responsiveness to changing legal arrangements. By the end of the century, the legislation providing for the management of burial places was divided across the areas of public sanitation and the management of ancient buildings.

Despite the growing numbers of available graveyards associated with new Roman-Catholic church-building projects and the large projects like Glasnevin and Goldenbridge, burials continued to take place within medieval sites throughout the nineteenth century, reflecting the ongoing significance of these sites within communities. Indeed, burial had been central to the initial establishment of many medieval monastic foundations, with many containing elaborate tombs for their founders and their families. Many medieval monastic or friary ruins remained sites closely affiliated with specific families, who retained burial rights in the grounds even after the dissolution and suppression of the monasteries.[26] As Alexandra Walsham has written, 'it was as if they were laying posthumous claims of ownership to

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[24] The Dublin cemeteries are explored in Griffith and Wallace, *Grave Matters*. The development of Mount Saint Lawrence cemetery is explored in Matthew Potter, *City and Cemetery: A History of Mount Saint Lawrence, Limerick* (Limerick: Limerick City and County Council, 2015). The establishment of Goldenbridge is considered in Livia Hurley, 'Death in the Garden: Patrick Byrne's Mortuary Chapel at Goldenbridge Cemetery, Dublin', *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, 19 (2017), 76-89. The expansion of church building in Ireland during this period is outlined in Jeanne Sheehy, 'Irish Church Building: Popery, Puginism, and the Protestant Ascendency', in *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society*, ed. by Chris Brooks and Andrew Saint (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 133-50.

[25] *Irish Examiner*, 18 February 1857.

[26] Colm Lennon, 'The Dissolution to the Foundation of St Anthony's College, Louvain, 1534-1607', in *The Irish Franciscans, 1534–1990*, ed. by Edel Bhreathnach, Joseph MacMahon OFM, and John McCafferty (Dublin: Four Courts Press 2009), pp. 3-26 (pp. 7-8).

ecclesiastical structures illegally annexed by their enemies'.[27] Michael O'Neill notes that Franciscan friaries were often continuously used as burial places, and states that the 'spectacular, if ruinous condition' of the friaries is a result of their 'important function as mausoleums for their original patrons and descendants'.[28] Clodagh Tait has highlighted the use of ruined ecclesiastical buildings by English settlers to Ireland in the seventeenth century, who sought out burial places within medieval churches and cathedrals in order to denote their social rank and position.[29] Rachel Moss has also noted the popularity of friary churches in particular for burial, giving the example of Sligo Friary, which was 'spared closure in the 1570s owing to its traditional role as a place of burial', and which 'until the Famine of the 1840s suffered from constant problems relating to the sheer volume of Roman Catholic burials within its walls'.[30]

Issues of social status, as defined by religious or socio-economic identity, continued to inform decisions around burial within medieval sites between 1824 and the end of the century. As outlined above, Roman-Catholic burial in suppressed monasteries, abbeys, or convents was often permitted by the landowner, despite being prohibited by an Act of William III. However, as the majority of these medieval ruins were in private ownership, the decisions around burial ultimately rested with the landowners. This could lead to local tensions, as was the case at the medieval ruin of Killone, Co. Clare, where the landlord, Major W. A. McDonnell, was accused of desecrating the existing graves in a ruined church on his property in 1860. While McDonnell assured the editors of the *Munster News and Clare Advocate* that he was simply trying to preserve the church from decay and tidy up the nave, which was full of coffin boards due to 'improper' burials, subsequent editorials and letters to the paper clearly outlined the extent to which a sense of moral or spiritual ownership was held in higher regard than legal ownership. According to the editors, the 'universal excitement and indignation should be remembered as warnings by every landowner who has a religious ruin on his property'.[31]

An incident at the Church of St Mary, Drogheda, in 1868, also reflects the role of burial in connoting a sense of moral and spiritual ownership over medieval ruins, particularly

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[27] Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 176.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Clodagh Tait, *Death, Burial, and Commemoration in Ireland, 1550-1650* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 71.

[30] Rachel Moss, *Art and Architecture of Ireland — Volume 1: Medieval c. 400-c.1600* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press with the Royal Irish Academy, 2015), p. 223.

[31] 'The Killone Churchyard', *Munster News and Clare Advocate*, 14 January 1860.

when that ownership was being directly challenged by the rule of law. The report of this incident, published by the *Nation*, began by outlining the fact that the Protestant church of St Mary occupied the site of the medieval church of St Mary, a Carmelite foundation from the twelfth century, as well as noting the role of the Carmelites in defending the town from Cromwell before 'falling martyrs to his savage cruelty when master of their town'.[32] The emotive rhetoric used in this report reflects the highly partisan nature of the printed press during this period, with newspapers displaying marked bias towards political positions on issues relating to religious freedoms and political independence. The use of the language of martyrdom and the 'savage cruelty' of Cromwell would have clearly demonstrated the political position of the *Nation* on the events at St Mary's Church to contemporary readers.

The incident at St Mary's developed during the preparations for the burial of a local Church of Ireland parishioner, Mr George Harmon Strype, in the church grounds, the grave-diggers came upon tiled flooring, under which they found a tombstone carved with an ornamental cross, a crozier, a key, and a lamb treading on a serpent. The tombstone was removed, along with a number of bones. This became known to the Roman-Catholic inhabitants of the town, who arrived with spades and shovels before Mr Strype's funeral, 'determined to return the bones, the tombstone, &c., into the grave'.[33] The disturbance that followed led to the arrival of the Drogheda Constabulary, who issued threats of arrest, and members of the twenty-first Royal Fusiliers, 'with bayonets fixed'.[34] While the issue was peacefully resolved, due to the arrival and intervention of the Roman-Catholic priest, the Rev. Mr Gavin, the 'defenders of the grave' asserted their right to the site, with the *Nation* reporting statements such as 'we have as a good [a] right to be here as you or Mr Harper', and '[w]e will guard the bishop's bones with our lives'.[35] As at Killone, the presence of burials provided the context for the assertion of a right to the sacred location, even in the face of considerable legal and military pressure.

The Irish Ecclesiological Society, established by leading Roman-Catholic figures at Maynooth in 1849, also cited the presence of the remains of the dead as a basis for 'true' ownership of ancient buildings. In his opening address for the Society, given by the Rev. Charles Russell, the medieval ruined churches across the countries were described as 'the temples which our fathers raised in honour of the living God […] around whose venerable

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[32] *Nation*, 5 July 1868.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

walls their ashes in after ages reposed'.[36] It is important to note that the disturbance of burials or funerary monuments impacted Church of Ireland communities also. During the restorations at Dublin's Christ Church cathedral, for example, parishioners were outraged when memorials were moved and rearranged in the crypt.[37] The rumoured disturbance of nave burials, and the removal of bones from underneath the floors during renovations at the church of St Multose, in Kinsale, Co. Cork, also led to protests by parishioners.[38]

This anxiety about the displacement of bodies in relation to significant burial sites reflects what Kirk Savage has described as the crisis of the '"missing" — names without bodies', and the '"unknown" — bodies without names' in the aftermath of the American Civil War.[39] In periods of political and social upheaval, secure knowledge of the location and identity of bodies provides a certain stability of material evidence, fixed in terms of interpretation, in contrast to shifting narratives, and to changing social and political norms and structures. In the case of Ireland during the nineteenth century, the presence of bodies also conferred political and social legitimacy to religious or political identities in the face of rapid and dramatic social change. The interference or dispersal of that base layer of evidence, therefore, led to distress and protest across confessional boundaries. The case studies presented below, of Muckross and Bantry, reflect the practical and political challenges faced by those with responsibility for the management of burial and of bodies during this turbulent period.

'All the horrors of a charnel-house' — Unruly Burial at Muckross
While antiquarian accounts of medieval buildings often noted the high status of medieval burials within their walls, they were also often used as community graveyards, carried out with varying degrees of permission from landowners. Accounts of monastic and friary ruins from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reflect the ongoing use of the sites as places of burial, regardless of overcrowding or unsanitary conditions. This was certainly the case at Muckross, a popular antiquarian attraction within the picturesque Killarney tourist

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[36] *The Address of the Irish Ecclesiological Society* (Dublin, 1849), p. 13.

[37] The movement of memorials at Christ Church Cathedral is discussed in Roger Stalley, *George Edmund Street and the Restoration of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 234-35.

[38] The removal and disposal of bones, presumed to be those of ecclesiastics, during renovations by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners at the Church of St Multose, Kinsale, Co. Cork, is outlined in Richard Caulfield, 'St Multose', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 1 (1892), p. 230.

[39] Kirk Savage, 2015 Wyeth Lecture in American Art, 'The Art of the Name: Soldiers, Graves, and Monuments in the Aftermath of the Civil War' <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/audio-video/video/wyeth-savage.html?utm_source=Real%20Magnet&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=85298153> [accessed 8 October 2017].

experience. The friary church and churchyard were part of the demesne owned by the Herbert Family, who resided at Muckross House.[40]

In his description of Muckross Abbey, published in 1849, the Cork antiquarian John Windele noted that such burial practices were the 'subject of continual complaint' from its numerous visitors.[41] According to Windele's report on visitor guides to the area, 'each book, descriptive of these localities, denounced the abominable desecration of the dead, so painfully visible in every part of the buildings and cemetry [sic] alike'.[42] He described 'coffin planks, sculls and bones', as well as how 'sculls [sic] selected as sufficiently bleached […] ranged on the rude altar-tombs standing near the entrance, formed the most revolting tablets, on which heartless visitors in search of the picturesque and sentimental, inscribed their unhonoured names and worthless ideals'.[43] Similarly, John Carr described his encounter with Muckross Abbey in 1805; while 'reading a pathetic epitaph upon one of the monuments in the abbey', he felt himself 'affected by putrid effluvia', and saw, as he looked around, 'some bodies, which might have been interred two or three months, in coffins, the planks of which had started, not half covered with mould'.[44] As he left, he saw 'a great collection of skulls and bones, promiscuously heaped up, in niches in the walls'.[45]

Isaac Weld, in his account of the scenery of Killarney published in 1807, provided a long description of the use of the ruin as a site of burial. According to Weld, while tourists may come in search of a picturesque experience, they would find themselves 'suddenly and unexpectedly environed by all the horrors of a charnel-house'.[46] Weld described Muckross as a 'common and favourite place of burial', but added that the 'limits of the cemetery are small; the depth of soil inconsiderable', with the result that 'the coffins with their mouldering contents are not unfrequently [sic] moved to make room, long before decency can warrant such a measure'.[47] Weld described finding, in a passage near the cloister, 'a head, with a considerable part of the flesh of the face and nearly the entire hair upon it, literally rolling

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[40] Landed Estates Database <http://landedestates.nuigalway.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/property-show.jsp?id=1669> [accessed 4 October 2017].

[41] John Windele, *Historical and Descriptive Notices of the City of Cork and its Vicinity* (Cork: Bradford & Co., 1849), p. 439.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] John Carr, *The Stranger in Ireland: or, a Tour in the Southern and Western Parts of that Country in the Year 1805* (Philadephia: T&G Palmer, 1806), p. 227. Carr also mentions an incident in Adare, where the remains of the dead were removed from the friary to the river. According to Carr, 'his lordship lost his popularity for a short period', but that it was restored in time (p. 228).

[45] Carr, p. 227.

[46] Isaac Weld, *Illustrations of the Scenery of Killarney and the Surrounding Country* (London: Longman, 1807), p. 26.

[47] Ibid.

underfoot'.[48] Although the friary was regularly cleaned, 'the bones, sculls and coffin-boards that are prematurely dug up, quickly accumulate again'.[49] Coffin boards were deposited in the vaults, and 'bones and sculls are heaped up in the angle formed by the transept and the nave of the church, at the outside of the building', where 'many thousands of them may be seen, bleached to an extraordinary degree of whiteness by their exposure to the weather'.[50] In a note on this point, Weld stated that at Buttevant Abbey, Co. Cork, the skulls and bones were heaped up in the form of a wall, with an adjacent ivy tree binding them together, and that this was not an unusual circumstance in Ireland or England.[51]

While some could afford to construct tombs with trap doors, the 'poorer classes of people generally content themselves with depositing the coffin in a cranny of the rock', covering it with loose stones.[52] According to Weld, 'a day scarcely passes without a burial at Mucruss abbey', and despite the 'concourse of people' attending the ceremony with 'cries and howlings', it is 'not thought expedient to oppose it', as 'any attempts made to prevent future burials in the abbey' would 'be the occasion of alarming disturbances'.[53] Even allowing for exaggeration and embellishment on the part of these early nineteenth-century commentators, Muckross appears to have been a site of very frequent burial. A report from the *Irish Times* on the visit to the ruins by Queen Victoria in 1861, however, suggests that the problems with overcrowding and unruly burial had been somewhat alleviated.[54] In reference to the improvements, Windele noted that 'things have been ordered otherwise of late', and that the 'mouldering remains have been interred'.[55] Colonel Herbert, proprietor of Muckross demesne by the middle of the century, outlined his experience of managing the graveyard during a special meeting of the Board of Guardians, in their capacity as burial board, in February 1857. During a discussion of the unsanitary condition of the nearby Aghadoe graveyard, where the 'decency due to the dead was violated to such an extent as was harrowing to the feelings of any civilized mind', he addressed the Board as to his own experience of managing a privately owned graveyard with a high level of public usage.[56]

In his comments, Herbert outlined some of the measures that he had taken since acquiring Muckross demesne forty years previously. He admitted that the burial ground had

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Weld, p. 27.
[54] *Irish Times*, 31 August 1861.
[55] Windele, *Historical and Descriptive Notices*, p. 440.
[56] *Irish Examiner*, 18 February 1857.

been in 'a most disgraceful state, as is but too notorious', and that the fees that had been collected for burial had not been invested in the upkeep of the site.[57] He stated that he initially took steps to put the site in order at his own expense, and then contracted his gatekeeper to maintain the site and to manage the fees. Reflecting the importance of the site to the locality, he noted that 'it has ever been my disposition to adopt the course that seemed to be best calculated to meet the public wishes on this subject', but that if the Burial Board or Board of Guardians could find a way to take on the maintenance of the graveyard, he would gladly hand over his rights to the fees to them.[58]

The difficulty of extending the site to accommodate additional burials was explained by the fact that 'on one side, it is surrounded by a bog that could not be penetrated two feet without having a copious supply of water, and on the other sides there is nothing but naked rock', and further to this, that 'the only part where an addition to the grounds might be made abuts so into my demesne that no gentleman or reasonable person could ask me to make the addition'.[59] This account by Herbert provides a valuable insight into the quotidian management of graveyards that were held on private lands, yet were subject to reports on issues of public safety and sanitation, as well as being sites of key religious and familial significance for many in the local area. His account also points to the importance of gatekeepers and estate managers in regulating and permitting burial, as well as the role of the landowner, and the payment of fees on these privately held burial grounds. In her discussion of the use of medieval ruins within planned and picturesque landscapes, for example, Finola O'Kane has contrasted the approach of the Herbert family, in possession of Muckross, with that of Lord Kenmare, who transformed the ruined Inisfallen Abbey into a banqueting chamber, complete with a bay window.[60] This is in contrast to the Herberts' clear desire to maintain good relations with those who wished to carry out burials at the ruin, as well as his concern with his responsibilities to the local Burial Board regarding public health and sanitation. While Lord Kenmare entirely co-opted the ruin on this land as a place of pleasure and diversion, Henry Arthur Herbert's position reflects the situation of landlords who attempted to negotiate between the often competing claims on the ecclesiastical sites on their properties.

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Finola O'Kane, *Ireland and the Picturesque: Design, Landscape Painting, and Tourism, 1700-1840* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 96-97.

Despite the measures put in place by Herbert, reports from the *Kerry Evening Post* from 1880 reflect the ongoing overcrowding burial issues at the site. During the weekly meeting of the Board of Guardians, a report from the district sanitary officer was presented on the unhealthy and overcrowded state of certain graves within Muckross Abbey Cemetery. Mr. H. A. Herbert, the eldest son of the family, who had inherited the estate following the death of his father in 1866, responded to say that he had requested no further burials take place, but expressed his anxiety that 'those persons having an interest in those graves had a right to interments in the abbey, and be the custodians of those grounds'.[61] He stated that he would donate a piece of land from his own demesne, to be consecrated by the Bishop of Kerry, in order to ensure that people had a suitable place of interment.[62] The popularity of Killarney as a destination was also referenced by Herbert, who noted that tourists frequently brought the unsightly and unhealthy graves to his attention. The presence of the medieval ruin on Herbert's property led to tension between the need to maintain good relationships with his tenants and local community, and his desire to maintain a picturesque demesne.

The care taken by the Herbert family of the ruins at Muckross was noted in a 1887 article from the *Kerry Sentinel*, which stated that 'all praise' was due to the Herberts of Muckross

> for having preserved this sacred spot from the shameful desecration which I have witnessed at Kildare, Ardmore, and other places in Ireland, where what is left of the holy house of God and the crowded resting places of the dead are left open to the herds and flocks, and the remains of ancient sculpture and architecture are rudely defaced or destroyed by visitors who have learned to respect nothing.[63]

The Herberts' care and sensitivity to the friary, which had 'never ceased to be the cherished burial ground of the Killarney Catholics',[64] was linked to the overall proper management of the land. This responsible and respectful proprietorship, mindful of shared values, was also contrasted by the newspaper with the nearby estates of the White family around Bantry Bay, described as 'a land bled to death', having been allowed to fall into 'decay, ruin', and 'degrading and shameful poverty'.[65] The Herberts' position as beneficent and responsible landlords reflects that of the Dunravens at Adare, Co. Limerick, who combined antiquarian preservation with an awareness of the role of the medieval churches on their lands to both

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[61] *Kerry Evening Post*, 15 April 1880.
[62] Ibid.
[63] *Kerry Sentinel*, 18 October 1887.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

Roman-Catholic and Church of Ireland parishioners throughout an era of political and sectarian tension.[66] The daily management of medieval burial sites required careful negotiation of relevant legislation and local expectations. Property owners such as the Herberts had to carefully manage their role as landlords, open as they were to the censure of the local authorities, and to negotiate their increasingly precarious position as paternalistic leaders within the community, subject to the evaluation of the press and of the local population.

Antiquarian Values and Claims to Interment

By the mid-nineteenth century, polite and scholarly interest in medieval ruins was growing, and they were increasingly prized for their architectural forms and sculpted decoration, rather than their associations with burial or with religious rites, religious figures, or saints.[67] Through the development of scholarly societies, publications, and field trips, as well as a growing interest in the measurement and recording of field monuments and ruins, their formal and historical meanings were increasingly fixed, reiterated, and supported through professional appraisal and adoption of a specific, technical language used across national boundaries in relation to particular architectural styles and building types.[68] Similarly, the vogue for picturesque tourism led to the incorporation of ruins into 'views' and into designed landscapes within demesnes. As O'Kane has argued, this 'transformation of significant ruins into prospects or vistas' lessened the ruins' ability to 'act as a focus for Catholic ceremonies'.[69] The presence of Roman-Catholic bodies, living or dead, interrupted the desire, and the ability, to view the ruins as picturesque objects of antiquarian curiosity. The ability to engage in a formalist appreciation of the aesthetics of the picturesque Irish landscape, characterised by roughness and wildness, required distance, literal and figurative, from the realities and consequences of living in such an environment.

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[66] The role of the Dunravens at Adare and their management of the medieval ecclesiastical buildings on their estate is explored in NicGhabhann, *Medieval Ecclesiastical Buildings in Ireland*, pp. 29-63.

[67] The growth of antiquarianism as part of middle- and upper-class leisure activities is considered in Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians, and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838-86* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). The growth of antiquarianism in Ireland is considered in, among other texts, John Waddell, *Foundation Myths: The Beginnings of Irish Archaeology* (Bray, Co. Wicklow: Wordwell, 2005); *Pathfinders to the Past: The Antiquarian Road to Irish Historical Writing*, ed. by Próinséas Ní Chatháin, Siobhán Fitzpatrick, and Howard Clarke (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012); and Máirín Ní Cheallaigh, 'Mechanisms of Monument Destruction in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Antiquarian Horror, Cromwell, and Gold-Dreaming', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 107C (2007), 127-45.

[68] NicGhabhann, *Medieval Ecclesiastical Buildings in Ireland*, pp. 64-135; and Carla Yanni, 'On Nature and Nomenclature: William Whewell and the Production of Architectural Knowledge in Early Victorian Britain', *Architectural History*, 40 (1997), 204-21.

[69] O'Kane, *Ireland and the Picturesque*, p. 23.

These attempts to establish fixed meanings had a physical corollary in the maintenance and preservation of ruined buildings by interested individuals, by scholarly societies such as the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland (founded 1849), and finally, through government agencies and via legislation such as the Irish Church Act (1869), which provided for the care and preservation of medieval churches, and the Ancient Monuments Act (Ireland), passed in 1882, which explicitly defined several sites as being worthy of state preservation.[70] In many cases, the preservation of these buildings ensured that they remained *as* ruins, to be maintained and protected in a ruined state, with an emphasis on the importance of the historical and architectural evidence presented by the monuments. The possibility of renovation and reuse, which had taken place at Ballintober Abbey in Co. Mayo, at Kildare Cathedral, and in Adare, Co. Limerick, at both the Trinitarian and Augustinian foundations in the town, was negated by this Act. This largely formal interest in the ruins contrasted, and was in conflict, with the use of the sites as places of continuing religious significance, as places of pilgrimage, communal worship, or burial.

The report published by the *Irish Times* in 1893 on the restoration of the friary in the town of Ennis, Co. Clare, explicitly contrasted the use of the site as a burial place with its maintenance as a place of antiquarian and scholarly value. The burial ground was described as being in a 'scandalously neglected and unsanitary state'. Following a sworn inquiry, the friary was closed to future burials, while 'reserving rights to the representatives of five families who have vaults therein'.[71] It could be argued that, by the end of the century, the ideal engagement with the sites, following the Irish Church Act and the Ancient Monuments Act, involved a field trip of interested society members, or, in very specific cases, 'respectable' burial ceremonies for individuals who could lay a claim to burial on the site, rather than popular Roman-Catholic devotional practices or ceremonies.

The reports of the Fund for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead, in Ireland, established in 1888, reiterate these antiquarian concerns, combining them with the idea of a civic duty to care for the remains of the dead. These concerns were explicitly linked to ideas of national respectability. A report in the *Irish Times*, published in 1891, bemoaned the fact that such an organisation was even required when 'we might suppose that in a civilized and

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[70] The foundation of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland is outlined in Aideen M. Ireland, 'The Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, 1849-1900', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 112 (1982), 72-92. The development of the Ancients Monument (Ireland) Act is discussed in Rachel MacRory, 'The Evolution of Policy for the Conservation of Historic Monuments in Ireland' (unpublished MUBC thesis, University College Dublin, 1994).
[71] 'Restoration of Ennis Abbey and Clare Abbey', *Irish Times*, 10 January 1893.

Christian nation the care and reverence of the dead would be a duty so imperative as to have no necessity for any enforcement of it whatsoever'.[72] Similar sentiments were expressed in the report on the Fund in 1893, with the comment that 'we compare very badly with England in this matter', but that 'until our national vanity sets itself to remedy the evil it cannot hope to escape the comments freely bestowed by visitors from other countries'.[73] This report noted the condition of several sites, held in private ownership and therefore not available for, or subject to, the care of the Board of Works. The friary in Askeaton, Co. Limerick, is described as being 'littered with tombstones in the most chaotic and disgraceful condition, so smashed and broken among the crumbling stones of the Abbey that the ground more resembles the unused bed of a quarry than the floor of a sacred abbey'.[74] Also in Co. Limerick, the Cistercian abbey of Monasternenagh is described as being 'covered with ivy, littered with tombstones, coffins and *human bones*'.[75] The Abbey at Athenry is also described as being in good condition, with fine tracery, but the report notes that the 'burial ground is badly kept, and the interior of the Abbey walls is in a disgraceful state'.[76] Concerned citizens were urged to subscribe to the fund in order to avoid national disgrace, and to demonstrate their own respectability by aligning themselves with such an effort.[77]

At both Muckross and Ennis, certain families asserted their rights to continue to carry out burials within the grounds of medieval ecclesiastical buildings. In order to do so, they had to demonstrate the ways in which their claims, and future burial ceremonies, would differ from those that had led to problematic overcrowding. On 30 July 1880, the *Irish Examiner* carried a report on an inquiry into the burial rights of several families at Muckross. The families represented, including the Gallwey and Coltsman families, made claims to burial rights based on the recorded presence of their relatives already interred within vaults on the site. The fact that these families had vaults and memorial markers to record their familial burials indicates their relative wealth and social status. It should also be noted that these family names frequently appeared on the local Board of Guardians, another marker of their social status. Although questions were raised at the inquiry as to whether there would be adequate space within the vaults for future burials, Mr. J. C. O'Reardon, a solicitor representing The O'Donoghue, M. P., asserted that 'there was plenty of room in that tomb for

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[72] *Irish Times*, 26 December 1891.
[73] *Irish Times*, 27 May 1893. For further context on Victorian attitudes towards memorials and grave markers, see James Stevens Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Thrupp, Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004).
[74] *Irish Times*, 27 May 1893.
[75] Ibid, emphasis in original.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

future interments and the tomb is well built'.[78] Several claimants also made representations on behalf of their relatives living abroad, reflecting the outward migration of the period, with John Quinlan from Killarney claiming a right to burial 'on behalf of his sister, Mrs Casey, who is in Australia, and also on behalf of Mrs Casey's children in the Lady's Chapel'.[79] James Glissane from Killarney also claimed a tomb for himself, his father, and grandfather, and recorded that 'perhaps his son and daughter might come from Australia and claim this tomb'.[80]

Throughout this hearing, the ability to provide respectable sepulchre for future burials was a determining factor, with witnesses giving evidence regarding the 'revolting' sight of 'fresh coffins taken up to make room for new coffins', the continuing overcrowding, and the fact that 'two or three tombs' were not air-tight, resulting in 'a stench emanating' from certain tombs.[81] While this inquiry was evidently concerned with public order, and with health and safety, the emphasis on access to tombs in order to safeguard burial rights, and the ability to demonstrate a clear, documented lineage within the site, reflect the influence of class concerns. Rather than being associated with popular religious practices, therefore, the medieval ecclesiastical sites were being re-coded as places to signify family lineage and social status, as well as a space to demonstrate scientific and polite knowledge of their architectural and historical significance.

Respectable Roman-Catholic Bodies and the Burial of the Dead

This concern regarding the proper treatment of bodies within these medieval sites reflects the broader preoccupations around public health, hygiene, and the control of disease during the Victorian period, but may also reflect cultural anxieties regarding the distinction between disorderly and respectable burial, following the treatment of bodies in mass graves during the years of the mid-century Famine.[82] Emily Mark-Fitzgerald has outlined the extent to which burials without coffins and mass graves were associated with the workhouse and with Famine death. Mark-Fitzgerald describes the extent to which 'the proliferation of graphic and distressing narratives of the spectacle of mass burial — and their persistence in folk and

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[78] *Irish Examiner*, 30 July 1880.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] For further context on aspects of medical history during this period, including concerns around epidemic disease, see Margaret H. Preston and Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh, *Gender and Medicine in Ireland, 1700-1950* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2012).

popular memory — reveals the deep significance attached to rituals of death and the social collapse associated with the dissolution of boundaries between the living and the dead'.[83]

An article published by the *Irish Examiner* in 1869 on the state of the graveyard at Ardnabraher in Co. Cork, on the site of a demolished friary building, linked both the horror of 'missing' and 'unknown' bodies (as theorised by Savage, outlined above)[84] with the mass burials of the Famine. The article roundly criticised the Board of Guardians of the Bantry Union for the neglect of the graveyard. Four burial grounds in the area were listed: one adjoining the Catholic church; another used almost exclusively by Protestants; a further site located four or five miles from the town, used primarily for the burial of Catholics but now unsuitable for further burials; and the site at Ardnabraher, known as the Abbey Burial Ground, and described as a site of great natural beauty and spiritual significance — a 'fountain of piety and learning', 'founded in 1460 by Daniel O'Sullivan, Prince of Bere.' According to the *Examiner*'s article, it was the 'principal place of sepulchre for the people of an extensive district', with graves 'eked out with an ingenious economy of space that is very curious to see'.[85]

The article also records that the site also contained 'three monster graves, into which were flung hundreds of the coffinless and shroudless bodies of the victims of the Irish famine'.[86] The disintegration of the site by the sea had resulted in human remains being swept into the sea with the soil. The article reports that 'it needed but the great storms and extraordinary tides of last winter to make the spectacle simply horrible', as this had resulted in the exposure of the soil due to the toppling of several large trees. The spectacle recorded is chilling to read:

> the visitor sees an almost completely vertical section of the burial ground presented to him. Here are the rows of rotted coffins protruding from the bank, with here a human skull grinning out in all its hideous ghastliness, and there the thigh bone of a full grown mortal, displaying its gaunt nakedness to the eye of the passer-by.[87]

The article described the experience of walking on the strand or in the fields and picking up 'a half-eaten bone — part of a limb or a skull — which some stray dog had borne off from the cemetery to crunch in a quiet corner. And not only dogs, but pigs and other beasts have

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[83] Emily Mark-Fitzgerald, *Commemorating the Irish Famine: Memory and the Monument* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 104.
[84] Savage, 'The Art of the Name', n. pag.
[85] 'The Bantry Burial Grounds', *Irish Examiner*, 26 March 1869.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.

been found exploring the sacred ground.'[88] The author of the article conjectured that these limbs could belong to a 'learned ancestor', or the 'right arm of one who bravely wielded the sword or the pike in the battle for "Faith and Fatherland"'.[89]

The description of Ardnabraher clearly demonstrated outrage at the desecration of Roman-Catholic bodies, the direct result of the callous indifference of both Lord Bantry and the Board of Guardians. The bodies are described as either linked to Republicanism and Roman-Catholic freedoms, or as blameless victims of the Famine. In particular, the reference to the 'pike' suggests a link to the violence of 1798, and related struggles for Irish political and religious independence. The lack of respect shown to these bodies was translated, therefore, into an insult to the Roman Catholics of the region, and as a symbol of anti-nationalist politics. The article, which would have been widely read and circulated, created a counter-narrative, and explicitly reinvested these scattered bodies with a necessary respectability through its emphasis on the sacred and ancient nature of the graveyard itself, and on the possible nobility of those buried there. The article can be read as demonstrating the painful anxiety around the visible desecration of Roman-Catholic bodies, and the inability to control their fragmentation and dispersal due to a lack of control over and ownership of the burial grounds. The trope of the 'body in pieces' has been considered in the context of the highly visible physical desecration of social groups in other contexts, and the idea of anxiety around physical fragmentation is resonant in the context of post-Famine burial in Ireland.[90]

The treatment of bodies at Ardnabraher is in sharp contrast to the elaborate funerary customs engaged in by Roman Catholics at Muckross by the end of the century. Newspaper accounts of funerals taking place at Muckross in the 1890s emphasised the respectability of the dead and the propriety of the funeral customs, including lists of notable local figures in attendance, details of the funeral mass held at Killarney cathedral, and suits of coffins encasing the bodies, made from heavy oak wood with brass mountings and numerous wreaths.[91] As Ciara Breathnach and David Butler have outlined in their study of death notices and obituaries, the desire to control funerary practices also reflects the increasingly Ultramontane[92] emphasis on doctrinal adherence, and the suppression of practices such as the

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[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Derek Hook, 'The Racist Bodily Imaginary: The Image of the Body-in-Pieces in (Post)Apartheid Culture', *Subjectivity*, 6.3 (2013), 254-71.
[91] The funeral of Daniel Cronin Coltsman, who died 23 February 1894, was described in this manner in the *Kerry News*, 2 March 1894.
[92] The term 'Ultramontane' refers to a shift in Roman-Catholic devotional practice and culture from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, reflecting increasing adherence to Roman practice and papal authority, and is

'merry wake' throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.[93] While other burials may well have also taken place in the cemetery at this time, they were unlikely to be recorded in such detail or disseminated in the press, given the fact that newspapers selectively reported on the deaths of the socially respectable and locally eminent citizenry.[94] These changes around burial reflect much wider shifts in Roman-Catholic devotional practices in the post-Famine period, which focused in many ways on the performance of the respectable, or ideal, body in public through the increased popularity of processions and other public devotions, held in the streets or in the many new churches and religious buildings constructed during this period.[95]

As all of this implies, while the Ancient Monuments (Ireland) Act was being prepared, establishing these sites as areas of antiquarian, touristic, historical, and aesthetic interest and pleasure, a parallel strand of interpretation was also evident in the discourses of the period. The sites were positioned within sermons, political speeches, and narrative essays published in newspapers as important signifiers of Roman-Catholic Irish identity, with an emphasis on their initial construction and their role in establishing Roman Catholicism in Ireland. While tension existed around the proper 'ownership' of early-Christian ruins, with both the Church of Ireland and the Roman-Catholic church claiming these as part of their 'true' inheritance, the later monastic and friary buildings could be more firmly established as part of a Roman-Catholic heritage.[96] As Elizabeth Crook has explored in her study of nationalism and the uses of the past, the ruin was used as symbol of both nationalist resurgence and religious dispossession. She gives the example of the use of the ruin within the political rhetoric of William Smith O'Brien's lecture to the Cork Young Ireland Society

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most often associated with Cardinal Paul Cullen. For more contextual information on Ultramontane culture in Ireland during this period, see *Cardinal Paul Cullen and his World*, ed. by Dáire Keogh and Albert McDonnell (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011).

[93] Ciara Breathnach and David Fleming, 'Death Notices and Obituaries in Provincial Irish Newspapers, 1820-1900', in *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe*, ed. by James Kelly and Mary Ann Lyons (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2013), p. 260.

[94] Breathnach and Fleming, p. 252.

[95] The role of public processions in the communication of post-Famine Roman-Catholic identity is explored in NicGhabhann, '"A Development of Practical Catholic Emancipation": Laying the Foundations for the Roman-Catholic Urban Landscape, 1850-1900', *Urban History* (special issue on Irish urban history – forthcoming); Lisa Godson, 'Charting the Material Culture of the Devotional Revolution: The Advertising Register of the *Irish Catholic Directory* 1837-96', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 116C (2016), 265-294; and Colm Lennon and Robin Kavanagh, 'The Flowering of the Confraternities and Sodalities in Ireland, c. 1860-c.1960', in *Confraternities and Sodalities in Ireland: Charity, Devotion, and Sociability*, ed. by Colin Lennon (Dublin: Columba Press, 2012), pp. 76-96.

[96] The tension between the 'moral ownership' of early-Christian buildings in Ireland at this time is explored in NicGhabhann, *Medieval Ecclesiastical Buildings in Ireland*, p. 12.

in 1885, arguing that Smith O'Brien essentially presented Irish patriotism as emerging from the archaeological remains scattered across the Irish landscape.

O'Brien used the image of the landscape as being peopled with 'the bones of uncanonised saints and martyrs'. He created an explicit link between the ruins and the political present, stating that 'when the framers of the penal laws denied us books, and drew their thick black veil over Irish history, they forgot that the ruins they had themselves made were the most eloquent memorial of a history and a race destined not to die'.[97] However, these nationalist and often romantic narratives tended to ignore the centuries of 'unruly' burial throughout the early-modern period, and into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and built their case for moral ownership on the presence of kings and ecclesiastics, rather than on the more recent, and more numerous, bodies interred within the site.

This desire to invest the ruins with a specifically elite Roman-Catholic identity is evident in a series of articles titled 'History of Muckross Abbey and Those Buried Within', written by the Rev. Fr. Jarlath OSF, and published in the *Kerry Sentinel* in 1897. This series focused on clerics and friars who were interred in the grounds, providing emotive and extensive descriptions of their virtue, and the nature of their martyrdom for the Roman-Catholic faith.[98] In 1893, the *Irish Examiner* published a short story set within the ruins of Muckross, inviting readers to imagine the friars still assembling to chant the Divine Office, despite the 'withering edicts of the royal free-booters, Henry VII and his daughter, Elizabeth of England'. The story rehearses the trope of a faith community under threat, but that remains faithful, allowing it to flourish once more in the future. This narrative structure, of continuation and fidelity, was also frequently used to structure the sermons within new churches, reflecting resurgent Roman-Catholic socio-political status during the period.[99]

The tendency to associate these sites with antiquarian 'respectability' is also somewhat countered by the rich body of folklore dealing with burial across denominational boundaries, demonstrating the continuing position of these sites in the popular imagination, despite increasing prohibition regarding physical access. As Clodagh Tait has outlined, Roman-Catholic folktales recounted church walls 'jumping' in order to avoid enclosing Protestant burials, especially in cases of dissent around the use of a medieval site for

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[97] Elizabeth Crooke, *Politics, Archaeology, and the Creation of a National Museum of Ireland* (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2000), p. 33.
[98] Rev. Fr. Jarlath OSF, 'History of Muckross Abbey and of Those Buried Therein', *Kerry Sentinel*, 25 September 1897.
[99] NicGhabhann, *Medieval Ecclesiastical Buildings in Ireland*, pp. 190-91.

burial.[100] As Tait argues, these stories are 'revealing of the negotiation of interdenominational relationships', and while they highlight a 'strong sense of difference between the Catholic and Protestant communities', the necessity of multi-denominational burial led to a range of practices developed to allow the communities to live 'apart but together', including the use of different grave-marker types, the employment of different masons and craftsmen, or the use of different part of the graveyard.[101] Crucially, these folktales, combined with attention to the material evidence of the sites themselves, provide an important counter-narrative to that of polite antiquarian engagement.

Conclusion

This essay has traced the multiple and often contradictory discourses surrounding Roman-Catholic burial within medieval ecclesiastical buildings between 1824 and 1900, focusing on the case study of the burial ground surrounding the medieval friary of Muckross. These different discourses reflect the extent to which the medieval ruins had become sites of complex negotiation between legislation, public custom, private responsibility, and political significance. It is clear that, throughout the century, the ruins were powerful symbols of power and religious identity, co-opted through physical occupation and narrative retelling in order to serve different aims and political goals.

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the uses of medieval ecclesiastical sites have been largely controlled by state agencies involved in their preservation and care. Smaller parish churches, however, remain frequently used as sites of burial throughout the country, and recent burials, denoted by new headstones, can be seen within many monastic sites, including at Muckross and Askeaton. Indeed, the issue of overcrowding at Muckross cemetery remains an issue of concern, with the *Irish Examiner* publishing an article on the subject on 30 January 2017. Echoing some of the nineteenth-century concerns, the article noted the overcrowding of coffins in local cemeteries, and the fact that the burial ground at Muckross Abbey is 'closed to "newcomers" and accepts only burials of the town's long-established families'.[102] At the time of writing, the issue of the improper and undignified burial of the bodies of children and infants from a Mother and Baby Home at Tuam, Co. Galway, has also featured prominently in the recent media,

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[100] Clodagh Tait, 'Wandering Graveyards, Jumping Churches, and Rogue Corpses: Tolerance and Intolerance in Irish Folklore', in Kelly and Lyons, pp. 281-82.
[101] Tait, pp. 285-89.
[102] *Irish Examiner*, 30 January 2017 <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/cremation-eases-issue-over-burial-plot-space-in-killarney-441348.html> [accessed 13 March 2017].

reflecting similar concerns about the 'body in pieces', and the definition and treatment of 'respectable' bodies in Ireland during the twentieth century.[103]

Although the image of the Irish medieval ruin is now most frequently used as part of attractive tourist campaigns, marketing the country as a place of historic interest,[104] the association with death and burial continues to be present within contemporary visual culture. The uses of medieval monastic sites as places of burial features in works of art, literature, and film throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, ranging from Seamus O'Kelly's short story, 'The Weaver's Grave' (later made into a prize-winning radio play by RTÉ in 1961)[105], to contemporary poet Tess Gallagher's representation of a ruined abbey in 'Abbey Ballindoon'. In this poem, the poet imagines an encounter with her new partner's late wife, but also connects the ruin with images of death from the Cromwellian era and the Vietnam War.[106] In *Eclipse* (2009), directed by Conor McPherson and written by Billy Roche, the character of Michael Farr, played by Ciarán Hinds, returns to the site of a ruined church to visit the grave of his recently deceased wife. More recently, Amnesty International released a short video protesting the 8th Amendment in 2015, which focused on the image of a ruined church, shrouded in mist and surrounded by broken grave-markers, as a symbol of the continuing power of the Roman-Catholic Church within Irish legislation.[107] These are just a few examples of the continuing significance image of the ruin within Irish visual culture, as a place of uneasy or troubling memory.

A brief survey of the current condition of many of the monastic or friary sites described above, however, reveals that contemporary preservation practices have almost completely effaced this history of unruly or unsanctioned burial, with the foundations at Askeaton and Monasternenagh furnished with level floors, facilitating safe tourist access, while maintaining some of the burial markers or wall tombs and memorials in situ. At Muckross, the site itself, under the care of the OPW, is also cleanly laid out inside, with graves and tombs located in the surrounding cemetery. While this form of preservation is as

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[103] 'Woman Went to Tuam Home after Seeing Child with "Skull on a Stick"', *Irish Times*, 3 March 2017 <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/woman-went-to-tuam-home-after-seeing-child-with-skull-on-a-stick-1.2997365> [accessed 13 March 2017].

[104] The 'Ireland's Ancient East' campaign from Fáilte Ireland provides a recent example of the use of medieval ecclesiastical sites within tourist marketing. See <https://www.irelandsancienteast.com/discover/stories/themes/sacred-ireland> [accessed 8 October 2017].

[105] 'The Weaver's Grave' <http://www.rte.ie/drama/radio/plays/2015/0123/675205-the-weavers-grave-by-seumus-okelly/> [accessed 13 March 2017].

[106] Tess Gallagher, 'Abbey Ballindoon', in *Midnight Lantern: New and Selected Poems* (Northumberland: Bloodaxe, 2012), pp. 325-26.

[107] Amnesty International, 'In Chains' campaign video <https://www.youtube.com/embed/j9W33wCm7Ao> [accessed 8 October 2017].

necessary now for safe access and public health as it was in the nineteenth century, some memorial to the many, currently invisible, burials, and the local significance of the sites as places of local interment, would be welcomed in order to avoid continuing the effacement of those in society who did not provide, or could not afford a tomb or grave marker, but who wished to inter their friends and family in a site that was deeply meaningful to them.

Helping Eleanor Come Home: A Reassessment of Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*

Brittany Roberts

Critics have most frequently considered Shirley Jackson's novel *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) a work of gothic genre fiction.[1] Critics like Roberta Rubenstein and Judie Newman refer to the psychological dissolution of Eleanor Vance, the novel's protagonist, as the inevitable consequence of Eleanor's relationship with her overbearing and controlling mother, for whom, as the novel opens, Eleanor has cared for the last eleven years of her life. At the novel's beginning, Eleanor is downtrodden and miserable. Jackson writes,

> Her years with her mother had been built up devotedly around small guilts and small reproaches, constant weariness, and unending despair. Without ever wanting to become reserved and shy, she had spent so long alone, with no one to love, that it was difficult for her to talk, even casually, to another person without self-consciousness and an awkward inability to find words.[2]

Tracing Eleanor's unhappiness back to its source within her mother, critics like Rubenstein and Newman have taken a feminist-psychoanalytic approach to the novel, focusing primarily on the mother-daughter bond, the dynamics of the novel's families, and these dynamics' refraction and recapitulation in the domestic spaces of Hill House.[3] For instance, Newman writes,

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[1] For instance, see James Egan, 'Sanctuary: Shirley Jackson's Domestic and Fantastic Parables', *Studies in Weird Fiction*, 6.1 (1989), 15-24; Darryl Hattenhauer, *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003); Trisha Lootens, '"Whose Hand Was I Holding?" Familial and Sexual Politics in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*', in *Shirley Jackson: Essays on the Literary Legacy*, ed. by Bernice M. Murphy (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005), pp. 150-68; Bernice M. Murphy, '"The People of the Village Have Always Hated Us": Shirley Jackson's New-England Gothic', in Murphy, pp. 104-126; Judie Newman, 'Shirley Jackson and the Reproduction of Mothering: *The Haunting of Hill House*', in Murphy, pp.169-82; John G. Parks, 'Chambers of Yearning: Shirley Jackson's Use of the Gothic', in Murphy, pp. 237-50; Roberta Rubenstein, 'House Mothers and Haunted Daughters: Shirley Jackson and the Female Gothic', in Murphy, pp. 127-49; and Andrew Smith, 'Children of the Night: Shirley Jackson's Domestic Female Gothic', in *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, ed. by Andrew Smith and Diana Wallace (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 152-65. While the above critics name *Hill House* a work of gothic fiction, some make distinctions among the various sub-genres of gothic fiction to which the work best belongs. Smith and Rubenstein describe the work as belonging to 'female gothic', Murphy argues that it exemplifies Jackson's brand of 'New-England gothic', and Hattenhauer describes Jackson's canon overall as an example of 'American Gothic'.
[2] Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 3.
[3] For excellent analyses in this vein, see Lootens, Newman, and Rubenstein.

> An exploration of *The Haunting of Hill House* in the light of feminist psychoanalytic theory reveals that the source of both the pleasures and the terrors of the text springs from the dynamics of the mother-daughter relation with its attendant motifs of psychic annihilation, reabsorption by the mother, vexed individuation, dissolution of individual ego boundaries, terror of separation and the attempted reproduction of the symbiotic bond through close female friendship.[4]

Indeed, the relationship between feminist-psychoanalytic theory and Jackson's novel has been extraordinarily productive, leading critic Andrew Smith to remark that '[i]t has become somewhat of a critical commonplace to note that the house represents the projection of Eleanor's ambivalent feelings about her dead mother'.[5] In their influential readings, for instance, Rubenstein and Newman read the events that take place at Hill House as Eleanor's desperate attempt both to break away from and to retrieve a pre-oedipal, symbiotic unity with her demanding mother, who has given Eleanor's life its sole purpose, and without whom Eleanor does not know how to live. Taking a cue from Nancy Chodorow's study *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), Newman and Rubenstein read Eleanor's suicide at the novel's close as the sad return to her initial trauma, the mother-daughter bond, which never allowed Eleanor to differentiate herself from her mother fully.[6] As Rubenstein argues,

> Ultimately, the haunted Eleanor is destroyed by her own ambivalent submission to maternal domination. […] By the novel's end, Eleanor is dead, having crashed her car into a tree just outside the house in a gesture that may be understood as a suicidal sacrifice to the embracing and consuming mother/house.[7]

In these psychoanalytically inflected readings, Hill House itself is presented as a source of evil, which preys upon Eleanor's weaknesses and desires for her own home by seducing her into killing herself in an attempt to merge with the house. The house, these critics conclude, thus tricks her into returning to the undifferentiated state of the 'home' she felt most comfortable in: the womb of her mother.[8]

Recent Jackson biographer Ruth Franklin states that, '[l]ike an abusive relationship […] the house is both impossible to remain in and impossible to escape. In the end, of course, Eleanor's delusion that she is coming home to join whatever has been calling her turns out to

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[4] Newman, pp. 171-72.

[5] Smith, p. 153.

[6] Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[7] Rubenstein, p. 137.

[8] See in particular Newman and Rubenstein. Laura Miller also notes, in a passing remark, that '[t]he "lovers meeting" [Eleanor] has spent the whole novel humming about materializes as a return to the womb that is also a grave'. See Laura Miller, Introduction, in *The Haunting of Hill House*, by Shirley Jackson (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), pp. ix-xxii (p. xix).

have been painfully wrong.'[9] On the surface, Franklin's characterisation of the relationship between Eleanor and Hill House as 'abusive' seems apt; Eleanor is, indeed, increasingly isolated throughout her stay at Hill House, and the house does appear to play purposefully into Eleanor's rich fantasy life. However, it is also worth stressing that Eleanor is a more complicated character than this and many other readings have proposed, and that her desires are not so easily elucidated. Many critics, like Carol Cleveland, James Egan, Tricia Lootens, and Andrew Smith have, admittedly, frequently acknowledged Eleanor's initial desire for social acceptance and her early fantasies at Hill House of a new 'family' with the group that gathers there.[10] However, her equally pronounced misanthropy and the fantasies of isolation in which she indulges on the way to Hill House have gone largely unremarked in much critical work on the novel. To lament Eleanor's inability to find social acceptance within the group that gathers at Hill House, and to perceive the house's interactions with Eleanor as an undesirable and predatory reconfiguration of the mother-daughter bond, is to recognise only Eleanor's publicly stated desires for sociality, such as her assertion that 'I am always afraid of being alone'.[11] The majority of interpretations of the novel therefore recognise only half of the character of Eleanor, or her *public* self-narration — and as Laura Miller remarks, 'self-knowledge is not her forte', as Eleanor's publicly stated desires often conflict with the desires she most cherishes in private.[12]

This focus on the social dynamics of the group and Eleanor's exclusion from it, rather than on the self and its associated dream homes that Eleanor constructs privately, has led many to label the novel as a gothic tale that culminates in tragedy and defeat for Eleanor.[13] Ostracised from the group and forced to leave the home and her new 'family', she smashes her car into a tree. The conventional reading of *Hill House* thus identifies Eleanor's inabilities to be fully accepted by her new family and to break away from her mother as key aspects of the novel's tragic ending and of its status as a work of gothic fiction. However, this mode of analysis ironically replicates a patriarchal view of women by seeking to re-establish a

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[9] Ruth Franklin, *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life* (New York: Liveright, 2016), p. 416.

[10] Carol Cleveland, 'Shirley Jackson', in *And Then There Were Nine: More Women of Mystery*, ed. by Jane S. Bakerman (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1985), pp. 198-218; and Egan, 'Sanctuary'.

[11] Jackson, p. 118.

[12] Laura Miller, Introduction, in *The Haunting of Hill House*, p. xx.

[13] See in particular Egan's 'Sanctuary', Lootens, Newman, and Rubenstein. Interestingly, Egan first speculates that perhaps Eleanor *has* found her own sanctuary in Hill House. He writes, '[t]rue, Eleanor commits suicide in the driveway of the house, but one might conclude that, based upon her behavior before she left, she had found the domestic sanctuary previously absent from her life. In part because of the novel's inconclusive ending, Eleanor's perception has not been conclusively refuted.' However, Egan later notes that Eleanor has fallen victim to 'betrayal and isolation, […and to] her commitment to Gothic parodies of domesticity, the familial, sanctuary'. See Egan, 'Sanctuary', p. 21.

conventional domesticity at the novel's close, with Eleanor circumscribed within the very same imprisoning familial structure that she sought to escape at the novel's opening. To recognise and give serious critical attention to Eleanor's inner desires for isolation, and to the total rejection of family and social life that her private fantasies imply, is to recognise the self that Eleanor has had to deny throughout her adult life, and which she immediately begins to fashion following her mother's death. Importantly, as explored below, this is a self constructed out of multiple literary elements, such as fantasies and fairy-tale tropes, and *in participation with* multiple nonhuman, domestic items such as stone lions, oleander trees, and Hill House itself. This mode of reading renders Hill House's interactions with Eleanor ambiguous, suggesting a more complicated relationship between the house and Eleanor than the predatory, unidirectional relationship proposed by most critical readings to date. Daniel Miller's work is useful in this regard; in considering the many meanings of the word 'accommodating', Miller observes that this term encompasses not only our physical need for shelter, but also the reciprocal relationships that we develop with our nonhuman homes and the nonhuman material emblems of domesticity within them. He writes,

> It [the term 'accommodation'] may imply our changing of a home to suit ourselves, but it can also imply the need to change ourselves in order to suit our accommodation. [...] [T]he term accommodating expresses a sense of willing, of benign agreement to compromise on behalf of the other, often the only spirit within which accommodation can be achieved. By considering our relationship to the home through the term accommodating we face the home not as a thing but as a process.[14]

If previous readings of *Hill House* have largely focused on the relationship between Eleanor and Hill House as abusive and unidirectional, a relationship that ignites a process of madness and dissolution of selfhood for Eleanor, I instead argue that the process undergone by Eleanor and Hill House is one of mutual fulfilment, a process of accommodating one another's needs. As I demonstrate, Hill House encourages Eleanor to achieve the romance of isolation that she fantasises about, thereby propelling Eleanor to actualise both the self she has begun to construct through fantasy and her most inwardly cherished desires.[15] In return, Eleanor provides a genuine love and appreciation for Hill House and the seclusion, isolation, and silence it promises. Far from participating in the dissolution of Eleanor's selfhood, then, Hill

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[14] Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p. 96.

[15] Laura Miller comes close to this reading of the novel when she observes, '[i]f it is Eleanor who now walks in Hill House, then she has arrived at something not too far from her dream of living in the little cottage behind the barricade of poisonous oleander. She walks alone, and that, as Theo would probably point out, is the fate that she most feared and most desired' (p. xxii). While Miller is among the few critics to have devoted attention to Eleanor's private fantasy life, her overall characterisation of Hill House itself is negative, a point from which I diverge.

House, and the many nonhuman emblems of domesticity and seclusion that Eleanor comes to care for throughout the novel, are instead co-creators of Eleanor's newfound identity.

Further, Eleanor is the work of a complicated and subtle writer whose texts delight in confusing, thwarting, distorting, and inverting generic conventions and reader expectations, as in the comedic, satiric, apocalyptic novel *The Sundial* (1958), in which the apocalypse never conclusively occurs. Like *The Sundial*, whose generic classification is ambiguous, *Hill House*'s own inter-textual dialogues with multiple genres complicate attempts to interpret the novel solely within a gothic framework.[16] Instead, *The Haunting of Hill House* should be read within the context of Jackson's work as a whole, including her autobiographical domestic stories, collected in *Life Among the Savages* (1953) and its sequel *Raising Demons* (1957). As S. T. Joshi notes, even the boundaries between her autobiographical works, her non-supernatural fiction, and her weird fiction are difficult to define. Joshi argues,

> Jackson's work returns time and again to certain fundamental domestic themes, sometimes in an autobiographical manner, sometimes in a mainstream manner, and sometimes in a weird manner. I again emphasize that these distinctions are arbitrary and nebulous; it takes only a small touch to push a story from one of these groups to another, and some stories remain resolutely averse to clear categorization.[17]

The Haunting of Hill House is indeed a gothic work, making use of well-established gothic tropes such as haunted mansions, isolated, well-off families, and disputes over property.[18] However, the novel's central image of the house and Eleanor's pronounced desires for a home of her own bring the novel into conversation with Jackson's domestic fictions and family chronicles, which frequently stray into the territory of the gothic. Jackson's use of the gothic, which frequently appears in her work in the form of tropes or sinister language, suggests that she considered gothic a mode, rather than a genre. As John Frow explains,

> [M]odes are understood as the extensions of certain genres beyond specific and time-bound formal structures to a broader specification of 'tone'. […] Rather than standing

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[16] As Angela Hague notes, '*The Sundial* has received almost no attention from Jackson's critics, perhaps because it is among her most ambiguous and unclassifiable works'. See Angela Hague, '"A Faithful Anatomy of Our Times": Reassessing Shirley Jackson', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 26.2 (2005), 73-96 (p. 86).

[17] S. T. Joshi, 'Shirley Jackson: Domestic Horror', in Murphy, pp. 183-98 (p. 192).

[18] Murphy notes that Jackson's American homes and isolated families are modelled after the castles and aristocratic families of classic English gothic literature. She writes, 'Jackson's gothic mansions, [*sic*] are clearly intended to represent modern-day versions of the traditional gothic castle; generic clichés reconfigured for a new age, and created with a strong awareness of (and willingness to adapt) the generic codes that lend them such resonance in the first place. It is interesting to note, therefore, that Jackson's final novels all feature a mansion built by Victorian exemplars of American free enterprise, the new aristocracy in American life; and that her protagonists are all removed from the inhabitants and the locality in which they live — a removal symbolized by the actual physical barriers between them and the outside world.' See Murphy, '"The People of the Village Have Always Hated Us"', p. 114.

> alone, modes are usually qualifications or modifications of particular genres […]; they specify thematic features and certain forms and modalities of speech, but not the formal structures or even the semiotic medium through which the text is to be realised.[19]

Thinking of gothic as a mode allows a reconsideration of Jackson's work as a whole, and in particular its tendency to rapidly slip between atmospheres and registers. In Jackson's writings, gothic elements 'flavour' the stories, novels, and chronicles, but do not necessarily provide the blueprint for the narrative structure as a whole. Instead, Jackson's work moves freely — and at times unexpectedly — between humorous, light-hearted reflections on domesticity and family life and the oppressive, gloomy atmospheres characteristic of works like 'Pillar of Salt' (1948) and *The Haunting of Hill House*. As James Egan remarks, Jackson's 'most subtly crafted fictions draw upon interactive narrative modes', resulting in an oeuvre 'where the whole often exceeds the sum of its parts'. It is this interaction of narrative modes that results in what Egan terms '[t]he sophisticated tonality of the Jackson canon', or its impressive ability to draw upon and manipulate the conventions of various genres and modes for literary, comedic, satiric, and metatextual effects.[20] For instance, *Hill House*'s status as a gothic work is complicated by Eleanor's frequent fairy-tale inflected daydreams and Jackson's careful placement, inversion, and doubling of fairy-tale tropes, such as the enchanted kingdom and the long-lost princess. The novel, then, might best be considered a domestic fairy tale in the gothic mode, or a gothic-domestic fairy tale. Rather than delivering a work of purely gothic terror, Jackson offers a blending of elements drawn from multiple genres and modes, resulting in a gothic-inflected tale with a fairy-tale ending in which a heroine achieves her long-desired kingdom.

Jackson's work is often characterised by a playful approach to genre, and characteristically, *Hill House* inverts and distorts the expectations raised by each of its generic components.[21] The result is a novel which exceeds the sum of its generic parts, offering a series of delightful reversals: a domestic tale that seeks to deny the family, but keep the home; a fairy tale of wish fulfilment that delivers the enchanted kingdom Eleanor so

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[19] John Frow, *Genre*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 71. Frow also notes that '[e]xhausted genres such as the Gothic romance may survive in their modal form — quite spectacularly so in the case of the gothic mode, which passes through early-Victorian stage melodrama into the stories of Edgar Allen Poe, the novel of sensation, and the novels of Charles Dickens, and thence into the vampire novel, the detective novel, and a number of other narrative genres, and more directly from melodrama into a range of Hollywood dramas including the "old house" movie, *film noir*, and the contemporary horror and slasher genres' (p. 72).

[20] Egan, 'Comic-Satiric-Fantastic-Gothic: Interactive Modes in Shirley Jackson's Narratives', in Murphy, pp. 34-51 (p. 34). See also Cleveland, who notes that 'Jackson had a strong penchant for mixing genres and reversing conventional expectations' (p. 202).

[21] See Cleveland, Egan, and Joshi.

desperately wants, but in the form of a haunted house; and a morbid and ironic portrayal of a monstrous, gothic home that, I argue, challenges the notion of the monstrous by seeking not to kill Eleanor maliciously, but instead to give her the love she never received from her mother. To fail to recognise the interaction of these various elements — or, worse, to isolate and over-emphasise the gothic at the expense of the novel's more positive transformations — is to privilege a heteronormative, humanistic, and family-centred notion of progress and thereby to risk a serious misreading of the novel. As Jodey Castricano notes, '[i]t could be argued that what actually haunts Hill House is a certain interpretive model that still delimits what we can say about the "supernatural"', a model which relies on psychoanalysis to domesticate the novel's supernatural phenomena.[22] This psychoanalytic model, which privileges human familial relationships and conventional domesticity, has led many critics to take the novel's ambiguously positive ending for a cruel tragedy.[23]

In an attempt to restore what I view as the novel's more complex relationships to genre, the family, and self-actualisation in solitude, I depart from previous gothic-centric (and psychoanalytic) theoretical frameworks by re-establishing the text as a generic hybrid, a work combining gothic tropes, fairy-tale narrative structures, and domestic fantasies. Further, I depart from previous critical treatments of the text by proposing that *Hill House* presents social isolation — perhaps even agoraphobia — not as a tragedy, but as a potential alternative route to female happiness and liberation.[24] I consider *Hill House* within the context of Jackson's life and oeuvre and provide close readings of several key scenes within the novel to

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[22] Jodey Castricano, 'Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* and the Strange Question of Trans-Subjectivity', *Gothic Studies*, 7.1 (2005), 87-101 (p. 89).

[23] Indeed, Jackson herself may have found the conventional reading of the novel unnecessarily dark. As Carolyn Alessio states, 'Jackson tended to dissociate herself from overly academic — and especially dark — interpretations of her work'. See Alessio, 'Shirley Jackson', in *American Writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies, Supplement 9*, ed. by Jay Parini (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002), pp. 113-30 (p. 113).

[24] Interestingly, only one scholar, Jackson's biographer Judy Oppenheimer, has speculated that 'madness' may have positive overtones in Jackson's work. Speaking of Jackson's earlier 'mad' protagonists, Natalie from *Hangsaman* (1951) and Elizabeth from *The Bird's Nest* (1954), she notes, '[t]he madness itself is a far from miserable state; both young women experience a heady rush of delight, exultation, a pure sense of power in its sway. It is actually the reintegration into "sanity" which somehow feels like a loss — of potential, of possibility, of self. It is hard not to believe that Shirley, who took such pride in the strange quirks and turns of her own mind, was expressing her own feeling that a certain sort of madness had its appeal, at least up to a point. […] Eleanor in *The Haunting of Hill House* kills herself rather than accept a lesser, saner reality.' See Judy Oppenheimer, *Private Demons: The Life of Shirley Jackson* (New York: Putnam, 1988), p. 164. Additionally, Julie Nash has convincingly argued that madness in *Hill House* is Eleanor's only possible reaction to a restrictive patriarchal society, and that madness is preferable to the society she left behind. See Julie J. Nash, '"Whatever Walked There, Walked Alone": The Feminist Supernatural in Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Shirley Jackson, and Fay Weldon', *Para-doxa: Studies in World Literary Genres*, 20 (2006), 173-84. Lastly, though she does not mention Shirley Jackson, Karen Stein has noted a tendency in heroines of the 'female gothic' to embrace madness. Stein writes, '[t]hese heroines experience madness as a stage on the journey toward self-knowledge'. See Karen Stein, 'Monsters and Madwomen: Changing Female Gothic', in *The Female Gothic*, ed. Juliann E. Fleener (Montreal: Eden, 1983), pp. 123-37 (p. 123).

argue that Jackson's clever and evasive text, most often considered a tragedy for the long-suffering Eleanor, instead rewards her with the fairy-tale ending she has always dreamed of: an isolated, enchanted kingdom; a home of her own that she never has to leave; and a nonhuman love more constant and nurturing than any she has ever experienced.

Human Nature and Haunted Families: Situating Jackson's Work in Jackson's Context

No discussion of the eponymous Hill House can begin without first acknowledging the intimate associations with family that houses carry in Jackson's fiction, for even more than the home itself, family is an especially challenging and contradictory concept within her writing. As James Egan notes,

> A substantial part of her work may be interpreted as either the expression of an idyllic domestic vision or the inversion of that vision into the fantastic and Gothic. Jackson controls the tenor of her domestic and fantastic parables primarily by her sophisticated use of wit, irony, and paradox and by juxtaposing the premises of her domestic tales to those of her fantastic ones.[25]

Indeed, Jackson's domestic chronicles, *Life Among the Savages* and *Raising Demons*, conjure a vision of a harmonious and safe family home, in which disorder reigns, but where the bonds of family nonetheless 'remain secure' and nurturing.[26] More importantly, the home within these works serves as a protective boundary between the family and the outside world, the latter of which is often peopled by small-minded groups dominated by 'prejudice and the human capacity for everyday savagery'.[27] On the surface, then, the chronicles reaffirm the conventional ideologies of heteronormative domesticity prevalent throughout mid-century American culture, which frequently depicted the home as a site of safety and luxurious comfort that offered the nuclear family protection from the horrors of a politically fraught and rapidly changing outside world.[28] However, the language in Jackson's domestic chronicles frequently slips into gothic registers, including the family's jokes in *Life Among the Savages*

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[25] Egan, 'Sanctuary', p. 15.

[26] Egan, 'Sanctuary', p. 16.

[27] Alessio, p. 114.

[28] Egan notes that in the domestic chronicles, 'Jackson establishes her domestic vision, defining the values of the familial, nurturing and normative'. See 'Sanctuary', p. 15. Jackson's domestic visions largely affirm the normative predominant post-war culture of domesticity. However, they also point toward the Cold-War era's prevalent distrust of the outside world. As Elaine Tyler May comments, '[i]n the early years of the cold war, amid a world of uncertainties brought by World War II and its aftermath, the home seemed to offer a secure private nest removed from the dangers of the outside world. The message was ambivalent, however, for the family also seemed particularly vulnerable. It needed heavy protection against the intrusions of forces outside itself.' See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 3.

that the new family home is haunted and, perhaps most suggestively, the works' titles themselves, which refer to Jackson's children as 'demons' and her domestic life as one lived among 'savages'. While this language is seemingly deployed for comedic effect, the introduction of gothic elements, as Andrew Smith observes, 'suggests an alienation from the domesticity that the book [*Life Among the Savages*] ostensibly celebrates'.[29]

In much of Jackson's longer fiction, and her last three novels in particular, this alienation from the domestic ideology of mid-century American culture would be more covertly displayed in plots dealing with the breakdown of families and the shattering of conventional domesticity. In *The Sundial*, *Hill House*, and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962), the home remains a barrier between the family and the outside world, but the bonds that connect family in *Life Among the Savages* and *Raising Demons* are dissolved. In these final novels, violence is often located within the family: a murder occurs in the Halloran family of *The Sundial*; death haunts both the family home of Hill House and the home that Eleanor is fleeing from; and Merricat Blackwood of *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* murders her entire family except her sister and her uncle. Curiously, each of these works preserves the status of the family home as a protected domain, even as those outside the houses come to fear or spread rumours about those inside, and even as the families within them disintegrate. In words that could be equally applied to Hill House and Eleanor, Dara Downey and Darryl Jones note of the Blackwood estate and its sisters that '[t]he more the house is a source of fear and superstition for the villagers, the more it is one of privacy and safety for the sisters: its *heimlichkeit* is made possible by means of its becoming *unheimlich* for everybody else'.[30] Thus, despite the differing portrayals of family bonds in Jackson's autobiographical work and her late fiction, all of her work is connected by the idea of the home as sanctuary. Egan notes that, in *Life Among the Savages* and *Raising Demons*,

> Her personal setbacks and discouragements, the days her children went to school with unkempt hair, unbrushed teeth, or in other states of disrepair do not surface, nor does her ongoing discontent with her husband's extramarital love life. Her subtle omissions, to sustain the illusion of domestic tranquillity, may point to the idea that a sanctuary or safe place was very critical to her personality and writing.[31]

The absent content of these 'subtle omissions', it seems, surfaced in her fictional writing instead, doubled as broken families in *The Sundial*, *Hill House*, and *We Have Always Lived in*

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[29] Smith, p. 157.

[30] Dara Downey and Darryl Jones, 'King of the Castle: Shirley Jackson and Stephen King', in Murphy, pp. 214-36 (p. 233).

[31] Egan, 'Sanctuary', p. 17.

the Castle. Indeed, Trisha Lootens notes that throughout drafts for *Hill House*, Jackson worked increasingly toward the vision of the family — and particularly the notion of 'togetherness' — as the theme that would 'haunt' the novel, even mentioning in a note to her publisher that she wanted to work into the novel 'the emphasis upon (yippee) togetherness'.[32] That the embellished images of domestic harmony portrayed in her autobiographical work did not match her daily experiences and discontents perhaps offers insight into the bleak theme she returned to throughout her fictional work: 'an insistence on the uncontrolled, unobserved wickedness of human behavior', often within the family.[33]

Her last three completed novels increasingly reach toward fantasies of being not only away from outsiders, but also of being family-less: away from everyone, yet safe.[34] In *The Sundial*, for instance, Mrs Halloran daydreams about 'a place all my own, a house where I can live alone and put everything I love' and in which 'there will be only one of everything — one cup, one plate, one spoon, one knife' and where 'no one can ever find me'.[35] Like Eleanor's fantasies in *Hill House*, this scene in *The Sundial* overlays the gothic mode upon a familiar fairy-tale image: perceiving the house to be made of candy, children soon attempt to eat the house, threatening Mrs Halloran's imagined sanctuary. In her daydream, the house is under siege — she is accused of being a witch while her home is destroyed by outsiders. Similarly, Fanny Halloran, also from *The Sundial*, keeps a full-scale reproduction of her childhood apartment in the attic of the Halloran estate, which she introduces to the young Fancy Halloran as her 'doll house'.[36] The reproduced apartment is so self-contained that '[i]f Aunt Fanny had cared to, she might have dropped from sight altogether into this apartment in the big house, might have left the others behind and gone into the apartment and closed the door, and stayed'.[37] In *Castle*, Merricat Blackwood's desire for the family estate to remain inviolable to outsiders prompts her to perform daily rituals designed to keep out intruders. These protagonists' dreams of a home of their own meet with different levels of success; only the Blackwood sisters and, I argue, Eleanor are able to fulfil their desires for domestic solitude by the end of their respective narratives.

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[32] Lootens, p. 155. Lootens also mentions that 'two words are scrawled on the bottom of a page of notes for Hill House: "FAMILY, FAMILY"' (p. 156).
[33] Oppenheimer, p. 125.
[34] Angela Hague notes, '[h]er indictment of the 1950s nuclear family and suburban lifestyles is an important interpretative rendering of the era, and her work insistently destabilizes the 1950s paradigm of containment and security in a variety of ways' (p. 89). Indeed, Jackson's work tends increasingly toward misanthropy, whether within the family or outside of it, until security comes only from oneself, as in *Hill House* and *Castle*.
[35] Shirley Jackson, *The Sundial* (New York: Popular Library, 1958), p. 119.
[36] Jackson, *The Sundial*, p. 188.
[37] Jackson, *The Sundial*, p. 187.

The home's consistent designation as a safe space in Jackson's writing perhaps reflects her experiences with agoraphobia in her later life. Jackson's biographer Judy Oppenheimer notes that, immediately following her completion of *Hill House* and upon her commencement of *Castle*, '[Jackson] was unable to leave the house; she was unable, for much of the time, even to leave her bedroom'.[38] As she wrote in a letter to a friend after completing *Castle*, 'I have written myself into the house'.[39] Jackson's agoraphobia suggests a dialogue between her life and the home-centric novels she created in her last years, which are often populated by characters who feel unable — or unwilling — to leave their homes. Indeed, for Eleanor Vance, who does not trust anyone, who has never had a home of her own, and for whom all homes that she has so far inhabited have been broken, what could be better than a home all to herself — a home she never has to leave? Mirroring Jackson's own familial dissatisfactions, Eleanor's attempts to establish intimacy and familial bonds have been thwarted at every turn.[40] Taken together with Eleanor's longing for a home, a safe space, and isolation, Jackson's novel offers a discourse in which the family is rotten, but the home is safe, and in which enclosure, seclusion, and isolation surface as strategies for happiness and safety. *Hill House* should thus be read within the context of Jackson's other work as a novel that tests out the fantasy of isolation that *Castle* eventually completes.[41] Indeed, Eleanor's own enchanted, secluded kingdom, eventually found in the form of Hill House, mirrors the Blackwood sisters' heavily guarded manor in the later novel. For both Eleanor and the Blackwood sisters, these homes fulfil desires for seclusion, security, and a space of one's own, offering charmed, fairy-tale kingdoms and spaces of self-determination in the guise of macabre gothic homes. In what follows, I consider Eleanor's journey to and experiences at Hill House and how Jackson's depiction of Eleanor's growing relationship

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[38] Oppenheimer, p. 247.

[39] Oppenheimer, p. 237.

[40] While I do not wish to fall into the trap of confusing Jackson herself with the characters she created, it is true that much of her work drew from her own life experiences. As Diane Long Hoeveler remarks, 'Shirley Jackson wrote a highly coded autobiography of sorts in much of her short fiction, and her later works are particularly rife with unresolved familial traumas and personal disappointments. […] She wrote out of a deep personal pain, but she presented that pain as universal, as the lot of all who are born into a world where they are unwanted, imperfect, and condemned to rail at those facts.' See Diane Long Hoeveler, 'Life Lessons in Shirley Jackson's Late Fiction: Ethics, Cosmology, Eschatology', in Murphy, pp. 267-80 (p. 280).

[41] In her insightful analysis of the feminist threat to patriarchal authority posed by the Blackwood sisters, Lynette Carpenter notes, 'Jackson's last completed novel and a bestseller, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* is her most radical statement on the causes and consequences of female victimization and alienation, a theme that runs throughout her work. The novel may represent a personal culmination for Jackson, who suffered a nervous breakdown shortly after its publication in 1962; her journal from that period records longings for "freedom and security", "self-control", and "refuge" that echo the novel's central concern with the self-determination of women in a safe environment.' See Lynette Carpenter, 'The Establishment and Preservation of Female Power in Shirley Jackson's *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*', in Murphy, pp. 199-213 (p. 200).

with the house is often characterised by a mixture of gothic and fairy-tale tropes and registers. Indeed, what is unnerving and disquieting about Hill House to the Hillsdale villagers and to Hill House's other tenants proves a source of enchantment and comfort to Eleanor: its guarded isolation, its separation from the outside world, and its constant nonhuman presence, all of which is precisely what Eleanor's fairy-tale reveries suggest she longs for.

The Break from Family: A Fairy-Tale Journey

Eleanor's introduction in *Hill House* is bleak. Like many of Jackson's protagonists, she is 'a social misfit, a young woman not beautiful enough, charming enough, or articulate enough to get along with other people — […] a woman with no recognized place in society'.[42] Unlike her older sister, who married, started her own family, and escaped the burden of caring for her mother, Eleanor's adult life has been spent enduring her mother's cruelty and performing endless domestic tasks. Jackson writes,

> The only person in the world she genuinely hated, now that her mother was dead, was her sister. She disliked her brother-in-law and her five-year-old niece, and she had no friends. […] She could not remember ever being truly happy in her adult life.[43]

The break she finally makes from her family — even if she has to 'steal' the car to do it — is entirely understandable, and it makes her transition into the language of fairy tale especially poignant. For the first time in her life, 'the car belonged entirely to her, a little contained world all her own', and she has made her first 'intimate', nonhuman, inanimate friend: the road.[44] Passing various homes along her journey to Hill House, Eleanor works through several fairy-tale scenarios, each of which involves the attainment of her own space. These scenarios are increasingly populated by nonhuman objects that, for Eleanor, carry extreme significance: oleander trees, stone lions, pillars, and white curtains all function to keep out the outside world. In fact, if Eleanor despises the thought of taking care of her mother, she fantasises over the prospect of cleaning the stone lions:

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[42] Carpenter, p. 210. Murphy also notes that *Hill House* 'has all the familiar trappings of the traditional haunted-house tale — unexplained noises in the middle of the night, a disorientating layout, strange occurrences — but the real horror lies perhaps in the fact that a lonely, unmarried woman like Eleanor is so out of place in a society that can only project one particular path for a young woman — that of wife and mother — that she becomes the perfect victim.' See Murphy, 'Introduction: *"Do You Know Who I Am?"*: Reconsidering Shirley Jackson', in Murphy, pp. 1-21 (p. 11).

[43] Jackson, p. 3.

[44] Jackson, pp. 10, 12.

> Every morning I swept the porch and dusted the lions, and every evening I patted their heads good night, and once a week I washed their faces and manes and paws with warm water and soda and cleaned between their teeth with a swab.[45]

This is also a fantasy of being taken care of, for she imagines that 'a little dainty old lady took care of me, moving starchily with a silver tea service on a tray and bringing me a glass of elderberry wine each evening for my health's sake'.[46] It is, finally, a fantasy of death; Eleanor's fantasy fades with a sentence only half formed, an image she perhaps cannot see beyond, which also closes the paragraph: 'When I died ...'.[47] Death — Eleanor's final experience at the novel's close — even finds a place in Eleanor's early fantasies of peaceful domestic bliss, an event romanticised and longed for, rather than feared.[48]

As these fantasies progress, they tend increasingly toward isolation. In her first scenario, she imagines that she 'took [her] dinner alone'.[49] In the second scenario, the world outside becomes more sinister:

> Will I get out of my car and go between the ruined gates and then, once I am in the magic oleander square, find that I have wandered into a fairyland, protected poisonously from the eyes of people passing? Once I have stepped between the magic gateposts, will I find myself through the protective barrier, the spell broken?[50]

If this particular fantasy begins with an intricate familial history, in which Eleanor imagines herself as a fairy-tale princess and rightful heir to an enchanted kingdom, then her fantasies change as she stops for lunch, where she abandons the thought of family and sits 'in joyful loneliness'.[51] It is after this feeling of joyful loneliness that she rejects family all together, retaining, in the final fairy-tale scenario, only the intimate, nonhuman markers of her own, protected space. Jackson writes,

> She came to a tiny cottage buried in a garden. I could live there all alone [...]. No one would ever find me there, either, behind all those roses, and just to make sure I would plant oleanders by the road. [...] I will raise white cats and sew white curtains for the windows and sometimes come out of my door to go to the store to buy cinnamon and tea and thread.[52]

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[45] Jackson, p. 12.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] An earlier draft of *Hill House* indicated the protagonist's desire for death more explicitly. Lootens notes that this earlier version included a protagonist who 'had a secret desire for death "for no very clear reason, since she was seventeen years old"' (p. 156).

[49] Jackson, p. 12.

[50] Jackson, p. 13, emphasis added.

[51] Jackson, p. 15.

[52] Ibid., emphasis added.

This blending of paranoia about other people and an increasingly pronounced desire for isolation and a space of her own — often indexed through inanimate, nonhuman items — are characteristics that come to define Eleanor. Her paranoia introduces gothic imagery into the domestic fairy tales that she weaves for herself, such as the 'poisonous' oleander trees that will protect her domestic space. It is through this mixture of literary genres and modes and the elaborate assortment of nonhuman items above that Eleanor fashions her ideal fantasy self: a nurturing and secluded woman nurtured by her isolation. As Darryl Hattenhauer has observed, Jackson's novels are meta-fictional, often pointing toward the act of writing itself, and in particular the impact of writing and reading on subject formation. He notes that the setting of *Hill House* is 'suffused with precise genres […] and specific texts', in particular the genres of fairy tales and gothic, didactic texts, moral primers, and novels such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1831) and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740). These allusions, he argues, are used by Jackson as 'a means for leading to larger discursive practices', such as subject formation. He writes,

> This strategy suggests that Jackson came to regard the role of discourse in subject formation and interpellation as not just a general process but rather a very precise one, in which not merely language in general but genres and even just a few specific texts directly determine much of the subject.[53]

Eleanor's journey to Hill House, during which she indulges in reveries of ideal fantasy homes, selves, and lives, suggests that for Eleanor, fairy tales have had a particular impact in her subject formation. In these fantasy selves and lives, isolation, seclusion, and paranoia directed toward the outside world are vital components, and they are vital to understanding the relationship that Eleanor develops with Hill House, which presents a gothic double to the enchanted kingdoms of her fantasies. As the next section demonstrates, this oscillation between gothic and fairy tale define the relationship between Eleanor and Hill House; drawing upon Eleanor's buried fantasy life, Hill House attempts to manifest this fairy-tale fantasy for her.

A First Taste of Happiness

When Eleanor arrives in Hillsdale, where Hill House is located, 'a tangled, disorderly mess of dirty houses and crooked streets' greets her, forming a jarring contrast to the rich green

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[53] Hattenhauer, p. 165.

paradises she has indulged in on her journey.[54] Like the villagers that Jackson depicts throughout her fiction, such as the villagers of 'The Summer People' (1949) and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, the people of Hillsdale are hostile to outsiders.[55] Jackson writes,

> A woman stood in a doorway across the street and looked at Eleanor, and two young boys lounged against a fence, elaborately silent. Eleanor, who was afraid of strange dogs and jeering women and young hoodlums, went quickly into the diner, clutching her pocketbook and her car keys. […] There was some elaborate joke going on between the man eating and the girl behind the counter.[56]

Eleanor's paranoia may be the result of what Hattenhauer terms Eleanor's 'grandiose assumption that romance is waiting for her behind every tree, and from her assumption that others persecute her'.[57] However, Hillsdale *is* unwelcoming toward outsiders: Dr Montague's letter had warned her that the people of Hillsdale are 'rude to strangers and openly hostile to anyone inquiring about Hill House',[58] replicating a pattern in much of Jackson's fiction of dangerous, small-minded locals who are hostile to outsiders, and undermining the assertion that Eleanor's observations are the products of her grandiose assumptions. Her fantasies may colour her interpretations of her experiences, but Jackson also suggests that Eleanor's fantasies have some basis in reality: there is, after all, reason to fear the villagers and their unhelpful, defensive responses to any questions raised about the house, just as Eleanor has had reason to distrust others throughout her adult life.

That Hill House is set six miles away from the village potentially implies that Hill House is a sanctuary from it, a protected fortress that will keep those inside safe from the judgmental eyes and hostile questions of the small-minded villagers. Though Eleanor herself does not yet realise it, her approach up the driveway of Hill House marks her progress through the 'protected barriers' that separate the enchanted kingdom from the outside world, just as she imagined in her earlier fantasies. The 'thick, oppressive trees' are the doubles of

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[54] Jackson, p. 16.

[55] Murphy notes that Jackson's consistent portrayal of insular, hostile communities might be the result of her own experiences as a newcomer to New England. Having grown up in California, moved to Syracuse, New York, as a teenager, and then lived for some time in New York City, Jackson felt herself an outsider to the small-town Vermont community to which she and her family moved for her husband's work. Murphy writes, 'Jackson would always be an outsider in New England. As is common in small, insular communities the world over, newcomers can remain categorized as such even many decades after their arrival. […] Whatever Jackson's own personal experiences of New England […], there can be no denying the fact that her fiction time and time again depicts clashes between unwitting newcomers or outsiders and insular, laconic locals as her protagonists repeatedly and generally naively violate longstanding codes of behavior and etiquette.' See Murphy, '"The People of the Village Have Always Hated Us"', p. 106.

[56] Jackson, p. 16-17.

[57] Hattenhauer, p. 157.

[58] Jackson, p. 10.

her oleanders; the gate, 'tall and ominous and heavy [and] set strongly into a stone wall which went off through the trees' is reminiscent of her pillars; and the 'dark and unwelcoming' Mr Dudley, the caretaker of Hill House, functions in just the same way as the stone lions, posted at the entrance to keep out interlopers.[59] Even her curtains have found a place in Hill House, where they appear in the windows 'holding darkness within', as has her dainty old woman, in the form of Mrs Dudley, who will 'set dinner on the dining-room sideboard at six sharp'.[60] Each of the elements of her earlier fantasies has been replicated, albeit in gothic fashion, until Eleanor finally is, just as she had earlier imagined, in her own enchanted and secluded kingdom. Jackson writes, '[t]here was no evidence that Hill House belonged in any way to the rest of the world. […] Behind the house the hills were piled in great pressing masses, flooded with summer green now, rich, and still.'[61] As Judie Newman observes, '[t]he emphasis here on locked gates, guards against entry, a tortuous access road, and the general difficulty of locating the house reinforces the impression of its desirability as *heimlich*, secret, a home kept away from the eyes of others', as fairy-tale and gothic homes often are.[62] What is more, Hill House's abstraction from the rest of the world impresses Eleanor favourably. Upon seeing it, she notes, '[i]f it were on top of the hill everyone could see it. I vote for keeping it well hidden where it is.'[63] Despite the house's dark and unwelcoming atmosphere, Eleanor is drawn to its hiddenness, its separation from the outside world that, in all of her fantasies, she longed so desperately to keep out.

However, Eleanor is at first unable to make the conscious connection between her imagined fairy-tale homes and their gothic reflection in Hill House, which she finds 'vile' and 'diseased' upon first sight.[64] Though Hill House replicates her fairy-tale creations right down to their protective barriers, Eleanor cannot initially discern the fairy tale when presented in a more ambiguous, gothic form. Even the third-person narrator is impacted by Eleanor's initial prejudice.[65] We are told that

> No human eye can isolate the unhappy coincidence of line and place which suggests evil in the face of a house, and yet somehow a maniac juxtaposition, a badly turned angle, some chance meeting of roof and sky, turned Hill House into a place of despair, more frightening because the face of Hill House seemed awake, with a watchfulness from the blank windows and a touch of glee in the eyebrow of a

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[59] Jackson, pp. 19-20.
[60] Jackson, pp. 1, 27.
[61] Jackson, p. 35.
[62] Newman, p. 173.
[63] Jackson, p. 36.
[64] Jackson, p. 23.
[65] Hattenhauer, p. 164.

cornice. […] A house arrogant and hating, never off guard, can only be evil. The house, which seemed somehow to have formed itself […] reared its great head back without concession to humanity.[66]

The narrator is careful here to emphasise that it is to the *human* eye that the house appears as such, and Hill House, being 'without concession to humanity', cannot be assessed according to human parameters. It is a direct confrontation with the nonhuman, and Eleanor is careful to leave her 'human automobile' parked out front to mitigate this shock.[67]

However, before long, her physical contact with the house generates love. Jackson writes, '[j]ourneys end in lovers meeting, she thought, remembering her song at last, and laughed, standing on the steps of Hill House, journeys end in lovers meeting, and she put her feet down firmly and went up to the veranda and the door'.[68] The immediate juxtaposition of evil and love here is one that repeats throughout the text, most particularly within the familial history of the house. If the house carries a suggestion of evil to the human eye, we must remember that it was, first and foremost, built as a gesture of love from Hugh Crain to his family, who 'hoped to see his children and grandchildren live in comfortable luxury'.[69] The characteristic that Eleanor is at first tempted to label 'evil' and ascribe to the *nature* of the house could therefore be read as a nonhuman refraction of Hugh Crain's own warped sense of love for his daughters, over whom he assumed the role of patriarch and whom he raised under a strict moral code.[70] Hill House, then, was meant for children, and perhaps only for them, as Hugh Crain was 'unlucky in his wives': the first died in a carriage accident in the house's driveway, the second of a mysterious fall, and the third of illness.[71] The house, it seems, jealously guarded its role as primary caretaker of the two young daughters, raising them according to the tenets set down by Hugh Crain in a book of moral instruction he prepared for his eldest daughter Sophia. The book, compiled of illustrations culled from other works and moral lessons derived from Biblical scripture, commands Sophia to 'hold apart from this world, that its lusts and ingratitudes corrupt thee not'.[72] In return, Sophia appears to have jealously guarded the house's love. While her younger sister married, she herself fought bitterly for the deed to the house and, while 'it is said that [she] was crossed in love […], that

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[66] Jackson, p. 24.
[67] Jackson, p. 25.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Jackson, p. 54.
[70] Jackson, p. 25.
[71] Jackson, p. 55.
[72] Jackson, p. 124.

is said of almost any lady who prefers, for whatever reason, to live alone'.[73] The unhappy relationship between Eleanor and her own sister echoes that of the Crain sisters; like the elder sister, who felt cheated out of Hill House, Eleanor feels cheated by her own sister, who has assumed control of the car they purchased together. Eleanor and Sophia are alike in another way as well: both share the desire to live alone. On the one hand, this lifestyle is precisely what Eleanor wants for herself; on the other, it also reflects her own moral upbringing, which, Lootens argues, is identical to that preached by Crain. As Lootens notes,

> Eleanor has been raised in the ideological world of Hugh Crain's precepts; she may surreptitiously buy red clothing, but to glory in her own sexuality, to be a 'woman of some color', she would have to be a 'different person' indeed.[74]

Like Sophia Crain, Eleanor has also been kept apart from her neighbours, because her mother 'wouldn't mix with them'.[75] She grew up isolated and alone into an unmarried woman of thirty-two, yet to have her first sexual experience, and still a child in many ways. Like the earlier Crain daughters and Hill House itself, then, Eleanor has been sequestered from the modern world. Raised within the same ideological moral code as Sophia Crain, who 'genuinely loved Hill House and looked upon it as her family home', Eleanor will love and respect the house as no one since Sophia Crain herself had.[76] For Hill House, 'nothing in it [had been] touched, nothing used, nothing here wanted by anyone any more'; the same could be said for Eleanor.[77] They find a source of love in each other: Eleanor has longed for her own home, and the home has longed for someone like Eleanor to fill it. Indeed, 'ever since her first memory, Eleanor had been waiting for something like Hill House'.[78]

And Eleanor *is* happy at Hill House, despite her initial misgivings. Retiring on the first night, she muses,

> Odd […] that the house should be so dreadful and yet in many respects so physically comfortable — the soft bed, the pleasant lawn, the good fire, the cooking of Mrs Dudley. The company too, she thought, and then thought, Now I can think about them; I am all alone.[79]

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[73] Jackson, p. 56.
[74] Lootens, p. 164.
[75] Jackson, p. 53.
[76] Jackson, p. 56.
[77] Jackson, p. 59.
[78] Jackson, p. 4.
[79] Jackson, p. 66, emphasis added.

Eleanor at first misidentifies the source of her happiness, as she still does not recognise that this is her own fairy tale; she wonders whether it is the company of the others that makes her happy, swinging alternately between paranoia ('were they laughing at me?') and a reserved sense of feeling 'grateful to all of them for having me', that 'they were a family, greeting one another with easy formality'.[80] However, Hill House hovers on the edges of her consciousness as she wonders why 'it was so odd to wake up happy in Hill House', noting that she had 'arisen so aware, so conscious of herself, so deliberate and tender in her attentions'.[81] It is the first time in Eleanor's life that she has ever been loved by anyone. Though unable to name the source of this love explicitly, she is aware of feeling engulfed within it, for the first time in her life.

A Final Taste of Happiness

That what lies at the 'heart of the house' is the nursery, with its 'indefinable air of neglect', is not a coincidence.[82] Childhood, for Eleanor, was the last time that she was allowed to nurture a sense of self, an identity later circumscribed, as an adult, within the mundane conditions of domestic reality. The house's construction, then, in many ways mirrors the compartmentalisation of Eleanor's own identity. As Dr Montague notes on the first day of the group's arrival, '[s]ome of these rooms are entirely inside rooms […]. No windows, no access to the outdoors at all.'[83] Like the nursery, long-abandoned and neglected, the freedom to self-invent that Eleanor enjoyed in childhood has been similarly partitioned off and separated from her daily activities, resulting in an inner self that is at first inaccessible to Eleanor. Hill House and Eleanor thus mirror each other: each is comprised of bits and pieces that have been subsumed by other elements. As Hattenhauer notes,

> The house […] is both a mirror reflecting Eleanor and a window in which she sees herself in the depths of the house. […] [T]he first-floor rooms comprise a series of concentric circles; the inner rooms have no windows. As a result, she cannot see the inner self from the outside; she must go there. And getting there is problematic because the passageways do not go to places where they appear to be going.[84]

Indeed, doors in Hill House open onto unexpected rooms; a simple journey from bedroom to dining room presents a labyrinthine series of obstacles for Eleanor and Theodora upon their

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[80] Jackson, pp. 68, 71.
[81] Jackson, p. 69.
[82] Jackson, p. 87.
[83] Jackson, p. 46.
[84] Hattenhauer, p. 160.

first morning in Hill House. As Jackson indicated in her notes for the novel, the structural confusion of Hill House is meant to reflect Eleanor's own psyche; on a page of notes, Jackson wrote, 'Eleanor IS house/' and then, further on, added 'ALL DISTORTED LIKE HOUSE' in reference to each of the novel's main characters.[85] Eleanor, then, like the house she is loved by, may be thought of as a series of distorted passageways, a selfhood divided and compartmentalised in which various pieces do not always interconnect. At her heart is a buried, secret, childhood self, secluded and happily alone within her own inaccessible home. If she is to find this inner self, as Hattenhauer suggests, she must go *to* this space.

It is from this perspective that we should consider the particular form taken by the novel's first haunting incident: the psychic manifestation of a child. During the incident, Eleanor and Theodora, huddled together in Theodora's bedroom, hear a banging on the door that, to Eleanor, 'sounds like something children do'.[86] Desperately searching through Eleanor's psyche, the house materialises a snapshot of Eleanor's own, deeply buried self-image at the last time she was genuinely happy: her childhood, 'when it had seemed to be summer all the time'.[87] The 'little pattings' and 'small seeking sounds' that Eleanor hears beyond Theodora's bedroom door are the sounds of the house attempting to touch this part of Eleanor, the child self abandoned by Eleanor's forceful transition into adulthood.[88] That the house manifests the 'sticky sounds' and 'thin little giggle' of a child again links Eleanor to the earlier occupants of the home, the two Crain girls for whom Hill House was a space of domestic comfort.[89] Awakening the next day, Eleanor thinks to herself, '[i]t is my second morning in Hill House, and I am unbelievably happy. […] You are happy, Eleanor, you have finally been given a part of your own measure of happiness', indicating that the house has, indeed, touched this long-buried part of Eleanor and begun its attempts to actualise the happiness she imagines in her fairy-tale longings.[90] 'Journeys end in lovers meeting', she insists to herself; she has only to name the lover, 'lovely Hill House', as she wishes 'to sing and to shout and to fling her arms and move in great emphatic, possessing circles around the rooms of Hill House'.[91] Indeed, Eleanor and Hill House have claimed one another; 'HELP ELEANOR COME HOME', a message written on the hallway walls the next morning, serves as both a plea to Eleanor and a territorial boundary between Eleanor and Hill House on one

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[85] Lootens, p. 159.
[86] Jackson, p. 94.
[87] Jackson, p. 9.
[88] Jackson, p. 96.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Jackson, p. 100.
[91] Jackson, pp. 100, 106, 104.

side and Theodora, Luke, and Dr Montague on the other.[92] As Eleanor and Theodora accuse each other of writing the message, Eleanor feels increasingly isolated and manipulated by the others, until the incident finally prompts her disengagement from the group. Stressing Eleanor's status as an outsider and her separation from the others, Jackson writes, 'I am outside, she thought madly, I am the one chosen'.[93] Eleanor's 'mad' embrace of her outsider status even becomes a point of self-determination: her inner monologue insists that '[i]f Eleanor is going to be the outsider, she is going to be it all alone'.[94]

Throughout the remainder of the novel, Eleanor increasingly distances herself from the other humans who have gathered at Hill House. In the interpretation that I am suggesting here, this should not be read as a negative movement, however; Eleanor has been alone since the novel's beginning, and it has taken the nonhuman to comfort her where all human efforts have failed. As a telepath, Theodora should have been able to understand Eleanor's desires and needs better than anyone, but she uses her abilities only to tease Eleanor, and then increasingly to mock her. Between Theodora's teasing and Eleanor's own condemnations of Theodora's self-centred tendencies and bold clothing, the relationship, which began in friendship, has become increasingly hostile. When the message 'HELP ELEANOR COME HOME ELEANOR' appears again, this time written in Theodora's room in what appears to be blood, the breach between them is near final; Theodora angrily blames Eleanor, who, though she denies writing the message, 'found that she was smiling'.[95] As Lootens argues, '[t]he menstrual imagery seems unmistakable here: Hill House echoes and amplifies Eleanor's hatred of "dirty" female bodies, including her own. Theodora's bright clothes are trampled and soaked in blood. Even more significantly, she herself is bloodied — literally rendered a scarlet woman', as though Hill House has passed judgment on Theodora's bright clothing.[96] Though Eleanor emphatically denies having anything to do with the message, her 'wild, secret hilarity reveals the extent to which Hill House has indeed fulfilled her hidden desires'.[97] It is this breach that truly clears room for the house to prove to Eleanor that it is her only friend. The first night that Theodora and Eleanor spend in Eleanor's room, Eleanor, dreaming, hears a sound coming from what had been Theodora's room, 'a voice she had never heard before and yet knew she had heard always in her nightmares'.[98] The voice, as I

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[92] Jackson, p. 107.
[93] Jackson, p. 108.
[94] Jackson, p. 109.
[95] Jackson, p. 114.
[96] Lootens, p. 164.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Jackson, p. 120.

have been arguing, is her own buried self: 'Please let me go home', it begs.[99] When Eleanor wakes and desperately questions whose hand she has been holding in her dream, the answer seems evident: she has been holding the hand of the house, who is begging her to come home by speaking to the very part of her that wants to.

That this message is, somehow, reaching her is made very clear the following day: 'I am learning the pathways of the heart, Eleanor thought quite seriously, and then wondered what she could have meant by thinking any such thing.'[100] It is understandable that Eleanor is confused by this; this is, after all, the first time she has ever been loved. But she is clear that other people are not the source of this love. She thinks to herself, '[w]hy do people want to talk to each other? […] Does [Luke] think that a *human* gesture of affection might seduce me into hurling myself madly at him?'[101] A human gesture, for Eleanor, will surely not do the trick. But a *nonhuman* one, replicating the pattern of her previous affections for items like stone lions and white curtains, would invite her into a space of comfortable love, a space where she can 'be alone to think […with] nothing in her mind beyond an overwhelming wild happiness'.[102]

That none of the humans gathered in Hill House are capable of the love and care that Hill House invests in Eleanor is a point that Jackson underscores throughout the text — and, indeed, throughout her fiction. In Jackson's oeuvre, very few humans are capable of love, but all are capable of evil. As Carol Cleveland notes, '[i]n Jackson's world, the guilty are not greedy or crazy individuals, but society itself acting collectively and purposely, like a slightly preoccupied lynch mob'.[103] The 'society' that gathers at Hill House, represented by Eleanor's fellow ghost-hunters, quickly turns against Eleanor once her 'weakness' and proclivity toward fantasy is revealed, deciding to expel her from the house and from the group.[104] Cleveland continues, '[h]er fellow ghost-hunters are very ordinary people, ill equipped to understand the despairing love affair that develops between Eleanor and the perverse house. What they can understand is her need for human relationship and they reject it.'[105] Of the several acquaintances she makes at the house, Theodora comes closest to caring for her;

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[99] Ibid.
[100] Jackson, p. 121.
[101] Jackson, pp. 120-21, emphasis added.
[102] Jackson, p. 132.
[103] Cleveland, p. 200. Cleveland also notes that '[i]n Jackson's world, a healthy and complex moral growth is possible for individuals, but almost never for large groups of people', implying that Jackson held particularly negative feelings toward society as a whole (p. 210).
[104] Cleveland argues, '[t]he fundamental assumption of Jackson's serious work is that any social group will, for its own convenience or pleasure, sacrifice a victim' (p. 215).
[105] Cleveland, p. 203.

however, she is also the character who threatens Eleanor's fragile self-esteem the most. As Cleveland states, 'Theodora is a clever, witty, utterly selfish young woman who can give a surface affection if it costs her nothing, but who closes like a trap if asked for anything more'.[106] Luke, when he finally does give Eleanor attention, talks of nothing but himself; indeed, his comments to Eleanor become increasingly jocular as he takes her less and less seriously. Dr Montague, despite his incessant reading of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, is unable to recognise that Eleanor is the same sort of long-abused, unloved, and morally exacting woman as the heroines he reads about.[107] Far from providing Eleanor a protecting hand from the evils of the outside world, he loves Eleanor only as an experiment. In a subtle build-up throughout the novel, Jackson reveals Dr Montague to be 'little more than an intellectual voyeur, knowing very much, but really understanding very little, especially when it comes to the mysteries of the human personality and the human heart'.[108]

Even Mrs Montague, who, despite her status as comic relief, is actually not that far off when she mentions that the house's spirits 'want to know that we are thinking of them lovingly', is incapable of feeling any love for her fellow humans.[109] She is cold and unfriendly to her husband and quickly disregards Eleanor, Theodora, and Luke, having only as much interest in them as their immediate connections to the manifestations allow. When her planchette brings a message from Eleanor's own psychic vibrations, amplified by the house, she only takes an interest in Eleanor long enough to deliver her message: a communication — seemingly from Eleanor's own childhood self — that desperately insists that she 'want[s] to be home', that she is 'waiting', that she wants her 'mother', and is 'lost. Lost. Lost.'[110] This should not be read as evidence of Eleanor's desires to rejoin her mother; Eleanor's immediate thoughts upon receiving this message are not that she wants her mother, but that 'what I want in all this world is peace, a quiet spot to lie and think, a quiet spot up among the flowers where I can dream and tell myself sweet stories'.[111] The mention of 'sweet stories' recalls Eleanor's earlier fantasies of domesticity and fairy-tale kingdoms, indicating that her true desires lie elsewhere — in solitude, quiet, and dreams. However, Eleanor soon makes the crucial realisation that she does not need to tell herself stories, for her fairy tale is

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[106] Ibid.
[107] Samuel Richardson's *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* describes the tale of a virtuous 15-year-old servant girl who is sexually harassed by her employer. *Clarissa* (1748) chronicles the abuse, kidnapping, and eventual death of a morally irreproachable young woman.
[108] Parks, p. 246.
[109] Jackson, p. 135.
[110] Jackson, p. 142.
[111] Jackson, p. 143.

already unfolding: '[n]o stone lions for me, she thought, no oleanders; I have broken the spell of Hill House and somehow come inside. I am home, she thought, and stopped in wonder at the thought. I am home, I am home.'[112] Indeed, Eleanor *is* home; mirroring her earlier fantasy of inheriting an enchanted kingdom, Eleanor has finally found her rightful domain. What neither she nor Hill House can bear is the thought that she might now have to abandon it.

A Domestic-Gothic Fairy Tale

As in many of Jackson's other works, the group at Hill House proves to be small-minded, ostracising, and capable of great social evil. Disturbed by Eleanor's erratic behaviour on her final night in Hill House, Dr Montague orders her departure, 'to protect [the] so-called experiment'.[113] Eleanor protests their dismissal, stating,

> I haven't any home, no place at all […]. Everything in all the world that belongs to me is in a carton in the back of my car. That's all I have, some books and things I had when I was a little girl, and a watch my mother gave me. So you see there's no place you can send me.[114]

Despite Eleanor's protests, they insist that she go back to her sister, who, when she is told by Dr Montague where Eleanor has been, 'asked first about the car'.[115] In the group's final moments with Eleanor, they underscore the selfishness that has characterised all those with whom she has interacted throughout her life. Able to embrace neither Eleanor nor the nonhuman house that loves her, they highlight their limited understanding of human fragility and the human need for love, ultimately performing a complete rejection of both. That the house is able to provide Eleanor with the love that other humans cannot is Jackson's final, ironic comment on humanity: 'no one else could satisfy [the house]' because no one else knows how to love.[116] Indeed, Eleanor's final experience — her collision with a tree in the yard and subsequent death — is Hill House's last gift to her: the exact fulfilment of her earlier unfinished fantasy of death and her desire for 'a quiet spot up among the flowers where I can dream and tell myself sweet stories'.[117] Eleanor, receiving this gift, transcends the human cruelty she has known throughout her life, entering instead into a constant, nonhuman love in her own isolated and secluded home where she can finally 'walk alone'.[118]

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[112] Jackson, p. 171.
[113] Parks, p. 25.
[114] Jackson, p. 177.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Jackson, p. 178.
[117] Jackson, pp. 12, 143.
[118] Jackson, p. 182.

In light of the cruel rejection of Eleanor performed by the others, which in many ways mirrors Eleanor's displacement from the broader heteronormative mid-century American society, the house's earnest protection of and attention toward unmarried women who wish to live alone, such as Sophia Crain and Eleanor, raises the question of why Hill House has been so maligned by critics, the other characters within the novel, and even the narrator, who observes that Hill House 'was a house without kindness, never meant to be lived in, not a fit place for people or for love or for hope'.[119] However, in a very real sense, the house is *not* the evil force it has been made out to be.[120] Far from being a reservoir of 'misery and agony waiting for suitably tenuous human beings to drink from [it]',[121] it is instead, as I have been arguing, a misunderstood nonhuman entity, with an undeveloped understanding of the human boundaries between self and other; an unclear understanding of the human love it refracts; and, existing as it does, 'not sane' and in 'conditions of absolute reality', an undeveloped understanding of the boundaries between human fantasy and reality, since *everything* within its bounds is absolute reality.[122] In this sense, it is very much like Eleanor, who similarly cannot tell the difference between the sense of self she has developed through fairy tale and her actual reality. Like Eleanor, Hill House wants a life of isolation and peace, enclosed securely within its gates, far from the prying eyes of people. That Hill House attempts to literalise Eleanor's fairy-tale desires of isolation throughout the novel is, I argue, a gesture of the house's own need for Eleanor — these are attempts to show her that she has found her home, a place where she can transform into 'absolute reality' the fantasies she has longed for throughout the text. By plumbing the depths of Eleanor's psyche, it materialises the conditions which seem to render her most happy: fantastic narratives of a home of her own; childish manifestations of her youth, when she was not subsumed by the needs of others; and an unending, impenetrable solitude in which to be alone and think.

The novel, then, is not solely a gothic tale. In keeping with Jackson's taste for subverting traditional reader expectations, *Hill House*, like her next novel *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, offers a macabre twist on the conventional happy ending. *Castle* ends

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[119] See Jackson, p. 24. The character of Mrs Dudley is, perhaps, one exception to this rule. While Theodora and, at first, Eleanor speak of the house critically, 'Eleanor sensed, with a quick turn of apprehension, that flippant or critical talk about the house bothered Mrs Dudley in some manner'. Despite the house's gruesome reputation, Dr Montague notes that '"the Dudleys have taken care of Hill House ever since anyone can remember"', and Mrs Dudley expresses a respect for the house and an attention to its care that causes Eleanor to declare, '"I think Mrs Dudley is proud of the house"'. Mrs Dudley's relationship to Hill House is, however, ambiguous at best; her pride in the house notwithstanding, she is careful to repeat, almost mechanically and in ominous fashion, '"I leave before dark comes"'. See Jackson, pp. 31, 47, 27.
[120] See in particular Cleveland, Downey and Jones, Hague, Miller, Newman, and Rubenstein.
[121] Cleveland, p. 203.
[122] Jackson, p. 1.

with the image of Merricat and Constance Blackwood living blissfully together in the charred ruins of the Blackwood estate, 'so happy' to have at last attained seclusion from the hostile villagers responsible for damaging their home and an inviolable isolation in which to practice their unconventional, self-sufficient, female-centric lifestyle.[123] In true fairy-tale style, Jackson ends *Hill House* with the fulfilment of another wish: Eleanor's longed-for 'quiet spot to lie and think', which recalls both the secluded silence of the grave and of 'Hill House itself', where 'silence lay steadily against the wood and stone'.[124] Crossing into the nonhuman realm, away from the eyes of the world, has been Eleanor's dream throughout the text. With its gloomy reputation to precede it and frighten off unwelcome visitors, its boundaries to cross, and its gates, chains, and protective barriers to pass through, Hill House is the ultimate protector for a 'sad maiden' like Eleanor who has been rejected by human society.[125] Its otherworldliness removes it from the reach of hurtful human hands. For those suffering in a cruel world, the thought of a house in which 'whatever walked there, walked alone' offers an enticing image of seclusion and, thus, of protection.[126] Far from being solely a gothic novel, then, *The Haunting of Hill House* is perhaps best thought of as a domestic-gothic fairy tale. As Jackson herself stated while writing the novel, '[m]ore than ever before I am wandering in a kind of fairytale world'.[127] However, this world — and its associated happy ending — eluded Jackson throughout her life. As Lynette Carpenter observes, the journal Jackson kept during her illness

> reiterates a longing for safety and security in the context of personal liberation, and it emphasizes Jackson's desire to be alone: 'I look forward every now and then to freedom and security (and I do mean security by myself)' […]. She describes 'the glorious world of the future' when she will be 'alone, safe' […], and her aspirations: 'to be separate, to be alone, to *stand* and *walk* alone'.[128]

Later, in a diary entry from 1964, Jackson wrote,

> this is not a refuge, these pages, but a way through, a path not charted; i feel my way, but there is a way through. not a refuge yet. on the other side somewhere there is a country, perhaps the glorious country of well-dom, perhaps a country of a story.[129]

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[123] Jackson, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (New York: Penguin, 2006), p. 146. For an excellent analysis of the anti-patriarchal themes of *Castle*, see Carpenter.

[124] Jackson, *Hill House*, pp. 143, 182.

[125] Jackson, p. 15.

[126] Jackson, p. 182.

[127] Oppenheimer, p. 226.

[128] Carpenter, p. 211. The desire expressed in Jackson's journal to '*walk* alone' mirrors the assertion that opens and closes *The Haunting of Hill House*: that 'whatever walked [in Hill House], walked alone' (p. 182).

[129] Quoted in Hattenhauer, p. 27, capitalisation as in original.

A letter sent days before her death in 1965 perhaps hinted at her intent to reach this other side, the 'country of a story'. Jackson, who never travelled anywhere, who could not even leave her home during the worst stages of her illness due to her agoraphobia, was about to go on a 'wonderful voyage […] alone'.[130] For Eleanor, and perhaps for Jackson herself, journeys end in lovers meeting; on the other side, there lies Hill House.

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[130] Oppenheimer, p. 271. This language also echoes the plot of Jackson's last novel, *Come Along With Me*, which was unfinished at her time of death in 1965. Carpenter notes that '[i]n it, a middle-aged woman buries her husband, picks a city at random, and sets off alone to make a new life for herself, with a new name of her own invention' (p. 212).

'Finding Infinity Round the Corner': Doublings, Dualities and Suburban Strangeness in Arthur Machen's *The London Adventure*

Sam Wiseman

A few pages in to Arthur Machen's 1924 text *The London Adventure or The Art of Wandering*, the narrator professes a 'very special reverence […] of signs and intimations given in odd ways in unexpected fashions, in places and surroundings which are generally accounted unreverend enough'.[1] In many ways, this serves as a manifesto for what follows: an extended meditation, with its own idiosyncratic 'signs and intimations', upon the creative process and the narrator's relationship with London — particularly some of the city's less glamorous and populous suburbs. As well as acting as a vehicle for such ideas, *The London Adventure* also effectively surveys a number of Machen's canonical late-Victorian gothic and decadent works, such as *The Great God Pan* (1894), in light of the intervening period, and the changes wrought by the passage of time. Although the text is sometimes presented as the third volume of Machen's autobiography, following *Far Off Things* (1922) and *Things Near and Far* (1923), the first-person narrator blurs the line between fiction and autobiography, creating a sense of ironic distance between text and reality.[2] *The London Adventure* emerges as an essay that is governed by a series of dualities: between the 'real' Machen and the narrator; between an imagined version of the text and the one we are actually reading; between the often lurid and sensationalist explorations of gothic themes found in his earlier works, and the more light-hearted, self-conscious discussion of similar themes here; and between the world of everyday appearances and a deeper reality that lies, as it were, beyond a veil. This final opposition can be seen as the dominant concern of Machen's fiction, and the guiding theme of a text like *The Great God Pan*, which asserts at the outset that the world as it ordinarily appears is '"but dreams and shadows; the shadows that hide the real world from our eyes"'.[3]

In positing this kind of dualistic ontological structure, Machen was in some ways reflecting the beliefs and speculations of his time; Spiritualism, for example, was flourishing

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[1] Arthur Machen, *The London Adventure or the Art of Wandering* (London: Martin Secker, 1924), p. 13.

[2] Recent publication history illustrates the text's ambiguous status. The most recent reprint, by Three Impostors press (2014), was presented as the third volume of the autobiography; however, in 2017, Tartarus Press published a single-volume text marketed as 'the full autobiography', which omits *The London Adventure*.

[3] Arthur Machen, *The Great God Pan* (Mineola: Dover, 2006), p. 10.

when *The Great God Pan* was published.[4] While he always viewed such movements with a degree of scepticism (describing 'modern Spiritualism and modern Theosophy' as a 'squalid chapter of back-parlour magic' in an 1899 article), Machen's fascination with notions of a parallel reality remains evident in *The London Adventure*, which appeared at a time of renewed interest in such ideas.[5] However, the text's peculiar tone and structure, along with its ambiguous fictional status, allows him to explore these concerns from new angles. If the gothic is always, in some sense, concerned with the potential or actual re-emergence of a real or imagined past, then Machen's essay suggests a gothicised relationship with the themes and locations of his late-Victorian texts, which echo uncannily throughout *The London Adventure*.[6] The city described in the essay remains one in which 'the real world' lurks beneath the 'dreams and shadows' of appearances, but it is also one in which Machen (or his narrator) is haunted by the vestiges of the fictional London constructed in texts like *The Hill of Dreams* (1907). Paralleled with this temporal distance from Machen's earlier experiences and evocations of London is the narrative's geographical emphasis upon the city's distant, forgotten, and (seemingly) mundane suburbs. These settings allow Machen to explore his guiding themes with a different assemblage of imagery, tone, and atmosphere to that found in a text like *The Great God Pan*, which focuses upon central neighbourhoods such as Soho and Piccadilly. In the following section, I argue that these ironies of temporality, geography, and narrative underpin *The London Adventure*'s approach to Machen's characteristic gothic concerns; the second section examines more closely his depiction of the areas he calls 'London *incognita*', and his emphasis upon the value of defamiliarised experience. Ultimately, Machen suggests, such experience is connected to the fusion of writing, walking, memory, and place found in *The London Adventure*.[7]

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[4] Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett, and Pamela Thurschwell note that Victorian culture was pervaded by 'an intimation that reality might be transfigured by something above and beyond', which they connect to such factors as the 'mysterious powers of electricity, the baffling feats of mesmerists and the apparently real communications from the dead elicited by Spiritualist mediums'. Introduction, in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. by Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett, and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1–22 (p. 1).

[5] Arthur Machen, 'The Literature of Occultism', *Literature* (18 February 1899), p. 181. As Jay Winter has pointed out, the revival of interest in Spiritualism in this period was undoubtedly 'related directly to the universality of bereavement in the Europe of the Great War and its aftermath'. Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 77.

[6] In defining the gothic in this way, I follow Robert Mighall, who argues that the 'principal defining structure' of the gothic is 'its attitude to the past and its unwelcome legacies'. Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. xix.

[7] In combining these elements, Machen situates himself within a rich tradition of London walker-writers, with antecedents including William Blake, Thomas De Quincey, and Charles Dickens, and inheritors such as Iain Sinclair (whom I discuss in the second section). Studies of this lineage include Merlin Coverley's *The Art of*

'The Two Levels of Life': Blurring Textuality, Temporality and Identity

The London Adventure begins with a description of a suburban setting apparently mundane and forgotten, which despite this — or rather, because of it — conveys a strange and subtly unnerving atmosphere. The text describes 'a certain tavern in the north-western parts of London which is so remote from the tracks of men and so securely hidden that few people have ever suspected its existence'.[8] The fascination inspired by such places, for Machen, lies precisely in their invisibility, which corresponds to the sense of literally invisible realms that exist alongside 'reality'. In addition, their apparent avoidance of the perpetual change that characterises much of the city around them gives a sense of vestigial survival, of a past era somehow persisting within the present. Machen's London is a palimpsest, comprising overlapping layers of these pasts. The tavern is located 'in the leafy quarter once familiarly known as "the Wood"':

> Here are modest residences of stucco and grey brick, built for quiet people in the late 'thirties and early 'forties; their front gardens planted with trees of all sorts and varieties before the period when somebody settled that the only tree for London was the plane. Here and there in these gardens there survives an old gnarled thorn, a remnant, I suspect, of the time when 'the Wood' was really a wood or a waste.[9]

In this single paragraph, Machen alludes to four temporal realms: the 'real' present which has somehow passed by this tavern; the 'remote' world in which the tavern exists; the period in which the surrounding neighbourhood was known as 'the Wood'; and the more distant past, when the area 'was really a wood or a waste'. In doing so, Machen begins his essay by destabilising the reader's sense of temporal solidity, establishing a context in which London's pasts seem to intrude constantly upon its present. Trees enhance the effect: the ghostly 'quiet people' who once populated the district maintain a residual presence through the 'trees of all sorts and varieties' that persist, their diversity an analogue of the neighbourhood's atmosphere of temporal multiplicity. Machen is particularly fascinated by the blurring of

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Wandering: The Writer as Walker (Harpenden: Oldcastle Books, 2012), which takes its title from Machen's essay; and Matthew Beaumont's *Nightwalking: A Nocturnal History of London* (London: Verso, 2015).

[8] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 5.

[9] Ibid. In a 1945 article, J. P. Hogan identifies this area as St John's Wood, and argues that the tavern's location is on or around Clifton Hill. However, by 1945, the neighbourhood's atmosphere of separateness is apparently no more, and the place that Machen describes now belongs to another layer of the area's past: 'the buses roar up and down the Abbey Road at frequent intervals; and there are no longer "quiet people"'. Hogan's attempts to identify the exact tavern described by Machen fail; possibly, given the factual uncertainty of *The London Adventure*, the 'real' public house did not exist even in 1924. J. P. Hogan, 'A London Adventure in St John's Wood', *The Guardian*, 29 June 2012 <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2012/jun/29/archive-1945-arthur-machen-london-pub> [accessed 25 August 2017].

'natural' and 'urban' suggested by the name 'the Wood', and by the persistence of trees like the 'old gnarled thorn' which testify to the area's origin: by exploring suburbia, he suggests, we engage in a kind of time travel, uncovering the persistence of an older world associated with pagan rituals and beliefs within the modern metropolis.

Another characteristic theme established at the beginning of the essay is that of the creative process itself, and the peculiar terror with which it is sometimes associated in Machen's work. *The Hill of Dreams*, a semi-autobiographical novel in which a young Welsh writer living in London becomes increasingly incapable of distinguishing between reality and the fictions of his imagination, is his most sustained exploration of these ideas. For its protagonist Lucian, writing is either 'a miracle or an infernal possession, a species of madness, that had driven him on, every day disappointed, and every day hopeful'.[10] The central gothic threat of *The Hill of Dreams* is the frustration and psychic destabilisation of the creative process itself, and this fear also pervades the opening of *The London Adventure*; moreover, as with the exploration of temporality discussed above, trees and vegetation are used to develop this theme. Sitting in the tavern, Machen is confronted by a man with a 'threatening' manner, who reminds him that the '"leaves are beginning to come out"'.[11] This apparently innocuous remark alludes, we are told, to an earlier commitment of Machen's to 'write a book about London' when 'the leaves were out on the trees, since the green leafage of the boughs made such a marvellous contrast with the grim greyness of the streets'; it consequently causes him to 'shudder' in fear.[12] As well as being residual presences from a forgotten past, trees within the urban environment function in Machen's work as symbols of the creative process: he tells us of a 'fig tree that had somehow contrived to flourish in this arid waste', which is a 'miracle and a delight', and 'the kind of adventure out of which I had agreed to make a book'.[13] We can therefore understand the characteristically gothic blend of terror and wonder with which urban flora is associated here if we recognise its connection to writing itself, which is, for Machen, a process which may be a 'miracle and a delight', but also one that threatens psychic stability. It is noteworthy, however, that he associates the common trees of the neighbourhood with his fear of writing, while the fig tree is described in an unequivocally appreciative tone: 'as blessed as any wells and palm trees in the midst of an

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[10] Arthur Machen, *The Hill of Dreams* (Mineola: Dover, 2006), p. 212.
[11] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 10.
[12] Machen, *The London Adventure*, pp. 11, 10.
[13] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 12.

African desert', its exotic, alien status within Britain seems to be associated with the positive aspects of the creative process.[14]

At the outset, then, Machen introduces the ideas of multiple overlapping temporalities and of ontological duality. While he hints at the metaphysical reality of parallel realms — particularly later in the essay, where he posits the existence of 'other worlds wholly, or almost wholly, unknown and unconjectured' — Machen also emphasises this sense of ontological instability by referring to his earlier works, and thus stressing a distinction between textual universes and the 'real' world.[15] His fear at the emergence of the leaves, for example, puts him 'very much in the condition of the Young Man in Spectacles' — an allusion to the 1895 episodic novel *The Three Impostors*, in which this figure becomes embroiled in a sinister pagan cult operating within London, ultimately leading to his grisly death.[16] By comparing himself to one of his own fictional characters, Machen begins to efface the boundary between fiction and non-fiction, and between the nightmarish world of his late-Victorian stories and the apparently more benign and mundane present. These boundaries are destabilised further when Machen explains that, in an unidentified 'former book', he has described 'with absolute veracity what strange things I once experienced in chambers in Gray's Inn, in forsaken Rosebery Avenue, in all sorts of down-at-heel and shabby quarters of London'.[17] He may be alluding to the autobiographical *Far Off Things*, but, in the adjective 'strange' and the need for protestations of 'absolute veracity', the passage also alludes to the dramatic supernatural events that characterise his fiction. *The Three Impostors* mentions Gray's Inn Road, and the comment also recalls *The Hill of Dreams*; as Roger Luckhurst notes, Machen 'lived in misery in Gray's Inn Road and Rosebery Avenue between 1895 and 1899, a time of painful solipsism' that is recorded in the novel.[18] The ambiguities here undermine distinctions between fiction and non-fiction, between the narrator of *The London Adventure* and Machen himself, and between the supernatural and the natural. Such confusions are intensified later in the essay, during a

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[14] Ibid. This tree has a counterpart in *The Hill of Dreams*, a 'Syrian fig tree imprisoned in Britain, nailed to an ungenial wall' (p. 219), which is also linked to the pleasures of creativity; Lucian has been suffering from writer's block, and this tree is somehow 'the solution of the puzzle' (p. 219), a source of renewed literary inspiration.

[15] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 61.

[16] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 10.

[17] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 13.

[18] Arthur Machen, *The Three Impostors* (Mineola: Dover, 2007), p. 135; and Roger Luckhurst, 'An Occult Gazetteer of Bloomsbury: An Experiment in Method', in *London Gothic*, ed. by Lawrence Phillips and Anne Witchard (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 50–62 (p. 56).

discussion of Mr Micawber in *David Copperfield* (a figure based upon Dickens's father, plagued by debt yet stubbornly optimistic):

> In a certain sense, it is probable that Mr Micawber is more real than any of us, infinitely more real than Dickens's own father, of whom he is understood to be a glorified projection. […] [I]t is only the beings of true literature who are pure and without alloy, since their essences are simple and immortal.[19]

The suggestion that literary characters have a more concrete existence than actual people, by virtue of their purity and coherence, reminds us of the complexity of the term 'real' in Machen's work; of his persistent sense that there is a deeper reality behind the world of appearances, whether this refers to other temporalities, textual worlds, or a separate metaphysical realm.

Accordingly, when Machen claims to be presenting an autobiographical essay, we should be aware that it may be guided by unconventional definitions of 'truth' or 'reality': he reminds us that the figure speaking is not Machen himself, but something 'pure and without alloy', a 'being of true literature'. This creates a sense of an uncanny doubling, of a fictionalised version of the author, anticipating the kind of blurring between fictional and non-fictional narrators later used by authors such as W. G. Sebald. Here, Machen repeatedly reminds us of this doubling by distinguishing between an imagined version of the text, and the one we are actually reading. He informs us that 'I had thought of an excellent title. I was to call my book *The London Adventure*', and later refers to 'the book on hand, this famous *London Adventure*'; but this envisioned version is a text that would focus upon descriptions of London, rather than describing the context and process of writing, as the published text does.[20] There is a paradoxical structure operating here; through its emphasis upon creative struggle, the essay stresses the difficulties inherent in writing about the city, but in doing so, it in fact gives us a strong sense of the places described. It is a kind of mirror image of *The Hill of Dreams*; while the novel is a purportedly fictional story that converges with Machen's own experiences, this is a supposedly non-fictional work which undermines its own claims to truth and reliability by implying that the narrator is not identical with Machen himself. *The London Adventure* even explains the moment when his vision of *The Hill of Dreams* coalesced in 1896, as he wrestled with the novel's conception. In the essay, Machen ponders writing 'a tale of a man who "lost his way"; who became so entangled in some maze of imagination and speculation that the common, material ways of the world became of no

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[19] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 39.
[20] Machen, *The London Adventure*, pp. 29, 47.

significance to him'.[21] This description could also apply to the narrative of *The London Adventure* itself, which ventures into increasingly imaginative metaphysical speculations as it progresses.

These erasures of the borders between fiction and non-fiction, and the suggestion that the text we are reading can be distinguished from a Platonic ideal of *The London Adventure*, function in the text to undermine our sense of a stable reality. As in his novels and stories, the notion of a metaphysically separate world that exists beyond the 'dreams and shadows' of outward appearances is at the core of the essay. Machen's long-term fascination with these ideas, as noted above, in some ways reflects his social and cultural context, whether in the late-Victorian period or the 1920s; it is particularly evident in *The Great God Pan*, with its sense of '"a whole world, a sphere unknown"' that lies '"beyond a veil"'.[22] Similarly, however, his refusal to subscribe to the tenets of 'modern Spiritualism' in the late-Victorian period also remains in evidence in *The London Adventure*, which gently mocks the movement:

> one reason for my disbelief in their message is my conviction that the two levels of life, the life here and the life of the world to come, are so utterly distinct. I have read, or rather dipped into, so many books which represent the spirits and souls of the dead as simply containing their life in this world under conditions which are practically reproductions. The young man who on earth was interested in the affairs of the Mount Zion Chapel (Particular Baptist), Beulah Road, Tooting Bec, is still vividly interested in the pious activities of the old congregation.[23]

The humour of this passage, derived from Machen's bathetic juxtaposition of dramatic supernatural language with the mundane particulars of a specific life, exemplifies the essay's ironic, conversational tone. But the passage also demonstrates that Machen has been consistent in his own worldview, and he remains firm in his conviction that there are 'two levels of life', even if they are 'distinct'. Moreover, *The London Adventure* demonstrates his enduring belief that particular places, atmospheres, and architectural forms can be conducive to accessing, or at least momentarily glimpsing, 'the real pattern and scheme of life'.[24]

'Apparitions of Grey Houses': Exploring London *Incognita*

Having established the essay's underlying ambiguities and dualities, Machen now goes on to explore the potential for some of the city's less glamorous and populous suburbs to induce

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[21] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 141.
[22] Machen, *The Great God Pan*, pp. 11, 10.
[23] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 21.
[24] Ibid.

glimpses of this 'pattern and scheme'. Although the metaphysical ideas underpinning his work demonstrate many consistencies over the years, the particular areas of London which Machen sees as conducive to transcendent experience vary from text to text. Moreover, these variations reflect differing structures of imagination, differing ways of gothicising the metropolis; this gothicisation renders the city a threatening, labyrinthine, and mysterious space, whether such threats are presented as real (as with the pagan cult of *The Three Impostors*) or psychological (Lucian's breakdown in *The Hill of Dreams*). *The Great God Pan* exemplifies the former, as forces associated with pagan ritual and decadent sexuality inexorably invade the city's centres of bourgeois wealth and respectability. The gothic threat associated with the mysterious Helen Vaughan is born in the story's opening scene, which takes place in rural Wales. The scene details a neurological operation carried out upon a young woman, Mary, in an attempt to alter her brain in order to render her capable of perceiving the god Pan; she is left a '"hopeless idiot"', but it later transpires that she eventually bore a child of Pan, who grows up to be Helen.[25] The threat that Helen embodies gradually advances upon central London, establishing itself in '"one of the meanest and most disreputable streets in Soho"' before finally conquering the respectable district of Piccadilly.[26] This structure of geographical advancement makes *The Great God Pan* one of the archetypal texts of late-Victorian gothic, which is frequently concerned with the invasion of London's supposedly rational and respectable imperial centre by mysterious forces associated with the city's impoverished districts, or with a more distant realm (consider Egypt in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, or Transylvania in *Dracula*, both published in 1897). As Luckhurst explains of *The Great God Pan*,

> Starting on the wild fringes or margins — in this case the ancient woodland of Gwent — the horror moves steadily towards the imperial metropolis and the centre of fashionable society. Like Count Dracula's move from the Carpathian mountains via Whitby and Purfleet to Piccadilly, the Gothic relentlessly advances on the centres of urban civilization. London becomes a psychic topography, the grid of streets the map of disordered fantasy and desire.[27]

The London Adventure, however, is underpinned by a different structural imagining of the city. The essay is not about malevolent encroachment upon the narrative subject — about external forces advancing upon a centre — but rather about a centrifugal movement, as its

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[25] Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p. 16.
[26] Machen, *The Great God Pan*, p. 54.
[27] Roger Luckhurst, Introduction, in *Late Victorian Gothic Tales* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics), pp. ix–xxxi (pp. xxix–xxx).

central subject explores the 'unsuspected countries' that lie in London's backwaters and margins.[28] Machen is obsessed with these 'places and regions further afield, places on the verge of London', the areas he refers to as 'London *incognita*'; and while the resulting experiences are not generally concerned with the sense of evil and corruption that pervades *The Great God Pan*, they are often gothic in other ways, attuned to the shadowy presence of histories and realms which coexist alongside the world of appearances.[29]

Memory is one such realm, and *The London Adventure* is, among other things, a journey through Machen's past: when he describes his exploration of these 'unsuspected countries', he is recalling 'the 1895-99 period when I first found out the wonders that lie to the eastward of the Gray's Inn Road, when Islington and Barnsbury and Canonbury were discovered, when Pentonville ceased to be a mere geographical expression'.[30] This fascination with the city's then lesser-known suburbs is barely evident in *The Great God Pan*, but it is a key element of *The Hill of Dreams*, as Amanda Mordavsky Caleb has pointed out. Lucian's neighbourhood 'between Shepherd's Bush and Acton Vale […] reflects an expanded London, one that has accommodated an overflow from the inner suburbs, and was seen as lacking in any value, whether economic or aesthetic'.[31] Even in the 1890s, Machen was already aware of the suburbs' strangely paradoxical qualities, 'both historical and contemporary, at once mundane and exotic'.[32] The London of *The Hill of Dreams* seems to exist in multiple temporalities, a quality that makes the temporal distancing of *The London Adventure* — an imaginative return, among other things, to the period and places in which the novel was written — even more complex. Machen's essay is permeated by the sense of a ghostly past that somehow haunts the present. Recalling his time in the Gray's Inn Road area, he notes that the district has 'the sense of having stayed the dreadful clock of eternity'. It contains 'secret and severed people who have fallen out of the great noisy march of the high road for one reason or another, and so dwell apart in these misty streets and squares of 1850, wondering when it will be 1851'.[33] Himself narrating from the perspective of a kind of ghost — his former self — Machen conjures a district that seems to be populated by spectres, invisible to the world around them, 'severed' from modernity, and oblivious to the passing of time. The intense sense of the past found in certain places is one manifestation of the world

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[28] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 34.
[29] Machen, *The London Adventure*, pp. 34–35.
[30] Machen, *The London Adventure*, pp. 33–34.
[31] Amanda Mordavsky Caleb, '"A City of Nightmares": Suburban Anxiety in Arthur Machen's London Gothic', in *London Gothic*, pp. 41–49 (p. 43).
[32] Caleb, '"A City of Nightmares"', p. 45.
[33] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 134.

'beyond a veil' in *The London Adventure*, a world that does not express the malignity of its counterparts in *The Great God Pan* or *The Three Impostors*, but is nonetheless gothic in its mysterious, haunted qualities.

If the presence of the gothic in *The London Adventure* establishes a different geographical structure to that seen in *The Great God Pan*, it should also be differentiated from another common *fin-de-siècle* gothic dynamic — that is, a protagonist who journeys from the security and familiarity of bourgeois neighbourhoods to discover the dangerous, exotic, and corrupting world of the city's poor districts. Perhaps the archetypal text in this respect is Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Dorian's night-time cab ride to the opium dens of the East End describes a hallucinatory, even infernal metropolitan world, where 'the streets [are] like the black web of some sprawling spider', lined with 'strange bottle-shaped kilns with their orange fan-like tongues of fire'; the 'fantastic shadows' of those who inhabit the buildings seem 'like monstrous marionettes'.[34] As many critics have noted, such representations of the East End (and other poor neighbourhoods) feed off William Booth and W. T. Stead's polemic *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), which rhetorically asks, '[a]s there is a darkest Africa is there not also a darkest England?'[35] The trope of a 'darkest England' existing within London, paralleled to the supposed savagery and barbarism still seen as extant in colonial territories, permeates texts like *Dorian Gray* and *The Beetle*. The suburban territories explored in *The London Adventure* (and also *The Hill of Dreams*), however, are imbued with a more subtle gothic atmosphere, one that gradually emerges from their mundane and quotidian character, rather than from a sense of nightmarish otherness or malevolence. Machen's narrative does not present a subject encountering an intoxicatingly strange and dangerous Other, but rather one alert to the nuances of apparently unremarkable places, whose subjectivity becomes increasingly entangled with them.

Nonetheless, while Machen's narrative does not present these suburbs as threatening, he also occasionally employs the imagery of colonial exploration. Walking from Enfield to

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[34] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2006), p. 156.
[35] William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 11. Relevant critics here include Robert Mighall, who argues that late-Victorian gothic moves both 'outwards to the margins of the Empire, and inwards to focus on the domestic "savages" which resided in the very heart of the civilized world' (see *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, p. 136). Peter Keating comments that novelists now 'travelled to far-flung corners of the East End or peeped into the social abyss to record the behaviour of alien inhabitants' (p. 316); and Alexandra Warwick explains that in much fiction of the period, west London 'exists in the same philanthropic, exploratory but essentially voyeuristic and exploitative relation to the east as Britain to its Empire' (p. 81). Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875– 1914* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1989); and Alexandra Warwick, 'Lost Cities: London's Apocalypse', in *Spectral Readings: Towards a Gothic Geography*, ed. by Glennis Byron and David Punter (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 73–87.

Enfield Lock — through an area over ten miles north of central London, that would not be incorporated into the city until 1965 — he feels 'as true an explorer as Columbus […]. For if you think of it: the fact that the region which is to you so strange and unknown is familiar […] to multitudes of your fellow-men is of no significance on earth.'[36] Machen proceeds from this assertion to argue that 'nothing exists vitally, that is, as an object of wonder, surmise, awe, exultation, or mirth in itself'.[37] Places are not inherently magical, Machen suggests, but our experience of them — particularly defamiliarised experience, when we encounter them for the first time, or from a new perspective — can bring about altered states of consciousness. In its blending of the history of place with the acts of walking and writing, *The London Adventure* is a foundational text for London psychogeographers like Iain Sinclair; Enfield is also discussed in Sinclair's *London Orbital* (2002).[38] For Machen, the strangeness of the area is captured by the contrast between Enfield's general desolation and its seemingly random patches of domesticity or speculative development. He writes,

> I had passed […] by sudden apparitions of grey houses built in the early 'sixties when it had dawned upon the mind of some madman that the day of the Wash was at hand and that the time for 'development' had come. These houses appeared with awful unexpectedness; these settlements, of, say, half a dozen houses calling themselves Highsounding Terrace, 1860, manifestly supposing themselves in the first place to be but the nucleus of a whole town of thronging streets, and now standing up a grey island in the desolations of the Wash; waste lands and raspberry bushes and cabbages all about them.[39]

The satirical humour in Machen's tone and language — the 'awful unexpectedness' of the houses, the name 'Highsounding Terrace', the astute awareness of the ironies inherent in the very concept of 'development' — anticipates Sinclair's dense, caustic style. For the latter, Enfield is 'a hive of non-functional balconies, satellite-dishes monitoring dead water', and still a site of delusional property speculation.[40] Sinclair notes that a location of this kind is 'what promotional material describes as a "stylish residential village" […]. What's new is that industrial debris is suddenly "stylish".'[41]

Beneath the humour, both Machen and Sinclair weave a subtle eeriness into their descriptions of such places. The apocalyptic tone in the phrase 'the day of the Wash was at

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[36] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 40.
[37] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 41.
[38] Machen is a recurring presence in texts such as *London Orbital* and *Lights Out for the Territory* (1997), and the influence is explicitly acknowledged in Sinclair's pamphlet *Our Unknown Everywhere: Arthur Machen as Presence* (Newport: Three Imposters, 2013).
[39] Machen, *The London Adventure*, pp. 134, 49.
[40] Iain Sinclair, *London Orbital* (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 67.
[41] Sinclair, *London Orbital*, p. 68.

hand', the uncanny 'apparitions of grey houses', and the strange juxtaposition of 'waste lands and raspberry bushes and cabbages', all serve as unnerving gothic counterpoints to the passage's ostensibly comic character. Moreover, both authors are fascinated by the occult image of London as a series of concentric circles, and by the idea of a centrifugal energy which drives them to explore these suburban hinterlands. As Caleb notes, the image of London as a series of rings is a key motif in *The Hill of Dreams*, which 'suggests central London as being at the heart of these rings, each representing the outward movement into the suburbs'; however, she argues, the key passages are also 'suggestive of the rings of the outer suburbs controlling and containing London'.[42] *The London Adventure* seems to vacillate between the idea that these areas gain their unnerving qualities from this sense of containment, and its converse — the identification of an atmosphere of entropic dissolution and dispersal — but in both cases there is a sense that Machen, in exploring the city's perimeter, is engaging with occult patterns or energies, with faint echoes of Dante's nine infernal circles. This, of course, is an idea that also underpins Sinclair's book, which narrates a complete circuit of the M25, 'the outer circle. The point where London loses it, gives up its ghosts.'[43] Indeed, the orbital motorway is the ultimate late-twentieth-century manifestation of the metropolitan circuits and margins that fascinate Machen.

The London Adventure, then, feels remarkably contemporary in the way it merges writing, walking, memory, and place, but also in its fascination with areas that are ordinarily overlooked. These 'unknown and unconjectured regions' may be on the city's margins, but they also lie closer to the centre; in fact, they exist everywhere, if we know how to look for them.[44] Machen celebrates 'the faculty of finding infinity round the corner of any street, within five minutes of anywhere', a comment which suggests the essay's guiding principle: to discover the unknown, the strange, the 'infinite', in the apparently mundane or familiar.[45] Shifting our perspective in this way, Machen suggests, might be the key to accessing or glimpsing the 'secret pattern' of things, which 'lurks, half hidden, only apparent in certain rare lights'.[46] Echoing the notion of an 'ideal' *London Adventure* rather than the one we are actually reading — and an ideal author too — Machen uses a version of Plato's Cave to emphasise the point. He writes, '[w]e see appearances and outward shows of things, symbols

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[42] Caleb, '"A City of Nightmares"', p. 46.
[43] Sinclair, *London Orbital*, p. 3.
[44] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 97.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 21.

of all sorts; but we behold no essences […]. We see shadows cast by reality.'[47] However, 'poets catch strange glimpses of reality, now and then, out of the corners of their eyes', and this perhaps expresses the ultimate goal of Machen's writing.[48] In fact, the 'unknown world' is 'about us everywhere […]; the thinnest veil separates us from it, the door in the wall of the next street communicates with it'.[49] The key is to make ourselves perceive the world anew. As he asserts,

> Strangeness which is the essence of beauty is the essence of truth, and the essence of the world. I have often felt that, when the ascent of a long hill brought me to the summit of an undiscovered height in London; and I looked down on a new land.[50]

The keys to accessing this 'essence of the world', then, are literature (the poetry that can 'catch strange glimpses of reality') and a certain kind of defamiliarised engagement with place. *The London Adventure*'s simultaneous writing, walking, remembering, and imagining of the city is therefore an attempt to combine these approaches, situating Machen in a lineage of London walker-writers like Blake, De Quincey, and Dickens, and anticipating the psychogeographical approaches of authors like Sinclair and Merlin Coverley.

The 'unknown world' that Machen strives to engage with is also a matter of introspection, of reconnecting with one's own sense of being in the world. Towards the end of the essay, he recalls his difficulties in writing *The Hill of Dreams* in 1896 (thus presenting us with yet another of the essay's uncanny doublings: Machen describes a writer struggling with writer's block, who is attempting to write a book about the same situation). Wandering the streets of his Gray's Inn neighbourhood, deep in thought, he suddenly realises that he has 'utterly lost the sense of direction. I was disoriented, though I was in a part of London most familiar to me; north and south, east and west had no more any meaning.'[51] The story is in some ways the inverse of Freud's account, in 'The "Uncanny"' (published five years previously), of a walk in 'a provincial town in Italy which was strange to me,' in which he finds himself inadvertently and repeatedly returning to the red-light district, before finally 'a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny'.[52] While Freud experiences the sense that a place which should be strange is somehow unnervingly familiar, Machen realises

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[47] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 70.
[48] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 71.
[49] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 100.
[50] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 127.
[51] Machen, *The London Adventure*, p. 140.
[52] Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', trans. by Alix Strachey, in *Collected Papers IV* (New York: Basic Books, 1959), pp. 10, 11.

that a place which should be familiar has suddenly become strange. In both cases, however, a certain kind of engagement with the environment has stimulated a disturbing but revelatory experience, threatening the subject's sense of psychic stability, but providing valuable insight in the process. In Machen's case, it provides the inspiration for the key theme of *The Hill of Dreams*, the story of a figure lost in a 'maze of imagination and speculation'.

The London Adventure's multiple dualities and doublings — the parallels between Machen and Lucian, the positing of two *London Adventures* and two authors, the overlapping temporalities — are thus intimately connected to his obsession with metaphysical transcendence. They establish the theme of parallel coexisting realities, but in addition, Machen seeks to undermine the idea of a single, unified identity, because the kind of fragmented subjectivity with which we are presented is potentially more capable of accessing or glimpsing the 'unknown world'. The essay is therefore not merely an account of Machen's own ideas and experiences concerning 'the essence of truth', but an attempt actually to facilitate the emergence of these states of being in the reader. Its destabilisations, multiple layers, and ambiguities regarding fictionality and identity serve as devices that shift or renew our perspective upon its subjects, so that our experience when reading *The London Adventure* in some ways mirrors that of the essay's narrator.

These devices are ultimately, for Machen, ways of creating a renewed sense of the strangeness of London's suburbs, of encouraging these places to disclose their secrets, and to reveal visions of the 'real world' beyond the 'dreams and shadows' of appearances. In addition, with its ironic return to the themes, questions, and period of his late-Victorian works, the essay represents a kind of resolution of Machen's anxieties regarding the creative process and the city itself; while London remains a gothicised space, it is no longer the source of terror and complete psychic breakdown that haunts *The Hill of Dreams*. Although Machen begins by expressing fear at the prospect of imaginatively revisiting this territory, then, his essay ultimately manages successfully to convey a picture of the city and his relationship with it, while also illuminating his other London-set writings.

BOOK REVIEWS: LITERARY AND CULTURAL CRITICISM

Stacey Abbott, *Undead Apocalypse: Vampires and Zombies in the Twenty-First Century*
(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016)

In Stephenie Meyer's popular teen vampire-romance series *Twilight* (2005-11), the protagonist, Bella Swan, 'unconditionally and irrevocably in love' with a vampire, opts to see a zombie movie when she wants to avoid all depictions of romance.[1] This decision reveals an obvious difference between dominant images of the vampire and the zombie in the twenty-first century: their relative sex appeal. Evolving from the sympathetic vampire on television (*Dark Shadows* (1966-71), *Forever Knight* (1989-96), *Angel* (1999-2004)) and heavily indebted to Anne Rice's popularisation of the eternally young and beautiful vampire (beginning with *Interview with the Vampire* (1976)), the contemporary boyfriend/girlfriend vampire (*Twilight*, Charlaine Harris' *Southern Vampire Mysteries* (2001-13) and television adaptation *True Blood* (2008-14); *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-17) and spin-off *The Originals* (2013-present)) is presented as a sexually appealing romantic partner. By contrast, the zombie, as rotting corpse in the style of George A. Romero's *Living Dead* series (1968-2009) or infected body (*28 Days Later* (2002), *Resident Evil* (2002), *Zombieland* (2009)), displays visible signs of degeneration and disease. Bodily degradation, combined with a lack of individuation, renders the zombie an unlikely romantic prospect for the most part, as may be seen in many contemporary zombie narratives (television series *The Walking Dead* (2010-present), and Max Brooks' *World War Z* (2006) and film adaptation (2013)). Comedy-horror films such as *Burying the Ex* (2014), *Life After Beth* (2014), and *Nina Forever* (2015) are based on the incongruity of even the individualised zombie and a viable romantic relationship.

This apparent difference between prevailing incarnations of the vampire and the zombie is unsettled in Stacey Abbott's *Undead Apocalypse: Vampires and Zombies in the Twenty-First Century*. A growing number of romance stories featuring zombies as the love interest, including the successful Isaac Marion's *Warm Bodies* (2010) and film adaptation (2013), demonstrate that the zombie is not entirely antithetical to romance. According to Abbott, however, to focus on romance in relation to these figures is to obscure many

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[1] Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight* (New York: Little, Brown, 2005), p. 195.

important similarities between the two kinds of monsters beyond the trend towards Dark Romance. Concentrating on dystopian texts, Abbott addresses the largely overlooked interconnections between vampires and zombies. Picking up where her work on vampires in film left off,[2] Abbott focuses here on the twenty-first century, a period that has thus far offered a vast array of vampires and zombies in fiction, film, television, and other media including video games, comics, graphic novels, and theatre. Presenting the seemingly distinct and separate figures of vampire and zombie as 'two sides of an undead coin' (p. 4), Abbott examines their shared generic connections and impact on one another, demonstrating how they are 'increasingly integrated and intertwined, engaged in a dialogue in which film, television and literature implicitly acknowledge their relationship and increasing influence on each other' (p. 4). Providing acute analysis of an impressive number and range of popular texts across fiction, film, and television, Abbott focuses on genre, medium, and the changing language and iconography regarding the undead. Moreover, she sets this discussion within the context of various media accounts relating the many perceived threats of annihilation facing contemporary western society, from disease through immigration to terrorism. Tracking the dystopian vampire and zombie narrative across a range of media, Abbott draws attention to and accounts for an alternative strand in undead culture characterised by 'horror and the threat of near-annihilation' (p. 4), existing parallel to the much-analysed vampire-as-love-interest in the twenty-first century.

Though the central focus is on twenty-first-century works, Abbott also discusses a range of relevant vampire and zombie narratives outside this period, thus further contextualising her consideration of specifically twenty-first-century changes to depictions of the undead. She establishes a foundational link between vampires and zombies in her reading of the influential, though until recently critically neglected novel, *I Am Legend* (1954), by Richard Matheson. This novel informs Abbott's analysis throughout the book, with Chapter One devoted entirely to a consideration of its legacy. In itself, the in-depth reading carried out in this chapter makes an important contribution to scholarship on Matheson's novel. Positioning *I Am Legend* as a significant precursor to Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), Abbott argues that the novel's zombie-like vampires establish an important link between the two undead figures. In particular, the idea, introduced in *I Am Legend*, that vampirism could be understood as a form of virus, leading to the possibility of a large-scale

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[2] *Celluloid Vampires: Life After Death in the Modern World* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007) examined vampire films up to 2002.

outbreak amongst the general population, is drawn on and developed significantly in twenty-first-century vampire and zombie post-apocalyptic works, as the subsequent chapters detail.

The second chapter distinguishes the vampire of twenty-first-century film and television as the object of a medical gaze. Tracing ideas initiated in Matheson's text, Abbott further contextualises this development through a discussion of the use of the vampire as metaphor for disease in late twentieth-century films such as *The Hunger* (1983) and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992). The vampire's reconstruction through scientific and medical language, images, and symbols is evidenced in films including *Blade* (1998), *Underworld* (2003), *Perfect Creature* (2006), *Ultraviolet* (2006), the remake of *I Am Legend* (2007), and *Daybreakers* (2009), and in TV shows such as *True Blood*, *The Vampire Diaries*, *The Originals*, and *The Strain* (2014-present). In these texts, vampirism is variously imagined as a disease, a cure, or both. Imagining vampirism in this way, Abbott argues, frequently leads to the examination of, and often the imprisonment of and experimentation on, the vampire body. The change from the depiction of vampirism as metaphor for disease to an example of disease subject to medical scrutiny is presented as an expression of contemporary anxieties surrounding the integration of science, commerce, and the body. Abbott finds that these anxieties take three key forms: virology, pandemic, and the growth of trade in human tissues. This framing of vampirism allows a critique of the increasingly shared interests of medicine and business in forms of 'Big Pharma' in many of the texts examined.

Chapter Three examines the re-emergence of the zombie in twenty-first-century media. Abbott locates the start of the current wave of cinematic zombies in five important zombie films released between 2002 and 2005: *Resident Evil*, *28 Days Later*, the *Dawn of the Dead* remake (2004), *Shaun of the Dead* (2004), and *Land of the Dead* (2005). These films heralded the mainstream emergence of the zombie and its subsequent proliferation on television. Avoiding a potentially reductive reading of the zombie renaissance as solely a response to the trauma of 9/11, Abbott favours a more open reading that allows for numerous influences to be traced in these films, brought together, as Abbott writes, citing Romero, in 'one big nightmare' (p. 74). While the medical gaze is fore-grounded in twenty-first-century vampire films, the mediated gaze is central to many zombie apocalypse films, as displayed in the remake *Dawn of the Dead*, *Diary of the Dead* (2007), *[REC]* (2007), *Quarantine* (2008), *Pontypool* (2008), and *World War Z*. These zombie narratives draw on a range of apocalyptic discourses, moving from localised stories to global pandemics, and making use of an aesthetic drawn from media reportage of twenty-first-century world events. In this context,

the zombie becomes 'a metaphor through which we express anxiety and anticipation of a potential extinction-level event that will bring about the collapse of modern society, if not humanity itself' (p. 64).

Chapter Four turns specifically to television and the proliferation of zombies on the small screen, adding greatly to current scholarship on the televisual zombie by exploring both the 'monster-of-the-week zombie' in shows including *Angel*, *The X-Files* (1993-2002/2016), and *Supernatural* (2005-present), and the recent emergence of the zombie series, such as *The Walking Dead*, *Dead Set* (2008), *In the Flesh* (2013-14), and *Z-Nation* (2014-present). The analysis reveals the zombie narrative's capacity to function as a means to explore 'a wide range of personal and political themes from the trauma of dealing with suicide and grief to contemporary issues around tolerance, terrorism, radicalism and the aftermath of war' (p. 113). Abbott's expertise on television horror is evident, as she elucidates the ways both the televisual format and changes within the television industry affect the production of horror.[3] For zombie television, this manifests most clearly in the tension Abbott points out between 'the allegorical approach to the genre and the more televisual focus on seriality' (p. 94). The zombie as allegory in the Romero tradition (used to critique race-relations in *Night of the Living Dead*, consumer culture in the original *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), and the military-industrial complex in *Day of the Dead* (1985)) exists on television in one-off episodes, such as the episode 'Homecoming' in *Masters of Horror* (2005-2007) which offers a commentary on US involvement in the Iraq War, and short series such as *Dead Set*, which uses the zombie to critique contemporary celebrity culture. The 'very slow apocalypse' depicted across seasons of a serial television show such as *The Walking Dead* allows for 'a complex use of the zombie not as allegory but provocateur, confronting the audience with heart-breaking, thought-provoking and often shocking developments that raise questions about what it means to be male, female, child, adult, animal, human, barbaric and civilised' (p. 118).

Chapter Five explores hybridity in contemporary vampire and zombie narratives. Here Abbott considers some of the more positive examples of the synergy of science and the body, by focusing on the technologically hybrid hero, a figure that celebrates the breakdown of boundaries through composite identity. While acknowledging the 'tension between being a product of a corporate economy and evoking a critique of such systems' (p. 140), Abbott looks closely at franchises such as *Blade* (1998-2004), the *Resident Evil* films (2002-16), and *Underworld* (2003-16), reading the protagonists' cyborg identity as one that 'resists and

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[3] Past work includes *TV Horror: The Dark Side of the Small Screen* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013), co-written with Lorna Jowett.

challenges corporate and patriarchal organisations through their action and their bodies that refuse to be contained, regardless of the origins of their hybridity' (p. 140).

Chapters Six and Seven investigate the influence of the sympathetic vampire on the zombie genre, and of the post-apocalyptic zombie on the vampire genre, respectively. In these chapters, Abbott draws attention to the 'borrowing and reworking [of] conceptions of monstrosity to create new meanings' (p. 179) in both vampire and zombie genres. Side-stepping the conspicuous growth of the vampire as love-interest in twenty-first-century texts, Abbott focuses instead on the impact of positioning the vampire as providing the principle viewpoint on his/her own story. Looking closely at the Swedish film *Let the Right One In* (2008) and its American remake *Let Me In* (2010), Abbott presents the use of the vampire point of view as one that brings out moral ambiguity. Television shows, such as *Buffy* (1997-2003), *Angel*, *Being Human UK* (2008-13)/*Being Human US* (2011-14), *The Vampire Diaries*, *The Originals*, and *Hemlock Grove* (2013-15), that involve entire or partial positioning from vampire perspectives, offer a 'space that allows for a slow and complicated exploration of identity', making audiences 'increasingly involved and implicated within the vampire's story' (p. 148). This chapter also provides keen readings of indie vampire films *Byzantium* (2012) and *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013), exploring the imbrication of power and storytelling in *Byzantium*, and the depiction of the vampire as a 'celebration of living' in *Only Lovers Left Alive.*

Abbott then draws attention to the post-millennial emergence of texts that allow a zombie perspective and even use the zombie as narrator. Examples include the novels *Warm Bodies* (and its film adaptation), *Husk* (2012), and *Zom-B* (2012-16); comic *I-Zombie* (2010) and its television adaptation (2014-present); television series *In the Flesh* and *Z-Nation*; and films *Colin* (2008), and *ParaNorman* (2012). A variety of uses are made of the zombie perspective: in a film such as *Colin*, the trope 'showcases the violence of humanity, which is presented as brutal when divorced from their perspective' (p. 166); in *Z-Nation*, it is 'designed to unsettle the audience' and obscure easy divisions between human and monster (p. 164); in *ParaNorman*, it challenges normative ideas and conformity. Through an insightful reading of the television series *In the Flesh*, Abbott demonstrates how the zombie perspective facilitates the exploration of themes such as 'sexual identity, a subject which bridges the personal and the political in terms of identity politics' (p. 172). This chapter argues effectively that the undead perspective reveals zombies and vampires to be 'inherently similar, distorted versions of humanity, struggling with fear and questions of identity' (p.

176). Abbott argues that orienting the narrative from this point of view need not be 'domesticating' in the sense of stripping the monster of Otherness or difference. The readings presented demonstrate how privileging the undead viewpoint may in fact engender new and more complicated interpretations.

Chapter Seven looks at the reverse influence of the post-apocalyptic zombie genre on representations of the vampire. Abbott tracks an apocalyptic trend in vampire film and television that 'captures in its dystopian vision confused and ambivalent responses of a society coping with drastic changes in science, economics, war, globalisation and religion' (p. 196). The monstrous vampire appears in films including *Perfect Creature*, the 2007 *I Am Legend*, *30 Days of Nights* (2007), *Daybreakers*, *Stake Land* (2010), *Priest* (2011), and TV shows such as *Ultraviolet* and *The Strain*, and 'provides a space through which we can project our cultural anxieties in order to safely destroy a clear and visible villain' while simultaneously 'remind[ing] us that the monster we seek to destroy is in fact a part of ourselves' (p. 186).

Finally, the cultural fascination with the undead is considered here as a vehicle for the expression of apocalyptic preoccupations and even a means of preparing for emergency events. The undead are figures whose allegorical and metaphorical potential make them useful in a variety of contexts, from political arguments to fun runs. As a whole, *Undead Apocalypse* demonstrates the evolving and adaptive nature of the vampire, the zombie, and their interconnection. The undead are read as expressions of cultural anxiety, utilised as metaphor, as allegory, and as vehicles for social commentary. They are, Abbott argues, particularly amenable to the exploration of a wide range of themes apposite to twenty-first-century society. In 1923, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote that '[d]eath is our friend precisely because it brings us into absolute and passionate presence with all that is here'.[4] One gets the same sense reading Abbott's insightful and perceptive analysis of the undead; they emerge here as figures that we would do well to recognise as friends, since they aid us in multiple ways in exploring and articulating some of the more difficult and unspeakable aspects of life in the twenty-first-century.

This reader would have loved to see more on the French series *Les Revenants* (2012-present), referred to briefly. M. R. Carey's *The Girl with All the Gifts* (2014) and recent film adaptation (2016) would also have fit well in the discussion, though the film may not have been released prior to publication. However, these are minor notes reflecting personal interest

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[4] Rainer Maria Rilke, letter to Countess Margot Sizzo-Noris-Crouy, in *A Year With Rilke*, ed. by Joanna Macy and Anita Barrows (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), p. 6 (6 January 1923).

and a desire to read Abbott's interpretation of these texts. Overall, this is an enlightening, well-researched, and fascinating read, indispensable for scholars of vampire and zombie culture, and, given its entertaining and accessible style, recommended for anyone with an interest in the area.

Mary Bridgeman

Marie Mulvey-Roberts, *Dangerous Bodies: Historicising the Gothic Corporeal*
(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016)

The volume of scholarly research written on the gothic is so vast and the genre so extensively examined by scholars that it can sometimes seem unlikely that any room for groundbreaking work on this subject could remain. However, Marie Mulvey-Roberts' *Dangerous Bodies: Historicising the Gothic Corporeal* provides nuanced, innovative readings of such important and familiar works as *The Castle of Otranto* (Horace Walpole, 1764), *The Monk* (Matthew Gregory Lewis, 1796), *Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley, 1818), *Dracula* (Bram Stoker, 1897), and *Nosferatu* (F. W. Murnau,1922) in an attempt to 'point to the real-life narratives of fear, danger, and persecution, which underpin the fictional terror and horror of the Gothic' (p. 11). In her detailed and convincing analysis, Mulvey-Roberts adeptly intertwines and then separates the persecuted and persecutor, the monster and victim, all while juxtaposing these binaries with institutional oppression. The closing sentence of the book successfully summarises the scope of Mulvey-Roberts' work. She writes, '[t]he endangered or dangerous body lies at the centre of the clash between victim and persecutor and has generated tales of terror and narratives of horror, which function to either salve, purge or dangerously perpetuate such oppositions' (p. 224).

This is a book replete with wide-ranging and well-documented explorations of such topics as monstrous alterities; bodies as politicised messages; the capacity of literature and film to serve as mirrors of human suffering; the visceral reality of a genre that is steeped in gore and the bleeding body; warfare and its complex appearance as metaphor in works dealing with vampirism; and the body as an arena over which battles relating to society, politics, race, religion, class, sexuality, and gender have been fought. One of the most enthralling elements of this text is what it can tell us about the authors of canonical gothic works, and indeed the questions raised throughout may cause discomfort to the reader accustomed to accepting the unchallenged or traditional biographies of these writers. In addition to a bibliography, which is thorough and quite up to date, and an index, the text contains five main chapters ('Catholicism, the Gothic and the Bleeding Body', 'Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, and Slavery', 'Death by Orgasm: Sexual Surgery and *Dracula*', 'Nazis, Jews, and *Nosferatu*', and 'The Vampire of War') and a closing chapter ('Conclusion: Conflict Gothic').

The first chapter, which sets the tone for entire work, presents intriguing readings of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and Lewis' *The Monk* within a religio-political context, in

order to argue that 'even overtly negative literary representations of Catholicism invariably prove to be less of an attack on the Catholic Church than a means of opening up subversive ways for critiquing secular hegemony and repressive governments' (p. 15). The interrelationships between the barbarically repressive Inquisition, gothic fiction, the Henrician Reformation, and 'the transition from a papal to a Protestant world view' (p. 21) form the nexus of investigation for this chapter. Of particular interest is eighteenth-century gothic fiction's preoccupation with Roman-Catholicism: texts from this time abound in phantom friars and nuns, desecrated buildings, Jesuit intrigue, the *auto-da-fé*, wicked abbesses, licentious monks, and theological misogyny. The next chapter, 'Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, and Slavery', shifts from the political and its interrelationship with religion to slavery, emancipation, rebel female slaves, and miscegenation. Here we find suggestions that Mary Shelley made ample use of the 'discourse of slavery' (p. 52) in her novel, which can be read as a 'textual patchwork of abolitionist writing and pro-slavery propaganda' that is 'inscribed on the body of the monster' (p. 53). Most importantly, Mulvey-Roberts asserts that this novel, which is full of contemporary negative reactions toward miscegenation, was ameliorist in its stance. Indeed, George Canning, the Foreign Secretary and Leader of the House of Commons, had referred to Shelley's work in a parliamentary debate 'as propaganda against the immediate emancipation of slaves' (p. 54); but more importantly, Mulvey-Roberts points out, on more than one occasion, Shelley wrote that Canning's compliment to her work was pleasing to her. The argument has been made that Canning had '"misread"' (p. 57) Shelley's intentions, but Mulvey-Roberts asks, if there was a misreading, why Shelley didn't distance herself from this association, and notes that the likelihood was that Shelley was 'sympathetic' to Canning's position (p. 58).

Chapter Three, 'Death by Orgasm: Sexual Surgery and *Dracula*', continues Mulvey-Roberts' focus on the female body and sexuality, through an examination of Stoker's novel, the monster found within its pages, and the disease that the monster suffers from, which she reads as a 'trope for an invented female pathology, believed to require a surgical solution' (p. 93). This chapter, without a doubt, is the most impressive of the book. The author highlights a vast array of elements within the novel relating to the body, which, she argues, can be viewed as 'Victorian pathologising of feminist and Freudian hystericisation of women's bodies' (p. 94); in particular, she focuses on Lucy's sexualised body, which needs to be destroyed, and on Van Helsing and his group, who she reads as castrating surgeons, operating on a hysterical woman. The medical/biological/physiognomic details of this novel, the author cogently

argues, may have been influenced by William Thornley, who was an eminent doctor and a colleague of one of Stoker's brothers (three out of the five Stoker brothers practiced medicine). Stoker may, therefore, have had first-hand knowledge and experience of the current state of gynecology, of the belief that mental illnesses originated from female sexuality, and of surgical procedures performed on women suffering from all types of medical issues.

Staying with Stoker's novel, in 'Nazis, Jews, and *Nosferatu*', Mulvey-Roberts convincingly argues that, although Stoker never explicitly identifies Dracula as Jewish, and never writes anything blatantly anti-semitic, the novel clearly depicts the Count as a 'multilayered and composite character' (p. 130) whose most noticeable characteristics are Jewish in nature. These characteristics are based on racial stereotypes that may find echoes in certain passages from the novel; for example, the vampire women who sate their thirst for blood with the blood of children may recall the repulsive Blood Libel accusation against the Jews. She also mentions the anti-semitic connection with the hoarding of money, and the use of the Evil Eye in the novel, which is an 'embodiment of evil that was also associated with Jews' (p. 134).

Chapter 5, 'The Vampire of War', builds on previous analyses of the figure of the vampire and its appearance in literature and film. In this chapter, however, the vampire is analysed as a metaphor for war in 'novels, films and short stories from the Crimean War […], through to the Russo-Turkish conflict […], First World War […], and up to the Vietnam War' (p. 180). This chapter, like all of the preceding chapters, includes thoughtful observations like the association between the Balkans' status as a 'particularly volatile cradle of war' and the fact that it is also 'a region notorious for nurturing legends of the vampire' (p. 180). Moreover, as Mulvey-Roberts points out, the traditional masculine pursuit of war is often 'allegorized as a vampiric woman' (p. 196). This chapter is quite convincing in its argument and in its linking together of the nature of the vampire, its association with the hatred of the foreigner, and the allegorisation of war as a communicable disease that, as in the case of syphilis in wartime brothels, is often related to female sexuality or some disease that is blood borne. Moreover, as Mulvey-Roberts puts it, 'war is the ultimate horror and supreme blood-sucker' (p. 179). From this discussion on conflict, war, and vampirism, the closing chapter, 'Conflict Gothic', does a fine job of arguing that the gothic as a whole arose out of conflict, as well as discussing the transformation of the genre caused by the French Revolution and Henrician English Reformation

Mulvey-Roberts has put together an excellent text that is soundly designed and structured, rigorously documented and supported through compact and learned endnotes, and includes cogently argued concepts, analyses, and interpretations. *Dangerous Bodies: Historicising the Gothic Corporeal* will, I hope, become a standard text for the field.

Edmund Cueva

David Punter, *The Gothic Condition: Terror, History and the Psyche*
(Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016)

The Gothic Condition consists of fourteen well-researched essays, collected from a range of articles and conference papers published and delivered by pioneering gothic scholar David Punter over the past sixteen years. Composed with Punter's characteristic erudite style, these essays provide compelling critical perspectives and readings of texts from within the gothic canon, but also of science-fiction novels such as M. John Harrison's *Light* (2002) and *Nova Swing* (2006), to name but a few. Despite the somewhat daunting abundance of endnotes, the majority of the essays in this collection focus on three central texts, while also weaving in numerous theoretical concepts and supporting primary material that ultimately form a common thematic thread. As discussing all fourteen essays in detail is beyond the scope of this review, I will focus primarily on four that have proven to be the most engaging.

In his Introduction, Punter explains that his present work is to be read as reflecting what he terms 'the Gothic condition' (p. 1) of contemporary society. He further develops this idea pointing out that

> The Gothic condition is one in which no excess, no transgression […] that can occur to the dark imagination can fail to find its equivalent in the 'real world'. Silent killing by drones; beheadings in the desert; the mass murder of children; racist attacks; endless violence towards women — all those are features of the current global landscape, and beside them, the so-called terrors of Gothic might seem pallid and even juvenile. (p. 3)

The first essay, entitled 'Spectrality: The Ghosting of Theory', provides thought-provoking perspectives on the function of the ghost and haunting within literary and cultural theory and criticism. Punter draws on Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Derrida, Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, as well as Jean Laplanche, among others, in order to demonstrate that the act of reading is an engagement with histories written by and regarding the dead. Psychoanalysis is central here, while the analogy between the 'psychic space' and the crypt is of particular interest, and goes beyond the Freudian concept of the 'return of the repressed'. In this combination of theory and literary tropes, the locus of the crypt functions as a place where secrets and painful stories are buried alongside ancestors. Punter quotes what he calls 'an extraordinary Gothic passage' (p. 16) from Abraham and Torok's *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis* (1994) regarding the return of the phantom from the crypt. This return troubles and challenges the self, represented as 'the cemetery guard', urging the self to a confrontation 'on the terrain of a trauma' (p. 16).

In order to understand why Punter accords such a high importance to the concepts of the crypt and the phantom, one must return to Abraham and Torok's work — *The Shell and the Kernel* and *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* — in which the two are extensively theorised. The crypt, according to Abraham and Torok, is formed when the individual suffers a traumatic experience which leads to 'a split in the Ego'[1] and to the development of 'a secret tomb inside the subject'.[2] This 'psychic tomb'[3] functions as 'a special kind of Unconscious [in that] [e]ach fragment is conscious of itself and unconscious of the realm "outside the crypt"'.[4] The related concept of the phantom is characterised by duplicity. On the one hand, it represents the sealing in the crypt of both a memory regarding a romantic experience with a loved object, and its subsequent traumatic loss. On other, the phantom functions as the haunting influence that the secrets of departed ancestors have on the psyche of the living descendants. Abraham goes even further by arguing that ghosts are the creation of the human psyche and that 'what haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secret of others'.[5] Furthermore, the violation and the uncovering of silenced and ghostly family secrets are what fill patients with horror, as Abraham observes. Punter suggests that 'the psychoanalytic encounter' between the patient and the analyst similarly evokes a 'dialogue with the dead' (p. 15) because the patient provides a narrative infused with secrets and coded words that conceal and symbolise the source of his or her crypts and phantoms. By connecting this idea of psychoanalytical analysis with an interpretative approach committed to uncovering the 'text that lies beneath the text' (p. 15), Punter argues that the self's words are to be perceived as 'the residues, the traces, of the words of others' (p. 17) and that they function as part of a conversation with an inner phantom.

The concept of the spectral, for Punter, is connected with the gothic as a place of origin as well as haunting. The core of the spectral is constituted by a series of contradictions that rely on the psyche. He writes, 'to recognize and yet not recognize the other; to recognize a foreign body at the heart of the self; to be aware and yet to be unable fully to articulate the sense that one's vocabulary […] [has] been formed by the other' (p. 24). In this sense, the haunting influence of the ghostly other extends beyond the limits of the crypt to the very acts and language of the subject. To offer a more comprehensive example of the spectral, and

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[1] Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 81.
[2] Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 130.
[3] As Nicholas T. Rand calls it in the introduction to Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, p. 22.
[4] Abraham and Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*. p. 80.
[5] Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, p. 171.

especially of what he calls 'a mutual impossibility of banishment' (p. 24), Punter refers to the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, in which one side cannot deny the grip of the other. Moreover, the author makes an interesting analogy between the 'foreign body' and the ghost, as both are simultaneously free to move through the world, but inexorably earthbound, compelled to return to a specific place.

Another thought-provoking essay is 'Pseudo-Science and the Creation of Monsters'. Here, Punter analyses two nineteenth-century texts — Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) — along with a twenty-first-century one — M. John Harrison's *Light* (2002). Each of the three texts is used here to highlight a different aspect of science's role in creating (fictional) hybrid beings. Punter proposes reading science as a form of supernatural power, and Victor Frankenstein's troubling of the limits between life and death is key to this reading. Furthermore, Victor is positioned as 'a debased, debauched form of Prometheus appropriate to a debased age' (p. 75). In the case of Wells's text, on the other hand, 'the limits of the human' are tested in multiple attempts to breach the animal/human dichotomy. Dr Moreau populates the island with failed experiments that remain defined by the animal rather than the human, and are unable to transcend their 'beast-flesh'. Here, science deals not only with the secrets of transformation via vivisection but also with pain, which Dr Moreau perceives as a necessary evil to ensure 'scientific progress'. In his related discussion of Harrison's text, Punter highlights the condition of Seria Mau Genlicher, the captain of a spaceship, who undergoes a process of mutilation as she fuses with the ship, becoming a cyborg and therefore ceasing to be a human. Ultimately, the question that this chapter poses is whether science — in its constant mutating and virtually enhancing the human body — is monstrous; or if its creators, driven by a hubristic determination to challenge the categories of the natural, can be considered 'Gothically mad' (p. 86).

The creation of monsters and their status as epitomes of the boundaries between the human and the animal is further examined in the tenth essay, 'Of Monsters and Animals'. Punter has adopted an ontological reading, by developing Heidegger's idea of the abyss that exists between the human and the animal. Punter suggests that monsters spring from the abyss, or what he refers to as the gulf within the human. This realm of darkness within the self, he argues, is responsible for hybridity and thus the instability of the human. Punter refers back to the texts in the earlier essay on 'Pseudo-science' but also to Michel Faber's *Under the Skin* (2000), which he reads as revolving around the metaphor of 'factory farming', and to

Stephen King's *Rose Madder* (1995), where the male protagonist is characterised by an animalistic monstrous aggression, and is associated with a minotaur. In connection to the idea of hybridity, an intruiging question is raised: 'what does it take for the human body to be perceived as deformed?' (p. 154). The proposed answer is rooted in teratology and in the assessment of 'birth defects', especially those that trouble the limits of the human. In this sense, he asserts, the medical also acts as the metaphorical 'police at the edge of the human species' (p. 154). Interestingly, Punter argues that the new-age monster is no longer a hybrid between the human and the animal (as in the case of the vampire or the werewolf), but rather between human and machine — that is, the cyborg. In this regard, he again invokes the figure of Seria Mau, who 'undergoes a process of monstrosisation' (p. 155), in that she is technologically modified in order to be incorporated in the spaceship. In fact, the image of the mutilated and dehumanised Seria Mau appears in four of Punter's essays. At a first glance, we could perhaps dismiss this as mere repetition; however, a more attentive reading reveals that Seria Mau is herself the specter that haunts Punter's text, representing the future of a highly technological world that is both monstrous and limitless.

Another interesting discussion that revolves around the body is presented in the essay 'Abhuman Remains of the Gothic'. This is probably the shortest and yet one of the densest essays in terms of references to both literary and cinematic works. Focusing on examples of bodily fragments, it also touches upon the idea of bodily integrity, especially in connection to prostheses and surgeries that are meant to keep the human body alive. Punter defines the abhuman as 'the place where the body fails to hold itself together […] what has been seen as inside (the skeleton, the organs, the guts) become visible, when what has been seen as outside (the skin, facial expression, limbs) fall back inside and are lost' (p. 97). Ann Radcliffe's representation of the skeleton in *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794); the human remains that have been disturbed by the vampire in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897); and the significance of the fragmented body, especially the eyes and the heart, in Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart'(1843) and E. T. A. Hoffmann's 'The Sandman' (1816), are central to this chapter's discussion of the body as vulnerable. Within the context of a highly technological world that can fashion artificial body parts in order to ensure the functionality of the human body, the question raised here is 'what exactly is it of the human that remains?' (p. 103).

Overall, Punter's *The Gothic Condition*, despite its numerous and at times overwhelming references to novels and films, succeeds in providing an engaging critical analysis that challenges the reader to move further away from monsters such as vampires and

monsters that have become the mainstay of gothic texts and criticism, and to examine instead the anxieties that the cyborg embodies. With its captivating accounts on spectrality, and its incursion into aspects of the fragmented or technologised body, this book will surely be appreciated by many scholars of gothic fiction.

Laura Davidel

Bram Stoker and the Gothic: Formations to Transformations, **ed. by Catherine Wynne**
(Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)

There's nothing quite like a centenary to revitalise a subject, even if that subject never really went out of fashion in the first place. Catherine Wynne's 2016 edited collection, *Bram Stoker and the Gothic: Formations to Transformations*, is one of many volumes that have emerged over the past five years, following the centenary of Stoker's death in 1912. The collection is the latest offering from Palgrave's 'gothic books' series, a series that proclaims itself 'the first to treat the genre in its many inter-related global and "extended" cultural aspects', according to series editor Clive Bloom.[1] Indeed, the series has produced some seminal studies on a wide range of topics under the gothic umbrella, including regional specialities such as Timothy C. Baker's *Contemporary Scottish Gothic* (2014), and genre-defining studies such as Dara Downey's *American Women's Ghost Stories in the Gilded Age* (2014). This latest addition is not the first to deal with the pervasive subjects of Stoker and *Dracula* however, with David J. Jones' *Sexuality and the Gothic Magic Lantern: Desire, Eroticism, and Literary Visibilities from Byron to Bram Stoker* also appearing in 2014, as well as Wynne's previous monograph, *Bram Stoker, Dracula, and the Victorian Stage* (2013). Although the Palgrave series has gone some way to stimulate the field of gothic studies, the combination of Stoker and *Dracula* is nearing exhaustion at this stage, and there exists a significant amount of untapped gothic resources — beyond *Dracula* — deserving of a revival.

It is to be celebrated, then, that *Bram Stoker and the Gothic* offers up a number of non-*Dracula*-related essays, eschewing the virulent vampire for once and contributing some intriguing analyses of Stoker's other fiction, as well as of his engagement with the gothic genre more broadly (as the title suggests). The collection is a result of a Stoker centenary conference held in 2012, and hosted by Wynne at the University of Hull (where Wynne is a Senior Lecturer) and nearby Whitby. In recent years, Hull has become a bastion of gothic scholarship. Rivalling their northern colleagues in Stirling University, and their Lancashire counterparts in Lancaster and Manchester Universities, Hull boasts among its academic staff many of the major contributors to this collection. The centenary year saw a number of Stoker conferences, one of which, 'Bram Stoker: Life and Writing', was held in Trinity College Dublin in July 2012 and resulted in the publication of another volume of work, *Bram Stoker: Centenary Essays*, edited by Jarlath Killeen (2014). Additionally, 2012 was also the year of

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[1] *The Palgrave Gothic Series*, ed. by Clive Bloom, inside cover of *Bram Stoker and the Gothic: Formations to Transformations*, ed. by Catherine Wynne (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

the inaugural — and now annual — Bram Stoker Festival in Dublin, which appears to be going from strength to strength each year. Killeen has written numerous articles on *Dracula* and Stoker, many of which ruminate on the continued mass appeal of the novel and its vampire archetype at the expense of other, arguably more talented Irish gothic writers.[2] The expansion of the Stoker festival into an all-encompassing 'Irish Gothic Writers' festival would certainly be a step in the right direction. However, the freight of the Stoker name appears to be unassailable where tourist opportunities and book sales are concerned.

As with any good conference-cum-collection, Wynne's edition features contributions from both emerging scholars and venerable gothicists, including Carol A. Senf, Luke Gibbons, and William Hughes. This cross section of established theoreticians offering broad assessments of author and genre is invigorated by new approaches to, and readings of, Stoker's work. Kevin Corstorphine and Sara Williams both offer analyses of Stoker's short story 'The Squaw' (1893), with Corstorphine examining Stoker's personal interest in America, highlighting the various ways in which this connection manifests in Stoker's fiction, including the Yankee Quincy Morris from *Dracula*. Moreover, Corstorphine considers Stoker's personal 'indebtedness' to writers such as Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe, and goes further to trace aspects of American gothic — such as themes of race, violence, and nationhood — in 'The Squaw' and across Stoker's fiction more broadly (p. 61). Sara Williams offers a feminist approach to 'The Squaw' and Stoker's 1903 novel, *The Jewel of the Seven Stars*, wherein she considers the idea of the 'devouring mother' and the theme of maternal biological inheritance, in this case through physical marking or 'maternal imprinting' (p. 118). Williams usefully considers these themes within the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and situates them amid theories of racial supremacy and eugenics.

Indeed, there is a definite strain of postcolonial theory evident in numerous essays in the collection — racial theory, degeneration, disease, and various manifestations of colonisation emerge repeatedly. In particular, Senf's essay considers the prevalence of 'invasion narratives' in Stoker's fiction, positing that 'even those that are not Gothic, are usually dominated by references to invasions', both fictional and historical (p. 92). Senf argues convincingly that 'invasion as a trope' is a defining feature of Stoker's fiction as a whole (p. 93). One reason for this, she argues, is '[b]ecause Stoker was thinking of a complicated world where people travel easily from one culture to another and where people

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[2] See Jarlath Killeen, Introduction, *Inspiring a Mysterious Terror: 200 Years of J. S. Le Fanu*, ed. by Killeen and Valeria Cavalli (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), pp. 1-28 (pp. 6-7).

are acutely aware of cultural differences' (pp. 93-94). Senf revives an established theory that *Dracula* is, at its heart, a colonial text, an allegory for Ireland's colonial subjugation; but by tracing the invasion theme throughout Stoker's oeuvre, Senf presents an entirely new perspective on Stoker, figuring him as a writer responding to 'what he saw going on in his own world' (p. 103).

Almost all of the essays point to an idea of cosmopolitanism — in one form or another — in ways that reflect on Stoker's lived experience in an increasingly globalised world. The collection concludes with artist Jef Murray's visual contribution, 'Gallants, Ghosts, and Gargoyles: Illustrating the Gothic Tale', which further underscores the cosmopolitan theme of physical place and dis-placement that runs throughout the book. In particular, Murray's image of the ruined abbey at Whitby, which also features on the cover of the book, is particularly striking given its relevance to *Dracula* and the location of the conference (p. 224).[3] Stoker is an author deeply concerned with place and property — as noted by Corstorphine, Senf, and Abby Bardi — an author who is rooted in place and yet is also a cosmopolitan, transnational figure: a migrant, an Irishman living in England who draws on American, European, and Oriental influences. Bardi's intriguing treatise on soil/land, race, and infection in *Dracula* points out the symbolic use of soil in the novel, and foregrounds the Count's concern with legal property ownership. Unfortunately, however, Bardi stops short of drawing out the potential connections between these themes and Stoker's biographical context, where issues relating to land and ownership are surely noteworthy. In fact, Stoker's Irish provenance is a subject noticeably absent across the board, an omission which seems particularly remiss considering the recurring themes of urban and rural environments, travel, and international influences.

However, Wynne's volume is a welcome addition to the considerable body of critical writing on the relationships between Stoker, *Dracula*, and the gothic, and is certainly essential reading for anyone keen to stay up to date in the field of Stoker studies. Indeed, the collection ought to be required reading for anybody interested in Bram, *Dracula*, or looking for an introduction to gothic studies more broadly. The volume is fittingly described by Palgrave as 'readable by an intelligent student or a knowledgeable general reader', although Stoker scholars may struggle to find room on their already overcrowded bookshelf.[4] Overall,

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[3] The conference keynote was given by the wonderful Christopher Frayling, who unfortunately doesn't feature in this collection, although he does appear in Killeen's collection.
[4] Bloom, inside cover, *The Palgrave Gothic Series*.

the move away from Stoker's *magnum opus* — however slight — is certainly a welcome development.

Aoife Dempsey

Patrick J. Murphy, *Medieval Studies and the Ghost Stories of M. R. James*
(University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017)

A genre-defining writer of ghost stories whose fiction has remained in print for over a century, M. R. James's place in the pantheon of great horror and supernatural storytellers has long been assured. Patrick J. Murphy's new monograph study of James's tales is notable on two counts. Firstly, despite James's long-recognised significance in the development of the ghost story, this is the first book-length study wholly dedicated to his supernatural fiction. Secondly, given James's equally celebrated position as an influential bibliographic scholar, whose work on medieval manuscripts is still consulted and widely discussed by modern scholars, Murphy's study is the first sustained attempt to assess the relationship between James's fiction as a whole and the history of 'antiquarianism' – and, more specifically, that particular branch of antiquarian study ('medieval studies') to which James's academic work might be said broadly to belong. As Murphy convincingly demonstrates, not only were James's academic preoccupations intricately entwined with the substance of his ghost stories, but his ghost stories can also be read as interventions in the academic pursuits that characterised his professional career. Indeed, Murphy's contention is that James's fiction and his academic output need to be seen as part of a single body of work, one which reflects an academic career that bore witness to profound changes in what exactly it meant to be an academic and an 'antiquary'.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the increased professionalisation of academic historical studies led to its compartmentalisation into distinct disciplines (most notably the gradual development of a distinction between documentary History and material-focused Archaeology). A demarcation also began to emerge between professional university-educated specialists and an undisciplined polymorphism, perceived as characteristic of the stereotypical amateur antiquary. Throughout Murphy's study, a keen sense of James's need to negotiate this disciplinary shift from undisciplined 'antiquarianism' to professional specialist in one specific discipline is in evidence. As Murphy argues, James's multi-faceted expertise in medieval manuscripts meant that he was well placed to meditate on this developing 'sense that a single professional researcher could no longer be free to wander from one demarcated discipline to another', since '[i]nvestigations into "the wanderings and homes of manuscripts" tended indeed to soften hardening boundaries separating the study of literature, biblical studies, historical linguistics, and art history' (p. 10).

At the same time, in addition to this focus on disciplinary boundaries, Murphy's analyses are also firmly grounded in the historical specificities of the homosocial, male-dominated, collegiate, Oxbridge-orientated world that framed James's understanding of the academic issues at stake. It is with this in mind that Murphy approaches the tales, with a view to 'tracing the coherence and significance of James's antiquarian style' (p. 22), suggesting that the ghost stories' authentic scholarly apparatus and implicitly learned narrator (a scholar addressing other scholars) are at once a reflection of their initial aim of entertaining a select band of fellow academics, and a consequence of James's 'performing a version of his professional self' (p. 23). Time and again, Murphy demonstrates convincingly that an understanding of James's stories is inseparable from an understanding not only of the specific 'antiquarian' issue at stake, but also of how James's own understanding of these very questions was framed and shaped by the social and historical context in which his work was undertaken. Murphy not only elucidates how James's stories function as direct (and often surprising) commentaries on questions of genuine interest to medieval scholarship, but also how they reflect the concerns of a scholar inhabiting a particular academic community, in which questions of disciplinary best practice are always intertwined with (homo)social norms and expectations.

In the first chapter, for example, Murphy examines 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas' and '"Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad"' (both 1904), in order to gain a clearer picture of how academic 'errancy' — not only in the sense of erroneous interpretation, but in the sense of 'errant' wandering from the established disciplinary path — is linked with other kinds of deviancy, both criminal and sexual. The chapter is a good example of the way in which Murphy's monograph meticulously uncovers a dazzling multiplicity of possible socio-historical lenses and medieval intertexts through which specific tales might be understood, while also offering convincing new insight into the real antiquarian puzzles on which the stories are founded (for example, the mystery of the Templars, or the precise origin and meanings of the runic inscriptions that James only partially elucidates). The second chapter examines how James's stories explore, in Murphy's words, the 'darker pleasures of professionalism' (p. 26). In an effective reading of 'Casting the Runes' (1911), for instance, Murphy sees the story not just as a condemnation of the amateurish polymorphism of its antagonist, Karswell's, fascination with the occult, but also as a dark reflection on the vagaries of a 'freshly constricted academic culture' (p. 26). According to Murphy's reading, the ideal of a community of academic specialists working together towards an objective

understanding of their subject is threatened by the vicarious temptation to write off a fellow-scholar's work, a symptom of the material realities of academic publishing practice. This reviewer was particularly taken with the notion that Karswell's warning, 'three months were allowed',[1] might be read as a sinister take on the impersonal language of the peer-review report or the editorial rejection, and that the anonymous runes with which Karswell curses Dunning reflect the anonymous thrashing that Dunning administers during his review of Karswell's proposed academic paper.

In the second half of the chapter, Murphy offers an analysis of 'A View from a Hill' (1925), arguing that the motif of the haunted binoculars that offer a direct window onto the history of the landscape affords James a means through which to reflect on the merits and demerits of the professional medievalist's project, when contrasted with the antiquary's less rigorous, yet also less constricted approach to the study of the past. This is another reading that exemplifies the richness of Murphy's analyses of James's individual tales, elucidating the way in which the pastoral visions of Piers Plowman function as a suggestive intertext for the story, while also explaining how the tale can be read in light of the historical-biographical context of James's work with the Royal Commission, established to recommend reforms to the Public Record Office. It is typical of the way in which, throughout the volume, Murphy combines the medievalist's knowledge of literary sources with an awareness of the minutiae of the history of 'antiquarian' methodologies, in order to demonstrate the ways in which the tales expose a fundamental tension at the heart of James's career — a tension between the rigours of professional discipline and the anarchic valances of the more leisurely approach that is the amateur's luxury. While James the professional scholar necessarily strove for the former, his tales often exhibit a vestigial desire for the latter.

A combination of medieval intertext and meticulous grounding in the history of late-Victorian and Edwardian approaches to academic history and archaeology also typify the remaining three chapters. Chapter Three examines James's treatment of cathedral history in 'An Episode of Cathedral History' (1914) and 'The Stalls of Barchester Cathedral' (1911). Murphy's analysis takes in not only the relationship between these tales and medieval poetry, drama, and Biblical literature, but also the real-life restoration of Rochester Cathedral, of which James would have been well aware and which, along with these literary sources, seems to have inspired his fictional 'Episode.'

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[1] M. R. James, 'Casting the Runes', in *Count Magnus and Other Ghost Stories* (New York: Penguin, 2005), pp. 158-179 (p. 164).

While Murphy's interlinking of intertext and disciplinary history is strikingly original, the fourth and fifth chapters demonstrate how such a combination can also prove unexpectedly moving. His fourth chapter, which focuses on James's monumental and ultimately unfinished project of cataloguing every medieval manuscript in every library in Cambridge (the volumes he did complete are still consulted, albeit warily, by present-day scholars), considers how his fiction might be read as a melancholic reflection on this kind of work. Murphy draws on recent scholarship by Judith Halberstam and Elizabeth Freeman, which posits a theory of 'queer temporality' — the notion, as Murphy puts it, that heteronormativity 'has a strong temporal dimension, demanding a particular script of expected stages and events' (p. 136). Murphy suggests that James's long association with Eton and King's both empowered his ability to pursue his academic studies, while also ensuring that his entire existence was enshrined in institutions fundamentally medieval, and thus out of step with the present day. Just as queer temporality both supports and subverts heteronormative time, James's career 'both redeemed and shunted awry the track of his antiquarian life', affording a 'temporal luxury', while also conferring 'the taint of scholarly anachronism' (p. 137). While this has implications for James himself, ensconced as he was in decidedly medieval institutions, it also has ramifications for all those engaged in academic research. Knowing as they must that such endeavours will be outdated almost as soon as complete, the professional scholar inhabits a present with no clear teleology, 'an endlessly expanding middle period of transmission' (p. 145). In James's stories, such a situation is most obviously represented by the hollow centre of Mr Humphreys's attempts to map his maze and catalogue his library. Nor is Murphy afraid to critique the troubling implications of James's attempt to redeem the 'temporal bearings of his university' (p. 154) in 'The Tractate Middoth' (1911), which Murphy sees as a problematic attempt to defend the enervating homosocial relationships between the denizens of Eton and King's (white, male) community by figuring it as an alternative temporality, at the expense of women and other races.

Murphy concludes his study with a moving reading of 'A Warning to the Curious' (1925), once again drawing on a combination of medieval intertext (*Beowulf* this time) and the history of the antiquarian disciplines that framed James's life and career — in this case, the tragic emptying of Cambridge University in the wake of the loss of an entire generation in the First World War. In an ingenious and powerful analysis, Murphy sees the tale, which is set in 1917 but never explicitly mentions the war, as embodying an alternative war-less England. Yet, he argues, the way in which the tale ends with the spectacle of the broken body

of the young treasure-hunter Paxton indicates that the war is sublimated rather than completely eschewed. Murphy's proposition is that this tale is no admonition against 'curiosity', but rather a meditation on the futility of 'warning', in which the older scholars who attempt, as Cambridge University dons would have done, to mentor this aspiring young antiquary, completely fail to rescue him from his dark fate. In fact, in the light of the war, the tale might be read as 'a restless *rquiescat in pace* for those who, like Paxton, fell well outside the reach of sound advice, sufficient warning, or the capacity of the present to make decent and lasting sense of the past' (p. 173). Ultimately, the possibility that 'the particular advice that might have been delivered is impossible to formulate even in retrospect, is perhaps precisely where the tale locates its most indelible horror' (p. 183)

As this summary illustrates, although focusing on the way in which James's fiction reflects both the history of medieval studies and their author's fluctuating position in relation to that history, Murphy's monograph holds back from formulating one all-encompassing position for James within that history — largely because Murphy also avoids portraying that history as itself a cohesive narrative. Murphy anchors his analyses in specific episodes in James's career, or in a particular medieval intertext, while also deploying a range of theoretical ideas about the relationship between present-day readers and scholars, and the texts that they consume. Yet Murphy also extends this understanding of what it means to interpret the past (and to write about the past) to his own readings of James's fiction. Indeed, Murphy's book is almost a celebration of scholarship itself, as a means by which complexities, rather than answers, are endlessly revealed, as new readers reinterpret the past through new, often intensely personal encounters with its material and textual remains. As such, while offering new and sometimes startlingly original readings, Murphy always eschews the need to reject other, apparently conflicting interpretations of James's fiction by previous critics. These are reviewed and critiqued, but are also held up as valuable alternative readings of stories which are fascinatingly elusive, their 'medievalizing complexity' demonstrating nothing if not the 'compelling and difficult' way in which they refuse to be 'reduce[d] to a single message, moral, or "warning"' (p. 167).

Until comparatively recently, the prevailing critical consensus on James's fiction could be characterised by Julia Briggs's insistence that, though masterfully entertaining and obviously the work of a learned scholar, his tales were superficial edifices with little to offer

the serious literary critic.[2] Perhaps paradoxically, in resolutely laying bare the sheer elusiveness of James's fictions — their absolute refusal to settle into one final 'meaning' — Murphy has fashioned a rich, allusive study, which demonstrates just how fertile a field for theoretical and historical enquiry these endlessly fascinating tales can be.

Dewi Evans

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[2] Julia Briggs, *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (London: Faber & Faber, 1977), pp. 124-41. Briggs reiterates the point in 'The Ghost Story', in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) pp. 122-31.

Adam Scovell, *Folk Horror: Hours Dreadful and Things Strange*
(Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2017)

Folk horror has been enjoying a renaissance since at least 2010, the year Mark Gatiss's influential three-part BBC documentary, *A History of Horror*, was released. Gatiss interviewed Piers Haggard, the director of the early 1970s cult classic, *The Blood on Satan's Claw*, who had claimed in a 2003 interview that his film had been an effort to create 'folk horror'. Haggard thus coined the term, although it didn't attract much attention until Gatiss used it in his documentary to denote a distinctive subgenre. Since then, the folk-horror renaissance has moved in two directions — backward, revisiting the defining folk-horror texts from the late 1960s and 1970s, including the central triumvirate of *Witchfinder General* (1968), *The Blood on Satan's Claw* (1971), and *The Wicker Man* (1973), and forward to new incarnations of the subgenre, both in films — *Eden Lake* (2008), *Wake Wood* (2009), *Kill List* (2011), *A Field in England* (2013), *The Hallow* (2015), and *Without Name* (2016) — and fiction — Adam Nevill's *The Ritual* (2011; made into a 2017 film), Andrew Michael Hurley's *The Loney* (2014), Thomas Olde Heuvelt's *Hex* (2016), and John Langan's *The Fisherman* (2016). This resurgence of the folk-horror subgenre has been met by a growing critical response. Adam Scovell has been at the forefront of this critical movement, through his website, *Celluloid Wicker Man*, and now his book, *Folk Horror: Hours Dreadful and Things Strange*.

As folk horror has continued to flower, it has inevitably provoked the definitional question: what is folk horror, anyway? One of Scovell's most important interventions is that (first on his website and now in his book) he has offered a useful answer to that question through his articulation of the 'folk-horror chain', a series of interlinked motifs that can be found in most if not all folk-horror texts. The first link in the chain is *landscape*, which, as Scovell points out, is never mere 'scene-setting' in folk horror but instead a topography that ushers in 'adverse effects on the social and moral identity of its inhabitants' (p. 17). The second link is *isolation*; the characters of folk horror, Scovell argues, are confined within a profoundly 'inhospitable place' that is cut off from 'some established social progress of the diegetic world' (pp. 17-18). The landscape and its isolating effects produce '*skewed belief systems and morality*'; those who inhabit folk horror's lonely landscapes, in other words, acquire a set of convictions and values that are outside the mainstream rational, modern world (p. 18, emphasis added). The inhabitants on Summerisle in Robin Hardy's *The Wicker Man*, for instance, believe that sacrificing a virgin can restore their crops. Finally, the folk-

horror narrative typically culminates in what Scovell calls the '*happening/summoning*', the 'horrific fallout' of everything that came before (p. 18, emphasis added), perhaps best exemplified by the sacrificial burning of Sergeant Howie — avatar of the Christian and 'modern' — as a pagan offering in the climactic scene of *The Wicker Man*.

The idea of the 'folk-horror chain' is an incredibly productive lens through which to read most folk-horror texts, as Scovell does in Chapter Two, which examines the 'unholy trinity' of late 60s and early 70s films (*Witchfinder General*, *The Blood on Satan's Claw*, and *The Wicker Man*). His book does argue, though, that the sheer diversity of folk-horror texts typically surpasses the bounds of the motifs that he identifies as making up the folk-horror chain. Indeed, Scovell's introduction lays out a more capacious conception of folk horror, as consisting of any work that uses folklore 'for eerie, uncanny or horrific purposes'; that dramatises the clash between such 'arcana' and modernity; or that 'creates its own folklore' (p. 7). Scovell's introduction, then, offers expansive definitions of folk horror that serve to balance the more constraining 'folk-horror chain'.

After examining the subgenre's 'unholy trinity' through the lens of the folk-horror chain in Chapter Two, Scovell turns, in Chapter Three, to the importance of landscape in British television of the 1960s and '70s, beginning with the BBC's Ghost Stories for Christmas (including several fine M. R. James adaptations) and moving through *The Owl Service* (1969), *Robin Redbreast* (1970), *Penda's Fen* (1974), and *Children of the Stones* (1977). Pursuing the idea of the centrality of landscape to folk horror, in Chapter Four, Scovell examines what he calls 'rurality' in a wide range of films, from the very earliest example — Benjamin Christensen's *Häxan: Witchcraft through the Ages* (1922) — through *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), offering examples not only from the UK but from Europe, the US, Australia, and Japan. Scovell defines 'rurality' as much more than just a countryside setting; instead, he sees it as 'the sideways tipping of the diegetic reality of a narrative world through an ironic emphasis on the recognizably numinous rural' (p. 8) and, later, as perceptible in a text's use of the 'otherness that can be attributed to rural life' in order to 'warp the very reality of its narrative worlds'. 'Reality' and the 'rural' are mixed in such texts, in other words, to form 'a symbiotic effect of eeriness' (p. 81). These definitions of 'rurality' make it clear how representations of rural landscapes in folk horror slide into the terrain of the strange and the unfamiliar rather than partaking strictly of realism. The rural

landscapes of folk horror are always uncanny, always harbouring the past just beneath the surface, and always possessing a powerful agency.[1]

In Chapter Five, Scovell shifts away (mostly) from landscape to focus on 'the occult flavoured esoteric content' (p. 9) within the genre — whether it be pagan ritual, magic, the supernatural, or witchcraft. He also extends his discussion to folk-horror texts set in urban locations (notably taking up the work of television and film writer Nigel Kneale, perhaps best known for 1967's *Quatermass and the Pit*). Scovell reads the folk-horror texts discussed in this chapter through the concept of 'hauntology', a term he defines several times (see, for example, pp. 122, 125, 135-36, 158, and 162) and that seems to signal the way in which the 1970s are both haunted by a deep (often occult) past and also (themselves) haunt later folk-horror productions. As Scovell uses it, hauntology involves not a nostalgic looking back to the past but a critical questioning of both past and present: 'nostalgia of the hauntological variety' involves a 'questioning of the past through its lost futures rather than a reductive form of looking back' (p. 158).

Scovell discusses Gordon Hessler's *Cry of the Banshee* (1970), for instance, a film that takes up the persecution of witches in the 1700s while exposing the 'ubiquitous abuse against women of all classes' that occurred in both the eighteenth century and the 1970s. Finally, in his last chapter, Scovell examines the burgeoning of folk horror in the twenty-first century — notably the work of Ben Wheatley (*Kill List*, *Sightseers* (2012), and *A Field in England*) — and what it might tell us about the current political climate. He ends with the provocative claim that the real world seems increasingly to resemble the diegetic folk-horror world, especially since the 2016 British referendum that may soon result in the UK's exit from the European Union. 'We have burnt our Sgt Howie in the wicker man', he writes, 'and now wait naively for our apples to grow once more, confident that we have "taken back control"' (p. 184). While this specific analogy for Brexit may be something of a stretch, it provocatively links the resurgence of folk horror with the nostalgia for a 'lost Britain' (one with more secure borders) that in part at least fuelled the vote to leave the EU.

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[1] An important early essay in the folk-horror critical canon, although it does not use the term, identifies how the past haunts the present in folk-horror texts. See Rob Young, 'The Pattern under the Plough', *Sight and Sound*, 20.8 (August 2010), 16-22 <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.lehigh.edu/docview/734695556?accountid=12043> [accessed 15 September 2017]. Looking at depictions of rural life in British period drama of the 1960s and 1970s, Young notes 'a desire to focus on the historical essence of place, and screen out modernist intrusions; or to envision buried spirits of a place bursting into the present' (pp. 17-18). I have argued that perhaps the dominant trait of folk horror is the agency of the landscape: 'In folk horror, things don't just happen in a (passive) landscape; things happen because of the landscape. The landscape does things; it has efficacy.' See Dawn Keetley, 'The Resurgence of Folk Horror', *HorrorHomeroom*, 6 November 2015 <http://www.horrorhomeroom.com/the-resurgence-of-folk-horror/> [accessed 15 September 2017].

The strength of Scovell's book lies first and foremost in the vast array of folk-horror texts he discusses (primarily film and television), from the 1920s to the present and across the globe, though with an emphasis on British cultural productions of the 1960s and '70s. The book is thus an invaluable resource for those who seek an introduction to both the central and more marginal entries in the folk-horror canon. Scovell's bibliography of secondary criticism is also helpful. There has been very little scholarly work on folk horror, with much of the criticism occurring in popular journals and on websites and blogs.[2] Scovell does an admirable job of collecting this work. There are some omissions, though, not least the important academic scholarship that has begun to emerge: Paul Newland's excellent edited collection on rural cinematic landscapes, including his chapter on folk horror in *Blood on Satan's Claw* (which extends its reach to folk horror more generally), as well as Tanya Krzywinska's important essay on pagan landscapes in popular cinema.[3] Nonetheless, along with its importance as a resource, Scovell's book is invaluable for his concept of the *folk-horror chain* and for his use of *rurality* and *hauntology* as lenses through which to read folk-horror texts. These three concepts recur throughout the book, and although the latter two suffer from some fuzziness of focus, they are helpful paradigms through which to approach folk-horror texts of all kinds.

Scovell's book is not, however, particularly helpful for its actual analysis of the folk-horror texts themselves. He introduces most of the texts he discusses by offering a 'breakdown' (a plot summary) and then his subsequent analysis is often sporadic and not terribly illuminating. His writing, moreover, is often unwieldy, obscure, and even ungrammatical, making it difficult sometimes to follow his point, especially at crucial moments when he elaborates the more abstract concepts that structure the book. The obscurity of both his arguments and analysis is deepened by the book's lack of any clear organising structure. It's clear that Scovell tries to impose some order at the beginnings and endings of chapters, but the vast middles are a hodgepodge of summaries and claims that often feel random and that are not developed in any sustained way. Chapters range over the

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[2] See, for example, Scovell's own website <https://celluloidwickerman.com/>, as well as <http://www.folkhorror.com/> and <https://folkhorrorrevival.com/>. Andy Paciorek, who runs the Folk Horror Revival Group on Facebook, published a collection of essays and interviews in *Folk Horror Revival: Field Studies* ([n. p.]: Wyrd Harvest Press, 2015).

[3] See *British Rural Landscapes on Film*, ed. by Paul Newland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), especially his chapter, 'Folk Horror and the Contemporary Cult of British Rural Landscape: The Case of *Blood on Satan's Claw*', pp. 162-79; and Tanya Krzywinska, 'Lurking Beneath the Skin: British Pagan Landscapes in Popular Cinema', in *Cinematic Countrysides*, ed. by Robert Fish (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 75-90. Also missing from Scovell's bibliography is the important essay by David Bell, 'Anti-Idyll: Rural Horror', in *Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginalisation, and Rurality*, ed. by Paul Cloke and Jo Little (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 94-108.

same texts and the same ideas (rural landscapes and the occult come up throughout the book, no matter what the purported argument of the chapter) to such a degree that the substance of the individual chapters end up collapsing into each other. The long Chapter Five on 'Occultism, Hauntology and the Urban "Wyrd"' tries to cover far too much ground and has no centre at all; much of the chapter (despite supposedly focusing on the urban occult) goes back to rural/village settings, and then when the chapter does turn to the urban, folk horror as such seems to fade away. It's hard to see, for example, how *Death Line* (1972) or *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) fit within even the most generous definitions of the genre.

Scovell has addressed numerous folk-horror texts on his website — and this book often feels like a translation of multiple blog entries onto the page; it is too often sporadic and sometimes superficial, not the sustained, deep, and coherent argument and analysis that a book demands. In short, my evaluation here is mixed. Despite the very real deficiencies in style, organisation, and analysis, though, you won't find a more comprehensive introduction to folk-horror texts than Adam Scovell's *Folk Horror: Hours Dreadful and Things Strange*. And his conception of the 'folk-horror chain' offers a productive lens through which to grasp some of what folk horror is doing.

Dawn Keetley

Jen Cadwallader, *Spirits and Spirituality in Victorian Fiction* (London: Palgrave, 2016)

God is Back! Or, at least, so proclaimed John Micklethwaite and Adrian Wooldridge in their 2009 examination of the global revival of faith in the twenty-first century. The title suggested that God had been absent for a while, and was now making a welcome or unwelcome return, and was a riposte to both the famous pronouncement of Nietzsche's madman in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-85) — 'God is dead!' — and the infamous *Time Magazine* front cover of 8 April 1966, which pointedly asked 'is God dead?' (the implicit answer being: 'yes, of course'). Pinpointing the time of his death was difficult, but Thomas Hardy had helped matters considerably with his poem 'God's Funeral' (1908-10), which provided a suitably gloomy title for A. N. Wilson's interesting examination of the slow demise of God through the Victorian period, as he succumbed to death by a thousand cuts (the knives wielded by the likes of Charles Lyell, A. G. Swinburne, George Eliot, Charles Darwin, Matthew Arnold, and so on).[1] Yes, despite being, in popular culture, associated with excessive and rigorous piety, repressive attitudes to sexuality, gender, race and everything else, those holy hypocrites, the Victorians, of all people, had actually also been the ones to finally put the knife in. Or so we all thought …

In recent years/decades, things have, however, changed in Victorian studies. In particular, there have been enormous shifts in our understanding of the religious history of the period. Recent scholarship has challenged and transformed conventional thinking about the Victorian period as one characterised by a fairly monolithic version of what is called the 'crisis of faith', a crisis traditionally characterised as a struggle between 'Genesis and geology', or 'Jesus and Darwin', or more nebulously, 'religion and science', with Andrew Dickson White's *A History Of The Warfare Of Science With Theology In Christendom* (1896) apparently setting the terms for understanding the concluding battles to be fought in the nineteenth century.[2] This battle for hearts and minds supposedly contributed to the increasing secularisation of the Anglo-American world, and led, in part, to a falling away of support for traditional religious authorities, and the rise of agnosticism and atheism. Much work on the Victorians in the twentieth century was carried out when the 'secularisation thesis' still reigned supreme in the social sciences, and the implications of this thesis were rather too

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[1] A. N. Wilson, *God's Funeral: The Decline of Faith in Western Civilisation* (London: John Murray, 1998).
[2] See especially Giles St Aubyn, *Souls in Torment: Victorian Faith in Crisis* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 2011); and Timothy Larsen, *Contested Christianity: The Political and Social Contexts of Victorian Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004).

easily accepted in studies of the literature of the nineteenth century.[3] Such work tended to focus attention on 'honest doubt' rather than sincere faith, agnosticism rather than reflective belief, and outright atheism rather than religious fundamentalism, and frankly didn't pay enough attention to religious continuities, or to personal and denominational adaptation to contemporary ideas rather than abandonment of faith.

The secularisation thesis has been under sustained assault for a while now, not least because most of the predictions about the ultimate disappearance of religion itself now look like they were either wildly optimistic, or pessimistic, depending on your particular convictions. The sociologists Rodney Stark and Roger Finke have suggested that it is time to give it a decent burial: 'After nearly three centuries of utterly failed prophesies and misrepresentations of both present and past, it seems time to carry the secularization doctrine to the graveyard of failed theories, and there to whisper "requiescat in pace".'[4] The misrepresentations of the Victorian period are being brilliantly addressed by the work of scholars like James C. Livingston, Timothy Larsen, Boyd Hilton, Melissa Schramm, and Giles St Aubyn, who are slowly transforming our understanding of the period, and drawing attention to neglected areas of religious innovation, transformation, and indeed, even renewed traditionalism. Larsen, for example, suggests that, far from religious conviction and belief being found intellectually untenable in the light of scientific discovery, in fact, as far as we can tell, far more sceptics became believers than believers sceptics in the late nineteenth century. God's death was, it turns out, greatly exaggerated, not only because its chroniclers failed to predict the postmodern fundamentalists of the twenty-first century, but because they paid too much attention to an unrepresentative coterie in the nineteenth century, and not enough to those who resisted the attacks on religious traditions, or who found new and interesting ways of remaining religious during the crisis of faith, which may better be termed a crisis of meaning.

Literary scholars are fast catching up with the historians. Surprisingly enough, gothic studies has been rather behind the curve here — surprising because very many texts now gathered under the very expansive term 'the gothic' concern direct or indirect manifestations of the supernatural and the paranormal. In other words, the gothic actually addresses ideas about the nature of ultimate reality on a regular basis, and therefore is well placed to offer insights into the ways in which questions of meaning and faith were being debated. It may be

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[3] For a good example of the way assumptions about secularisation crept into even incisive work on Victorian literature, see Anthony Kenny, *God and Two Poets* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1988).

[4] Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), p. 79.

that the powerful grip of psychoanalysis on gothic studies discouraged scholars and critics from taking religious language seriously as anything other than evidence about the neurosis of characters within the text — after all, Freud himself had explained religion as a vast repression mechanism generated by an Oedipal crisis at the very dawn of human history. As the psychoanalytic paradigm has come under attack, gothicists have been looking anew at whether the genre is a contribution to a secularising process within culture more generally, or a reaction against it. The compelling work of scholars like Alison Milbank and Diane Long Hoeveler has been crucial to persuading gothic specialists to look at religion again when considering the genre.

However, while there has indeed been a turn 'back' to religion in many areas of gothic studies, this had, until now, not really touched the ghost story or supernatural tale (although it would seem self-evident that stories with ghosts and supernatural events in them are commentaries on religious matters). The dominant reading of ghost stories has, in fact, been materialist — as evident in both Simon Hay's *A History of the Modern British Ghost Story* (2012), and Andrew Smith's *The Ghost Story, 1840-1920: A Cultural History* (2012). While both of these recent studies are superb treatments of the economic and material contexts necessary for a full understanding of the prominence of the ghost story in Victorian Britain, they tend to avoid engaging with the changing religious landscape or theology in a direct way. Earlier work on ghost stories — such as Jack Sullivan's very influential *Elegant Nightmares* (1978) — adopted a psychoanalytical approach that translated theology into psychology in a very direct way. However, thinking theologically about ghosts and ghost stories makes sense. After all, the ghost does not speak only of the forces or discourses of materialist modernity that were actually decentring Victorians from confident at-homeness-in-the-universe, but usually speaks another, and rather more disconcerting language entirely. If nineteenth-century geology, physics, and biology were in the business of dislodging homo-centrism, the ghost story dislodges, or at least undermines, the very instrument through which some of these new versions of science were articulated — the language of empirical reasoning. After all, ghosts could not exist, according to both Protestant theology and dogmatic naturalism, and if they (actually) did, then even more adjusting had to be done.

Two recent and very substantial studies of the Victorian ghost story appeared in 2016, both arguing that these tales should be read as interventions into the very complex faith crises of the period. In a convincing analysis, Zoe Lehmann Imfeld's *The Victorian Ghost Story and Theology: From Le Fanu to James* contends that these stories need to be resituated in what

she believes to be their true theological context. Imfeld proposes that the protagonists of ghost stories take a theological 'journey' over the course of the text, from what the sociologist Charles Taylor calls the 'bounded' or 'buffered' secular self of a post-Enlightened world, to a much more complicated and porous self in which, as she argues, 'man is *both* immanent and transcendent'.[5] More controversial is her proposition that it is not just the protagonists of the stories who are taken along this theological journey, but also the reader, who inhabits the same secular world as the sceptical characters. Therefore, these supernatural tales could be considered (in a nuanced and qualified way) as having religious designs on the readers. Indeed, Imfeld not only suggests that theology is central to an understanding of the ghost story and the supernatural tale more generally, but that it is virtually impossible to understand these stories outside the theological context, and that this context includes the reader's participation in a spiritual 'journey' (and metaphors of travel are used throughout the book) leading to a post-secular sensibility.

Imfeld is not the only contemporary scholar sensitive to the complicated religious history to which Victorian ghost stories speak. Jen Cadwallader's lively, accessible, and very insightful *Spirits and Spirituality in Victorian Fiction* brilliantly problematises readings of ghost stories as articulations of an agnostic sensibility and 'contends that the ghost story highlights the way faith adapted to and evolved in the scientific climate of the nineteenth century' (p. 6). Cadwallader carefully chooses major writers of ghost stories, and major crises of meaning that these authors addressed in their work. A powerful chapter on Sheridan Le Fanu traces the transformation of the ghost in his work, from the early quasi-folk tales focused around Father Purcell, where the ghost is rendered a function of substance abuse, alcohol consumption, and a dissipated life, to the author's undermining of the mid-century physiological and psychological dismissal of the ghost by the scientific and medical establishments, in his collection *In a Glass Darkly* (1871). Le Fanu is, Cadwallader demonstrates, highly sceptical of the many scientific claims to have 'solved' the continued sightings of ghosts and phantoms in a post-Enlightenment era. Doctors increasingly explained away the ghost as proof of the unbalanced mind and/or body of the ghost-seer, and Cadwallader marshals a large body of textual and contextual evidence to demonstrate that Le Fanu skewers patronising professionals in the figure of Dr Martin Hesselius, despite the latter's pretensions to 'metaphysical' as well as physical expertise.

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[5] Zoë Lehmann Imfeld, *The Victorian Ghost Story and Theology: From Le Fanu to James* (London: Palgrave, 2016), p. 25.

Le Fanu's withering scepticism about the efficacy of medical treatment can be found almost everywhere in his work, and Cadwallader's close reading of the ghost stories as critiques of those of Le Fanu's contemporaries who 'blindly adhere to the scientific system' (p. 48) is very persuasive. For Cadwallader, the haunted Rev. Jennings in 'Green Tea', who insists that the monkey that haunts him is a physical affliction, is the fictional equivalent of physiologists like John Ferriar, Charles Ollier and John Alderson who all considered ghosts to be medical rather than metaphysical problems. I was not so convinced, though, by the argument that he also refuses to place any faith in religion, an argument Cadwallader expands from Jack Sullivan's discernment of an almost nihilistic cosmology at the heart of texts like 'Green Tea', 'Mr Justice Harbottle', and 'The Familiar'. Richard Haslam has recently contended that Calvinism rather than nihilism might offer a better insight into such puzzling texts,[6] and given the renewal and revival of traditions of Protestantism heavily inflected by Calvinist theology in the nineteenth century, future scholars may need to look to the controversies in the Victorian Church of Ireland for explanations of Le Fanu's apparent spiritual pessimism.

In a rewarding chapter examining both Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain* (1848), Cadwallader argues that Dickens responds to the same kinds of cultural pressures to medicalise or psychologise the ghost as Le Fanu. Because Dickens connected the ghost to time and memory, Cadwallader argues that he proposes what she calls a '"blended" understanding of spiritual experiences' (p. 51), bringing the ghost-seer to a deeper understanding of reality and the self. The attention she gives to the neglected *Haunted Man* is particularly welcome, and the chapter is punctuated by sparkling insights into the Victorian Christmas as a 'festival time', a time-out-of-ordinary-time, a more elastic temporality in which past, present, and future entered into a kind of existential dialogue, for which conversation a ghost — a fragment of the past in the present, representing a possible future state — was a perfect interlocutor (which goes some way to explain the perennial association between ghost stories and the Christmas season).

Another chapter examines the reasons behind the extraordinary number of women writers who produced splendid examples of the ghost story in the nineteenth century. Indeed, it might be true to say that women actually dominated the field in the nineteenth century, as any examination of Victorian periodicals such as the *All the Year Round* and *Household*

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[6] Richard Haslam, 'Le Fanu's "Green Tea" and Irish Victorian Calvinism', *'Inspiring a Mysterious Terror': 200 Years of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu*, ed. by Jarlath Killeen and Valeria Cavalli (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016), pp. 93-116.

Words will attest. Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Mrs Henry Wood, Charlotte Riddell, Elizabeth Gaskell, Amelia Edwards, Rhoda Broughton, Margaret Oliphant, Vernon Lee, Dinah Mulock, Louisa Molesworth, Rosa Mulholland, Edith Nesbit, Louisa Baldwin, and Violet Hunt are only the most prominent names in a large group of writers, most of whom are now almost completely forgotten and unread. For Cadwallader, many of these women directly tackled the medical establishment's view that ghost seeing (something that was often particularly associated with women, who made up the majority of mediums in the period) was a function of pathology, which could, in turn, justify incarceration. Cadwallader argues that, by turning to ghost stories, women writers were expressing a 'shared concern over the way women were "diagnosed" [as hysterics in need of medical treatment] in various branches of the sciences' (p. 86). Tackling Margaret Oliphant, a conservative, and Rhoda Broughton, a 'progressive', Cadwallader persuasively demonstrates that, from their very different political positions, both women writers used their work to respond to, and to try to undermine, these supposedly authoritative discourses that ultimately worked to marginalise women who simply had different ideas about spirituality, religion, the afterlife, and ghosts.

In a fascinating, *tour-de-force* final chapter, focusing on the connections between ghost stories, spirit photography, and the material culture of Victorian funerals, Cadwallader demonstrates that all three are deeply invested in certain ideas about what has in other places been termed 'speculative theology', or the future life — what happens to us after we die. The camera, which snapped the corpse before burial for future contemplation by loved ones (and indeed by strangers who bought photographs of dead children they had never even met), and also apparently captured the spirits of the dead hovering near their grieving relatives, became a crucial medium for both ghost believers and ghost deniers. For those like Arthur Conan Doyle, believers in spirit photography, cutting-edge modern technology provided ostensibly empirical proof of the post-mortem survival of the individual spirit; for the sceptics, the camera could be used to refute spook enthusiasts by demonstrating how easily such credulous die-hards could be taken in by frauds, pranksters, and collections of dust on a lens.

Cadwallader performs sensitive and careful close readings of these stories, as well as providing a powerful sense of the complexity of the ghost story's position in Victorian culture. I recommend *Spirits and the Spiritual in Victorian Fiction* very strongly.

Jarlath Killeen

Ruth Franklin, *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life* (New York: Liveright, 2016)

Despite enjoying critical success in the 1950s and '60s, Shirley Jackson's works lay nearly forgotten for several decades after her sudden death in 1965. Her husband, Stanley Edgar Hyman, published some of her works posthumously in 1966 and 1968, but his untimely death in 1970 ended his endeavours to guarantee her literary legacy. The Hyman family carefully packed the couple's papers carefully away in boxes, which were later donated to the Library of Congress. For the next three decades, Jackson's most popular story, 'The Lottery' (1948), remained her strongest link to a reading public. Only two of her later novels, *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962), stayed consistently on bookstore shelves. For those who became interested in Jackson's writing, the only places to go were libraries, used bookstores, and the archives of the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress.

In contrast to that relative neglect, the 2000s saw her works finally recognised as vital to modern gothic canon, especially by scholars of female gothic and suburban gothic. Since the publication of Bernice M. Murphy's collection, *Shirley Jackson: Essays on the Literary Legacy* (2005), something of a resurgence in scholarly interest has been taking place. Many of the essays contain research conducted in the Jackson archive at the Library of Congress. Even more beneficially, previously unpublished material has been released from the archive, in the form of a new collection of short stories and essays, *Let Me Tell You* (2015). Coinciding with these, new scholarly material has also begun to emerge, such as Melanie R. Anderson and Lisa Kröger's *Shirley Jackson, Influences and Confluences* (2016).

Concurrent with the appearance of research, fiction writers who claim the gothic as either their favoured genre or as an inspiring influence, such as Neil Gaiman, Joyce Carol Oates, and Stephen King, have sung Jackson's praises in various print and social media. Oates's commentary on Jackson's works is both silently and outspokenly supportive of the value of Jackson's writing: Oates edited the Library of Congress publication *Shirley Jackson: Novels and Stories* (2010), and in 2016, wrote an article entitled 'Shirley Jackson in Love and Death' for the *New York Review of Books*, which reviewed Franklin's biography of Jackson, while discussing Jackson's life and literary works.[1] Similarly, Gaiman has mentioned Jackson's importance on several occasions, including in his list of female writers who

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[1] See Joyce Carol Oates, 'Shirley Jackson in Love and Death', *The New York Review of Books*, 27 October 2016 <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/10/27/shirley-jackson-in-love-death/> [accessed 27 September 2017].

influenced his writing,[2] in his blog as a recommended reading,[3] upon his nomination for the 2011 Shirley Jackson Awards (for best anthology and best short story; he won for best short story),[4] and in newspaper articles.[5] Stephen King is much more specific in his praise of Jackson's writing, significantly including her works in his book on horror fiction, *Danse Macabre* (1981), where he states that *The Haunting of Hill House*'s opening lines are 'the sort of quiet epiphany every writer hopes for: words that somehow transcend the sum of the parts'.[6] The value of these authors' praise of Jackson's works first and foremost lies in its power to capture the imagination a new generation of readers who will enjoy her books. Their praise also helps canonise her works as major contributions to classic twentieth-century American fiction.

Yet none of these recent publications have uncovered as much rich information nor have as much potential to inspire new scholarship as Ruth Franklin's award-winning *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life*, which has been acclaimed by numerous critics, fiction writers, and scholars as restoring/repositioning Jackson's literary legacy. The book has won several awards thus far, including the National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography (2016), the Edgar Award for Critical/Biographical (2017), and the Bram Stoker Award for Superior Achievement in Nonfiction (2017). It has been on major lists of recommended novels, such as that of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.[7] Most major news outlets have posted favourable reviews, but each seems to focus on a different aspect of the

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[2] The list was a response on Twitter to literary journalist Gay Talese's inability to mention any women writers who had inspired him. Jackson was among the women in Neil Gaiman's list of inspirations. Interestingly, the list went viral and now has a permanent home on the New York Public Library website. See Lauren Weiss, *Neil Gaiman on Women Writers Who Inspired Him* <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2016/04/06/neil-gaiman-women-writers> [accessed 25 September 2017].

[3] The list of recommended reads moved to his publisher's website, but two of Jackson's books remain on the list: 'The Lottery' and *The Haunting of Hill House*. See 'Book Recommendations from Neil Gaiman', *All Hallow's Read* <http://www.allhallowsread.com/2012/10/02/from-neil-gaiman/> [accessed 25 September 2017].

[4] The blog entry not only explains how the awards honour Jackson's literary legacy (they're awarded to authors who have written a significant work in suspense, dark fantasy, and horror fiction), but also encourages readers to pick up her short stories, *The Haunting of Hill House*, and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. See Gaiman, 'From the Desk of Mr Amanda F Palmer' <http://journal.neilgaiman.com/2011/07/from-desk-of-mr-amanda-f-palmer.html> [accessed 21 September 2017].

[5] See for example Gaiman quoted David Barnett, 'The Haunting of Shirley Jackson: Was the Gothic Author's Life Really as Bleak as her Fiction?', *The Independent*, 1 August 2015 <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/the-haunting-of-shirley-jackson-was-the-gothic-authors-life-really-as-bleak-as-her-fiction-10428397.html> [accessed 21 September 2017].

[6] See Stephen King, *Danse Macabre* (New York: Gallery Books, 2010), p. 310. The quotation in full reads, 'I think there are few if any descriptive passages in the English language that are any finer than this; it is the sort of quiet epiphany every writer hopes for: words that somehow transcend the sum of the parts'. King also compares *Hill House* favourably to Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* in the same passage, naming these books as significant psychological suspense novels which imply ghosts but have none. King has also included *Hill House* in his Stephen King Horror Library publication series (2003), penning the introduction himself.

[7] For a more complete list of awards and book list mentions, see Ruth Franklin's website <http://ruthfranklin.net/author/books/shirley-jackson/> [accessed 4 October 2017].

biography, emphasising its value as a multifaceted work. For example, the *Guardian* byline reads, 'a sympathetic biography argues for a feminist reappraisal of a tortured genius of American gothic', and considers Jackson's value as a gothic author whose fiction focused on the experiences of women.[8] Elaine Showalter's review in the *Washington Post* spotlights Jackson's use of writing as an expression of her inner world, her interest in the innate evil of human beings, and her desire for freedom.[9] These and many others are supremely complimentary; Showalter even states that Franklin has reawakened interest in Jackson's 'genius'.[10]

Although a biography of Jackson was already extant, namely Judy Oppenheimer's *Private Demons: The Life of Shirley Jackson* (1988), it lacked depth, and de-emphasised Jackson's impressive ability. Instead, it primarily discussed her balancing of career and family. Citations are comparatively few, and Oppenheimer's opinions are inserted liberally throughout in ornate prose, lending a sensational feel to the text. Passages regarding Jackson's relationship with her husband are particularly purple and eyebrow-raising: 'Stanley's lively interest in good-looking women was certainly real enough. Yet the image of the mad Dionysian artist, wild and lusty, unbound by the rules, also happened to be one he was particularly fond of assuming.'[11] While some extant letters from the archive, such as those between Stanley and his friend Walter Bernstein, seem to imply extra-marital dalliances as both fact and fantasy, it hardly seems historically accurate to describe them as a penchant for bacchanal.

It therefore would seem that Oppenheimer did not thoroughly examine or perhaps did not have access to a great deal of extant archival material related to Jackson's authorial life. There is little in that biography to indicate that Jackson was a rising star in the American

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[8] Sarah Churchwell, '*Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life* by Ruth Franklin Review — Beyond Spooky', *Guardian*, 10 February 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/feb/10/shirley-jackson-ruth-franklin-review-a-rather-haunted-life> [accessed 2 October 2017].

[9] Elaine Showalter, 'Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life', *Washington Post*, 22 September 2016 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/shirley-jackson-a-rather-haunted-life/2016/09/15/4293b85e-5f2b-11e6-af8e-54aa2e849447_story.html?utm_term=.a61754589491> [accessed 2 October 2017].

[10] However, not all the reviews are complimentary. Charles McGrath of the *New York Times* has few kind words about Jackson's work. He is more interested in Franklin's efforts to show Jackson as a writer caught between devotion to her craft and taking care of her family in the mid-twentieth century. See Charles McGrath, 'The Case for Shirley Jackson', *New York Times*, 30 September 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/02/books/review/shirley-jackson-ruth-franklin.html?_r=0> [accessed 2 October 2017].

[11] See Judy Oppenheimer, *Private Demons: The Life of Shirley Jackson* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1988), p. 107.

literary world of the mid-twentieth century.[12] This is because, unlike Franklin, Oppenheimer relied mainly on interviews, publisher's notes, and newspaper articles (which tend towards the sensational). These she intermixed with interpolated correspondence from the archives and Jackson's fiction. More importantly, Oppenheimer's book is dismissive of Jackson's connections to other authors. For example, Oppenheimer is indifferent to the idea that Jackson could have had an intellectual relationship with Ralph Ellison, stating instead that Jackson befriended Mrs Ellison, and that Stanley Hyman, Jackson's husband, influenced Ralph. This codifying of their behaviour in a stereotypical mid-twentieth-century heteronormative fashion bolstered Oppenheimer's claim that Stanley was the driving force of Jackson's authorial vision.[13] Yet archival matter from both the Ellison Papers and the Stanley Edgar Hyman Papers at the Library of Congress would indicate that Oppenheimer's opinion is not based in fact. Franklin makes clear in her biography that both Jackson and her husband were influential intellectual forces for Ellison.[14] Even more unfortunately, the second half of Oppenheimer's book drifts away from Jackson's stories almost entirely, focusing primarily on family matters and speculation on her mental health at a time when Jackson was increasingly focused on her writing. At the same time, it ignores almost all of the material in the archive relating to issues with her publisher and her agent, as well as an increasing amount of correspondence with other famous contemporary authors towards the end of her life.

In contrast, Franklin provides us with a biography that not only goes beyond the Oppenheimer's insufficient efforts; it also details Jackson's personal and literary lives with clear prose and little speculation. Even when Franklin integrates literary analyses of Jackson's novels and short stories, she never loses sight of the important separation between fictional characters and their author. That is to say, Oppenheimer often gives in to the fantasy that Jackson's narrators are in some sense the author herself, but Franklin makes a clear separation between the two. In parallel examinations of *The Bird's Nest* (1954), a deeply psychological novel about a young women's struggle with multiple personality disorder, the two come to totally opposite conclusions. Oppenheimer interpreted the book as a reflection of Jackson's personal dissonance: 'The subject of multiple personality disorder attracted her in a

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[12] As Franklin helpfully points out, Jackson's name is mentioned alongside Truman Capote, Eudora Welty, and others as one of a 'group of emerging writers' in the early 1950s. See Ruth Franklin, *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life* (New York: Liveright, 2016), p. 277.
[13] See Oppenheimer, pp. 103-04.
[14] For example, Ellison asked for her advice on *Invisible Man* (1952) from both Stanley and Shirley, but it was Shirley's page proofs from *Hangsaman* (1951) that he used to help with his editing. See Franklin, pp. 276-77.

very personal way — Shirley knew that she too, in a sense, had several different personalities, all jostling against each other in uneasy truce.'[15] She merely examines the characters/personalities in light of Jackson's own background. In contrast, Franklin treads very carefully, knowing that Jackson's interest in personality disorders went back to her college days, when she took a course on abnormal psychology, or perhaps even before.[16] Franklin admits that writing *The Bird's Nest* caused Jackson deep emotional distress, enough to make her physically ill.[17] She also mentions how the themes of the novel — feeling motherless, implied physical abuse by a partner or carer, yearning for affection — might have been unresolved sources of stress and angst for Jackson. Nevertheless, as Franklin helpfully points out, these themes reappear many times in Jackson's work: in *Hangsaman* (1951), in *The Haunting of Hill House*, and in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, as well as in her short fiction. Franklin states that the more disturbing content of these novels, such as matricide and molestation, are not meant to be read as literal desires or events in Jackson's life.[18] Thus, Franklin's *Shirley Jackson* shows the biographer's devotion to fastidious and sensible analysis of fictional works, considering the events of the author's life and the emotions that surrounded them.

In addition to her observations on Jackson's interest in the psychological both in real life and for her fiction, Franklin comments at length on Jackson's use of the house as a focal point of mental disease.[19] Further, she remarks that the houses in all of Jackson's major works, especially her final three novels, are significant: '[each] has its own distinct personality and indeed functions as a kind of character in the book'.[20] In her discussion of the house in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, Franklin states it is 'physically at a remove from the village beneath it, surrounded by a barrier'.[21] Removing the characters from the town shows their physical isolation as well as the mental obstacles that prevent them from participating in village life. Jackson carefully planned such physical spaces in her novels (she even drew sketches, which are reprinted in *Shirley Jackson*) to reflect the themes as well as

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[15] Oppenheimer, p. 162.

[16] Although it appears Jackson did not save all her college notebooks, she seems to have kept quite a lot of information from a course she took at Syracuse on abnormal psychology. These are stored in the Library of Congress archive.

[17] Franklin, p. 348.

[18] Franklin, p. 350.

[19] This should be of interest to gothic scholarship, as the house is a major motif in gothic fiction. For examples of commentary on the house in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, see Franklin, pp. 444-46, 449-50; for *The Haunting of Hill House*, see pp. 409-19.

[20] Franklin, p. 409.

[21] Franklin, p. 444.

the mental state of the characters. Franklin's insights are therefore important to the inclusion of Jackson's house-centred stories in the domestic-gothic sub-genre.

What is more, although the houses in works like *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* or *The Haunting of Hill House* have been treated as gothic in previous scholarship, Franklin implies that we might also consider Jackson's semi-autobiographical works, *Life Among the Savages* (1953) and *Raising Demons* (1957), as possessing similar themes and imagery. Franklin reminds us that the title *Raising Demons* was not the book's sole allusion to the occult: 'the book again included a nod to her studies in witchcraft, with an epigraph describing the conjuration of demons taken from the Grimoire of Honorius, a compendium of magical knowledge from around 1800'.[22] The house, as a locus of familial emotion, is also a place of magic and horror, even when Jackson is discussing the antics of her children.

Equally significant to these valuable textual and biographical analyses, *Shirley Jackson* contains the information that Oppenheimer overlooked, or perhaps could not make sense of — that is, the jumble of notes, letters, and discarded drafts belonging to Jackson and her husband, currently housed in the US Library of Congress archives. This archive is especially confusing, with many unlabelled and misfiled materials, so Franklin's creation of a clear and concise timeline of Jackson's personal and literary life should be considered a laudable achievement. As a fellow scholar who has conducted research in these achieves over the past decade, I cannot help but stand in awe of how Franklin has made sense of Jackson's earlier diaries from her teenage and college years, as well as her ability to read between the lines about Jackson's difficult relationship with her family, and later, her husband. As well as the archives at the Library of Congress, Franklin has also drawn extensively on other archives and private collections related to Jackson's life and works. Free of numbered footnotes that might break up the text for many readers, but nevertheless containing copious annotations, *Shirley Jackson* uses the convention of indexing citations at the back of the book. At the same time, the book generously contains a list of the relevant archives and persons that provided the source material for the book, so a scholarly reader would know where to conduct further research.

Unravelling the mystery of the archives has enabled Franklin to provide her readers with minute details regarding the literary value of Jackson's marriage to her professor/writer husband, the connections they both had to the East Coast and Midwestern literati (friends included the Ellisons, the Malamuds, and the Burkes), her love of music (especially folk

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[22] Franklin, p. 364.

songs and jazz), and her increasing popularity as a speaker and teacher at literary retreats and seminars in the last decade of her life (she became a regular at the Middlebury Bread Loaf writers' conferences, where she worked with the likes of Robert Frost and Julia Child). *Shirley Jackson* carefully illuminates the relationship that Jackson had with her editors, publishers, and agents, extrapolating the story from diary entries and letters, and not just from interviews. Franklin also adds details contextualising these relationships, explaining that Jackson eventually shared an editor with authors like John Steinbeck, Saul Bellow, Marianne Moore, and Graham Greene.[23] While these details are fascinating, perhaps the only drawback to *Shirley Jackson* is this copious detail, which some readers may find superfluous, especially in the case of information on Jackson's husband.

While she was alive, Jackson's writing spanned a broad range of genres, from humorous 'housewife' tales to serious psychological horror. But contemporary critics, who preferred women writers to produce either serious fiction or light-hearted, family-centred stories, had an immense amount of trouble labelling her work.[24] In several interviews, she became annoyed with their pigeonholing and ironically played up her interest in the occult. This led the news media to link her with images of witches, tarot readings, and ghosts.[25] Yet Franklin does not shy away from considering Jackson as a horror author, or as an author with an interest in the occult, the supernatural, and the gothic. She also does not try to overlook Jackson's semi-autobiographical family stories. Instead, *Shirley Jackson* provides a balanced examination of both Jackson's uncanny fiction and her family-friendly stories, considering the advantages of the duality in juxtaposition. Franklin concludes that Jackson was able to manage both genres because they are two sides of the same coin. She also uses this conclusion to explain why the duality of Jackson's works has led to them being misread and

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[23] The editor, Pascal (Pat) Covici, became an important influence on her writing and believed in her talent as an author. She dedicated *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* to him. See Franklin, p. 187. See also pp. 420-424.

[24] In letters to her mother and father, Jackson defended herself against the idea that negative reviews of her serious fiction might damage her public image as a wife and mother and prevent her success as a writer of domestic stories (her mother encouraged her to concentrate on the 'family stories'). But from a modern perspective, writing in both genres lends great significance to Jackson's work. A. M. Holmes has considered this problem at length in her introduction to *The Lottery* and elsewhere. See A. M. Holmes, *The Lottery and Other Stories* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005), p. xi-xii. See also Holmes's podcast interview with *The New Yorker*, 'A. M. Holmes Reads Shirley Jackson' <https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/fiction/a-m-homes-reads-shirley-jackson> [accessed 18 October 2017].

[25] One strong example may be found in her *New York Times* obituary, in which the editors assign her to both genres of the 'domestic' and the 'macabre'. Further, they problematically assert her eccentricities and wifeliness over and above her authorial abilities: 'Because Miss Jackson wrote so frequently about ghosts and witches and magic, it was said that she used a broomstick for a pen. But the fact was that she used a typewriter — and then only after she had completed her household chores.' See 'Shirley Jackson, Author of Horror Classic, Dies', *New York Times*, 10 August 1965 <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1965/08/10/101560334.html?pageNumber=29> [accessed 18 October 2017].

miscategorised not only during her life, but also after her death; even Jackson's obituaries marked her as 'witchy', despite the fact that even her so-called horror classic, *The Haunting of Hill House*, arguably has no ghosts and no monster, only psychological terror. Franklin insists we take Jackson's oeuvre seriously for what it is, not for how the press labelled it and its author.

Overall, Franklin has written a biography with all the detail and finesse that a writer of Shirley Jackson's calibre deserves. It stresses that Jackson wrote valuable and complex fictions and that as an author she lived a rich, imaginative, and productive life. This biography has reawakened a reading public's interest in the full range of Jackson's oeuvre, from her gothic tales to her darkly humorous family sketches. *Shirley Jackson* will hopefully serve as a point of reference for existing scholars interested in Jackson, as well as a point of departure for new scholars to discover the multifaceted nature of Jackson's life, works, and connections to the twentieth-century literary world.

Samantha Landau

***Lost Souls of Horror and the Gothic: Fifty-Four Neglected Authors, Actors, Artists and Others*, ed. by Elizabeth McCarthy and Bernice M. Murphy** (Jefferson: McFarland, 2016)

As Christopher Frayling observes in his foreword to Elizabeth McCarthy and Bernice M. Murphy's *Lost Souls of Horror and the Gothic*, this extensive collection uncovers some of the missing links in the great chain of heroes and heroines that forms the gothic canon as we know it, and identifies them as 'Lost Souls'. The collection began as a feature of *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*; McCarthy and Murphy (the journal's original founders and editors) explain that they recognised the need for a larger volume that would represent the many overlooked figures whose work has shaped gothic and horror studies. Their efforts have resulted in these fifty-four biographical essays written by an array of new and established gothic scholars, all of which explore significant contributions made by a vast array of authors, as well as a colourful blend of characters ranging from actors, artists, designers, and directors, to mediums, musicians, and even occultists. While I could make an argument for discussing any one of these entries at length, I've chosen to focus on five essays that I think give an accurate overview of the collection's comprehensive nature as an academic text, as well as its ability to engage the reader with personal and (often humorous) anecdotes about its subjects.

The weird fictions of American author Charles Beaumont and his immeasurable influence on the horror, science-fiction, and fantasy genres are examined by Edward O'Hare. He details the strange events of Beaumont's childhood, as well as his experience of growing up around a mentally ill mother, and highlights Beaumont's love of literature from a young age. O'Hare also identifies the common theme that connects Beaumont's many literary works, one that was undoubtedly inspired by the hardships of his early life: 'the monstrousness that lurks beneath ordinary appearances' (p. 31). His contributions to numerous screenplays, including a 1962 adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Premature Burial' (1844) and episodes of *The Twilight Zone* (1959-64), illustrate, for O'Hare, Beaumont's understanding of human nature, as well as his belief in the importance of individual freedom, all of which helps secure his status as one of the more unusual and versatile writers in the collection.

Another author who crossed media to make a significant contribution to the world of television and film was modern British horror writer, Stephen Volk, described by James Rose as being one of the quieter figures of the genre. He recounts Volk's impact on British literature, theatre, film, and television, focusing on Volk's creation of the first

'mockumentary' (a supernatural fiction that pretends to be a real-life event), which was quickly recognised as a defining moment in British horror. The programme, entitled *Ghostwatch* (1992), offered viewers the experience of witnessing a 'live' broadcast from an alleged haunted house, and caused the BBC to receive over 30,000 complaints. Rose examines Volk's extensive body of film and television work, and identifies a common thread in both — his creation of a complex and fluctuating relationship between the ghost, the believer, and the sceptic. This relationship creates a 'narrative of change' (p. 223) that is equally playful and terrifying to its reader.

One of the most fascinating British women in the collection is explored by Catherine Spooner, who uncovers the hidden musical talents of Danielle Dax, a figure from the 1980s Goth music scene who is better known for her silent cameo as a wolf-girl in Neil Jordan's production of *The Company of Wolves* (1984). Starting with Dax's various contributions to post-punk band Lemon Kittens as a musician, and later as a cover art designer for the group, Spooner details how her naked live performances and solo albums earned her a cult following that worshipped her overt feminist persona and tendency to ridicule hyper-masculinity. Noting too her later success as a designer and spoken-word poet, Spooner emphasises Dax's status as 'an unsung feminist icon' (p. 66), whose work has influenced many of today's most popular female performers, such as Alison Goldfrapp, St Vincent, and Florence Welch.

Sculptor and 'King of the Gorilla Men' (p. 96) Charles Gemora is another example of an overlooked artist who made a huge contribution to numerous sci-fi and horror films. Mark Cofell traces his humble Hollywood beginnings as a street sketch artist, to his role as a sculptor of gargoyles for *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) and a set designer for *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925). However, it was not until he was asked to sculpt a gorilla costume for the film adaptation of the play, *The Gorilla* (1927), that the extent of Gemora's talent was revealed. Gemora not only constructed the suit from scratch but, as he began to play gorillas himself, made regular visits to the gorillas of San Diego Zoo in order to perfect the movements of his primatial alter ego, and in doing so, set a new standard of performance for costume actors.

As well as uncovering influential figures from the glamourous worlds of music, television, and Hollywood film, the collection also documents the lives of fascinating personalities. One such example is Dara Downey's account of Leonora Piper, a medium and psychometrician who made a career out of her ability to contact the spirits of the dead. Associated with both the American Society of Psychical Research (ASPR) and Society for

Psychical Research (SPR) in England, she devoted herself to aiding in the Associations' study of the existence of life after death. As well as providing comprehensive biographical details about Piper's early life and eye-witness accounts of her channelling various spirits or 'controls', Downey also details the scepticism and controversy that plagued Piper during different stages of her career. She pays particular attention to the misrepresentation surrounding Piper's attempt to retire in 1901 and her later decision to return to work for the ASPR, despite ongoing exposés regarding her abilities, as well as detailing Piper's life-long involvement in psychical research.

The abundance of extremely well-researched and well-written chapters in this collection make it impossible to pick a favourite entry, but one that stayed with me long after reading it is Tom Weaver's personal account of his friend and horror actress Susan Cabot. Recalling the many strange details about her life, such as her troubled son, her chaotic mansion, and her mysterious romance with King Hussein of Jordan, Weaver paints Cabot as an eccentric figure whose very existence was defined by gothic-horror elements. Although he takes time to detail her brief stint as a cult-status horror actress, he mostly focuses on the gruesome details and conflicting stories surrounding her death. To summarise, her murder, at the hands of her disturbed son, and his ensuing suspended sentence for 'involuntary manslaughter' (p. 49), mean that her biography reads like the script of any classic or contemporary horror film. Weaver's personal anecdotes make this chapter quite a unique one, making me wish that there had also been more of this personal content in other chapters, although I understand that doing so may have taken from the academic tone and nature of the overall collection.

While, as I have already mentioned, it would be quite difficult to detail every chapter in this book within a single review, it is worth noting that the inclusion of entries by some of the leading scholars in gothic and horror studies (such as Clive Bloom, David Punter, and Xavier Aldana Reyes, to name but a few) ensures its status as a valuable research text that belongs on the shelf of every serious scholar of these genres. The alphabetised layout and short-essay format make it an excellent and easy-to-use reference text for research purposes, as well as an ideal book for the general reader who simply wishes to learn more about these overlooked Lost Souls of the gothic and horror canons.

Donna Mitchell

Xavier Aldana Reyes, *Spanish Gothic: National Identity, Collaboration and Cultural Adaptation* (London: Palgrave, 2017)

Xavier Aldana Reyes's *Spanish Gothic: National Identity, Collaboration, and Cultural Adaptation* is a groundbreaking work in both scope and intent. The first book-length, English-language analysis of Spanish gothic from its earliest guises in the long eighteenth century to modern and contemporary literature and cinema, *Spanish Gothic* provocatively and productively opens up the study of a body of cultural production that has remained largely overlooked in gothic scholarship. In particular, it provides Anglophone students and scholars with a crucial entry point into the fascinating world of Spanish gothic, complementing but also considerably expanding upon recent studies such as Abigail Lee Six's *Gothic Terrors: Incarceration, Duplication, and Bloodlust in Spanish Narrative* (2010), Miriam López Santos's *La novela gótica en España (1788-1833)* (2010), and Ann Davies's *Contemporary Spanish Gothic* (2016).

Published as part of the Palgrave Gothic series, which has fast become *the* place to go for cutting edge gothic scholarship, *Spanish Gothic* begins by challenging the assumption that the gothic was — and continues to be — 'an imported imaginative impossibility' in Spain (p. 1). In an eloquent and informative introduction, Aldana Reyes notes the commonly held belief that the gothic never really took off in Spain, thanks to a number of circumstances — including a long history of governmental and religious censorship — that mitigated against its establishment. Such assumptions regarding the paucity of Spanish gothic, Aldana Reyes contends, have produced — and perhaps also been produced by — a pervasive cultural amnesia that belies the quality, variety, and cultural significance of Spanish gothic over the centuries. The not-inconsiderable catalogue of texts recovered by Aldana Reyes in his study — from the early 'Gothic-inflected' novel, *El Valdemaro* (1792) (p. 53), through Emilia Pardo Bazán's female gothic fiction, to the films of Segundo de Chomón (1871-1929) — demonstrates the success with which the gothic rooted itself in Spanish soil. That many of these texts will be unfamiliar to even the most seasoned gothic scholar underscores the accomplishment of Aldana Reyes' study, and its valuable project of archival exploration and scholarly recuperation.

Over the course of ten accessible chapters, including introduction and conclusion, Aldana Reyes conducts a systematic, chronological study of texts drawn from three phases of Spanish gothic production, beginning with 'first wave' fiction published between 1785 and 1834, moving to Romantic and *fin-de-siècle* literature, and finally considering modern and

contemporary literature and film. His interest, as he outlines in his introduction, is to explore the gothic in Spain as 'a transmedia, transnational and transhistorical "mode"' (p. 5). To this end, he focuses on texts that might be seen to comprise 'an "art of pleasurable fear", or what, in the twentieth century, begins to be called horror fiction' (p. 5). This helps to distinguish gothic literature from earlier forms such as the *novel cortesana* and fantastic literature of the twelfth to seventeenth centuries. As Aldana Reyes argues, these forms might be understood as the prehistory of gothic in Spain, but it's only in the late eighteenth century that Spanish authors embark on 'a serious and sustained artistic project around the notion of pleasant fear' (p. 9).

If this inaugural moment of Spanish gothic is heavily influenced by translations of English- and French-language gothic novels that began to appear in the 1780s, this is not, as Aldana Reyes sees it, proof of the mode's imported or belated status in Spain. Instead, in keeping with López Santos, Aldana Reyes argues that Spanish writers dramatically adapted the models provided by British, European, and American gothic, 'rethink[ing] the Gothic under an intrinsically national, although not necessarily nationalistic, lens that may speak to Spanish readers' (p. 29).[1] *El Valdemaro* thus reflects the influence of contemporary British gothic fiction, at the same time that it gives its characteristic imagery and themes a particularly Spanish twist informed by the country's strict Catholicism. With religious censorship encouraging, if not mandating, didacticism, *El Valdemaro* makes subtle use of gothic devices for specific purposes, in particular the reinforcement of Catholic doctrine, the teaching of related moral lessons, and the construction of the Spanish monarchy as an essential guardian of the faith.

In contrast, the early-nineteenth-century anticlerical works of writers such as Luis Gutiérrez (d. 1809) and José María Blanco Crespo (1775-1841) adapted the anti-Catholicism of Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) and Matthew Lewis (1775-1818) in order to critique what was still a grim reality in Spain — the Inquisition and its particular form of religious tyranny. Gutiérrez's *Cornelia Bororquia, o víctima de la Inquisición/Cornelia Bororquia, or Victim of the Inquisition* (1801) and Blanco Crespo's *Vargas: A Tale of Spain* (1822) — both tellingly written and published outside of Spain — replace supernatural evils with those of the Inquisition, and, in so doing, transform the gothic into 'a social vehicle', or a language of resistance (p. 73). While their imagery of perverted, power-hungry religious figures and horrific Inquisition dungeons might seem familiar from a text such as *The Monk* (1796), their

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[1] See Miriam López Santos, *La novela gótica en Espanã (1788-1833)* (Pontevedra: Editorial Academia del Hispanismo, 2010).

writers' Catholic backgrounds and familiarity with Inquisitorial power renders the scenes depicted all the more chilling and poignant.

Aldana Reyes's elegantly persuasive assessments of the historically specific, national permutations of gothic produced by Spain's evolving socio-cultural and political contexts are arguably the study's greatest strength. What's more, they ably prove his contention that the gothic both played a central role in the development of Spanish literature and frequently had (and continues to have) radical potential. Some consideration of the potential diversity produced by, for instance, Catalan and Basque variations of gothic literary and cultural production — in both their respective languages, as well as in the Spanish language — would have been welcome. The author's relative inattention to these distinctions is perhaps a victim of his quest for a general picture of Spanish 'national' culture, but they are worth revisiting in future research on Spanish gothic.

A more troubling issue in the book is that of terminology, which Aldana Reyes himself considers in detail in both his introduction and conclusion. Throughout his study, Aldana Reyes observes that certain texts more closely resemble other literary forms or genres than they do the gothic. He also remarks upon the hesitancy of Spanish critics and authors/filmmakers themselves to apply the term 'gothic' to their national cultural production, leading to the idea that, as Aldana Reyes says of Spanish cinema, there is no such thing as 'a self-avowedly Gothic' literary or cultural tradition in Spain (p. 185). But, as is certainly the case in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, gothic literature rarely ever refers to itself as gothic, despite Walpole's subtitle — 'A Gothic Story' — for the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Instead, as Robert Miles has shown, most Romantic-era writers of the works we now think of as 'gothic' used an array of alternative terms to 'market' their texts as what was then called, among other things, 'terror', 'terrorist', and 'Germanic' fiction.[2] The application of the 'gothic' label to these works came much later, and from within academia, so to speak of self-avowedly gothic literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries at least, from Britain and elsewhere, is an anachronism. My point here is that more detailed attention to the terminology that authors, filmmakers, and critics themselves have used — in titles, reviews, official documentation, and so on — in referring to the works examined here, and to the reasons for these particular usages, may have helped further tease out and nuance both the lack of this term in Spanish cultural production and its applicability to these texts.

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[2] Robert Miles, 'The 1790s: The Effulgence of Gothic', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. by Jerrold Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 41-62 (p. 41).

This is especially the case for the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century fictions that Aldana Reyes analyses. Given the unfamiliarity of most of these texts, Aldana Reyes understandably devotes a significant amount of space to plot summary. While this is necessary, it also means there is little room left for a discussion of production and reception — elements that have the potential to address some of the 'terminological complications' Aldana Reyes identifies (p. 9). Similarly, in the case of later fictions and films, Aldana Reyes draws attention to Spanish cultural reluctance to apply the term 'gothic' to works that appear to deploy recognisable gothic conventions. Yet he never fully fleshes out why this has been the case. Chapter 8 contains an illustrative example. Here, Aldana Reyes begins his discussion of Spanish gothic cinema by commenting that films such as *La residencia/The House that Screamed* (1969), *El día de la bestia/The Day of the Beast* (1995), and *Las brujas de Zugarramurdi/Witching and Bitching* (2013), are, for various reasons, labelled 'fantastic' or 'supernatural', rather than gothic, and considered to be, among other things, 'thrillers', or 'comedies' (p. 185). Perhaps it is a consequence of a lack of space or the broad readership catered to by the Palgrave Gothic series, but Aldana Reyes references little marketing material or evidence of the critical and popular reception of these films to sketch exactly why or how they've been constructed as 'not-gothic'. This curious lack of contextual detail detracts from his otherwise convincing arguments for recuperating 'gothic' as an appropriate label for these works.

These minor reservations aside, *Spanish Gothic* is an exemplary piece of scholarship that will assuredly become the cornerstone of future studies of gothic cultural production in Spain. It will, moreover, undoubtedly contribute to new transnational histories of gothic as it developed on a global scale from the eighteenth century to today.

Christina Morin

Technologies of the Gothic in Literature and Culture: Technogothics, ed. by Justin D. Edwards (New York and London: Routledge, 2015)

Too often collections exploring 'literature and culture' tend to prioritise the former, with the occasional nod towards film or television. This is certainly not the case with *Technologies of the Gothic*, an admirably wide-ranging collection of essays taking in everything from steampunk to dubstep, celebrity news coverage to zombie running apps. Gothic and media technology have long had a close relationship; as Joseph Crawford points out early on, 'Gothic, like those monstrous families upon which it has always been so fixated, tends to mutate further with every generation, taking advantage of the possibilities offered by each new form of media technology for the articulation of monstrosity, instability, and disruption' (p. 40). However, the 'technology' which brings this collection together is not only that of film, TV, computer games, and other media, but also acoustic and, in particular, medical technologies. The thirteen chapters link together particularly well, and credit must be given to editor Justin D. Edwards for shaping a collection of essays that was originally the conference proceedings of the International Gothic Association's Biennial Conference. So, for example, the chapters move smoothly from sound, to sound and zombies, to zombies and biomedical horror, to biomedical horror and organ transplants, to organ transplants in the media. There is some occasional duplication of materials but, for the most part, the essays overlap effectively and inform each other without being repetitive.

Following Edwards' introduction, Fred Botting's 'Technospectrality: Essay on Uncannimedia' works well as an opening chapter, giving a useful overview of many of the topics which will appear throughout, particularly the spectral and the uncanny. In this regard, he looks in detail at *The Sixth Sense* and the moment of 'spectral self-consciousness'. The famous twist at the end of the film, he notes, provides closure for the protagonist but audience disappointment. Thus, the film's ending 'only reaffirms that "when we go to the movies, we see dead people". To have this enacted so unequivocally disrupts visual pleasure' (p. 28). Joseph Crawford also explores gothic and media and, while perhaps not treading too much new ground, reminds us how perfectly the gothic genre adapts to new and hybrid media forms. As he rightly points out, the real question is whether it is 'likely that any new form of mass media technology could *fail* to manifest itself in Gothic forms' (p. 36, emphasis in original). He traces the routine outbreaks of moral panic surrounding new media, looking at the 'trope of the Terrible Text' from H. P. Lovecraft's *Necronomicon* to *The Ring* films (2002-17). Updating the trope for the present day, Crawford focuses in on the 'Slenderman'

YouTube videos, in which a shadowy figure lurking in the background of online video footage is supposed to have abducted or murdered the video's creator. The Slenderman mythos is particularly suited to an age of viral video; not only are the videos shared online by fans and creators, but the 'rules' of the mythos actually promote the creation of video. These rules, as Crawford explains, are that the Slenderman causes both memory loss in potential victims and distortion in any video recordings made while in close proximity. Thus, potential victims begin perpetually recording their lives in order to check their memories against the video and to look for the tell-tale distortion. As a result, Slenderman content is endlessly created and disseminated. The technology in this case may be more contemporary but, as Crawford points out, the videos are simply another incarnation of the same fundamental fear that the gothic text somehow corrupts the vulnerable. This is a fear with a long history, from the gothic novels of the 1790s, to horror comics of the 1950s, to more recent horror computer games. But, in the end, '[t]he myth of audience vulnerability to moral contagion through new media technologies proves to be the most pernicious Gothic fiction of all' (p. 46).

The visual gives way to the aural in the trio of chapters which follows, each challenging what Kelly Gardner refers to as the 'ocularcentrism' (p. 72) of our worldview. The essays are linked by their acoustic focus but examine quite varied media — literature, music, and computer games respectively. Justin Edwards looks at (or perhaps more accurately listens to) 'acoustemology', which he defines as the way in which 'the union of acoustics and epistemology calls attention to the primacy of sound as a modality of knowing and being in the world' (p. 55). This underexplored area presents new opportunities for the gothic. Edwards highlights the ways in which Roald Dahl's 'Sound Machine' (1949) and Leonora Carrington's *Hearing Trumpet* (1974) undermine the primacy of the visual by connecting with a newly heard, non-human world. In the former case, the connection is with vegetation, as the protagonist of Dahl's story invents a device to capture vibrations inaudible to the human ear. To his horror, he discovers that he can hear the inhuman screams of roses being cut by his neighbour. When he takes an axe to a nearby tree, he hears a 'harsh, noteless, enormous noise, a growling, low-pitched, screaming sound' (p. 52). In Carrington's text, a woman's hearing trumpet allows for an unimaginably amplified sense of hearing. Not only can she hear sounds at a distance, but she also gains access to the previously inaudible world of the dead. It must be said that at times Edwards' sentences can be as opaque as the hidden sound worlds explored in his chapter. Take this example: 'Klausner's insights into the organic utterance of pain and suffering gestures to ontological inseparability agentially intra-

acting components that signify the mutual constitution of entangled agencies that are relational through intra-actions between forms of organic life' (pp. 52-53). This is a minor quibble, however, in what is ultimately an insightful and informative chapter that makes a strong case for the significance of the aural in the study of the gothic.

The foregrounding of the acoustic is continued by Charlie Blake and Isabella van Elferen, who highlight the 'inherently spectral' (p. 61) nature of music more generally from Kraftwerk to dubstep, and by Kelly Gardner, who focuses on a single sound: 'Braaiinnsss!' The zombie, 'perhaps the only Gothic monster that is definitively tied to a specific sound', has inspired a wide variety of video games, but the 'iconic zombie drone' (p. 72) is a constant feature of their soundscapes. The chapter gives a relatively straightforward overview of the ways in which music and sound provide player immersion, before looking at the intriguing *Zombies, Run!* This running-companion app prompts its users to run in order to escape attacking 'zombies', their presence announced by the recognisable zombie moan. The app blends a typical zombie-apocalypse narrative (the player is a 'runner' gathering supplies for a survivalist team) with the standard features of a running app, recording the requisite statistics using the mobile device's GPS and accelerometer. It is audio alone which provides the story-world and context as well as the cues to indicate attacking zombies or other dangers, prompting the player into physical actions. Many games and other media claim to provide an 'interactive experience' but few reach this level.

Moving from zombies to biomedical horror, Roger Luckhurst explores the 'New Undead', those 'interstitial beings' (p. 88) in coma states whose lives are maintained by technology. This is a world of 'potential cadavers' and 'neomorts', 'irreversible comas' and 'Persistent Vegetative States'. The bioethical issues are profound and unsettling: when is a patient truly dead? How much do coma patients feel or understand? At what point should organ transplants be allowed? While this ethical minefield may be a relatively new area for doctors (essentially since the 1960s and the advent of the ICU), the undead have always been a part of our culture in one form or another. Luckhurst explores how it is 'in cultural fictions that the implications of these new interstitial beings are fully worked out […]. This is the odd zone in which genre spills out from the limits of fiction, and where generic tropes, icons and narratives *help shape* reality' (p. 91, emphasis in original). The key date is 1968, the year in which an American committee relocated the definition of death to the brain, and in which George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* was released. From here, Luckhurst traces the new undead from the 1977 medical thriller *Coma* to its re-imagined 2012 miniseries version,

via *28 Days Later* (2002), *The Walking Dead* (2010-present), *Resident Evil* (1996-present), and *Fringe* (2008-13). Each fictional representation of the undead, in its own way, influences our understanding of the very real 'undead' of the hospital ICU ward, significantly shaping what Luckhurst terms the 'biomedical imaginary'.

The biomedical imaginary is further explored in the two chapters which follow. Sara Wasson looks at the gothic aspects of organ transfer, and the complicated and conflicted emotions that recipients can experience. Barry Murnane, on the other hand, takes as his subject matter a single recipient of an organ transplant — George Best. The chapter explores the moments leading up to Best's death, three years after receiving a liver transplant, and the media response to his impending death. Best becomes yet another interstitial being; as Murnane writes, '[d]id anyone really care if Best was *actually* dead or alive? While the obituaries suggested he was dead, the constant screen images of him offered a virtual re-incarnation' (p. 119, emphasis in original).

Science fiction, a genre which understandably makes its way into a number of the essays in the collection, returns more explicitly in Rune Graulund's chapter on the gothic science-fiction novel *Necroville* (1994), by Ian McDonald. Ultimately, however, the chapter covers much of the same ground as previous chapters on the undead, in this case focusing more particularly on the world of the novel in which the resurrected dead are enslaved to the living. The two chapters which follow — Alan Gregory on disability and performativity in the work of Patrick McGrath, and Maisha Wester on cannibalism in the Sawney Bean and Sweeney Todd tales — both contain a number of useful insights. Both, however, seem a little out of place in the collection. While they certainly focus on the gothic, there is very little in the way of *technology*, in any of the various guises under which the theme has been interpreted in the rest of the collection. Linnie Blake's chapter on Mark Hodder's steampunk fiction brings the focus back, in this case to what Blake terms 'neoliberal Gothic'. She notes that steampunk, despite its celebration of the past, is 'a genre pronouncedly concerned with the present moment'. In relation to Hodder's novels, she convincingly argues for a 'sustained exploration of the trauma wrought to global ecology, society and selves by the vicissitudes of post-1970s global capitalism' (p. 167).

The collection ends with Peter Schwenger's deliberately B-movie-inspired title 'Language Will Eat Your Brain'. He explores the concept of language itself as a parasite, and a number of texts which use the idea of a 'language plague' as a premise. In the end, he concludes, stimulating literary texts which allow for multiple readings and 'literary

disruption' are our best defence against any such plague. He urges, '[m]ove things around people; let words and narratives become increasingly strange' (p. 184). So maybe that Edwards sentence quoted above is, after all, a perfect example of literary disruption. Certainly, this well-edited and thought-provoking collection provides the stimulating reading we need to 'resist the smooth and insidious plague that would turn us all into zombies' (p. 184).

Conor Reid

Amy Simmons, *Antichrist* (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur Publishing, 2015)

Antichrist (2009) is arguably Lars von Trier's most controversial film, and a detailed examination of it is an appropriate addition to Auteur Publishing's 'Devil's Advocates' series of monographs on horror cinema. In her book *Antichrist* (2015), Amy Simmons has crafted a close study of this film, where 'themes such as misogyny, maternal ambivalence, madness and lust permeate a ruptured dreamscape' (p. 22). She pronounces von Trier to be the most important Danish director since Carl Theodor Dreyer, pointing out the skill with which he transcends genres, with his films crossing conventional boundaries between realist, art house, and Hollywood. Simmons's *Antichrist* explores von Trier's aesthetic, as well as his psychological and philosophical concerns, tying them together in an admirably succinct and compelling style.

Antichrist is an enthralling and distressing two-hander, with Willem Dafoe and Charlotte Gainsbourg playing the unnamed characters 'He' and 'She'. The film follows the married couple as they deal with the death of their child, who we see fall from their apartment window while they are having sex, in the dialogue-free, black-and-white, slow-motion prologue. Von Trier's *Antichrist* is divided into four 'chapters', bookended by the aforementioned prologue and an epilogue; however, within this apparently ordered structure, the narrative that unfolds is profoundly unstable, marked by the fracturing of time and space, and of the self. Simmons explores how von Trier's destabilised narrative mode reflects the ways that trauma can disrupt conceptions of identity and memory. The complex issue of identity is represented by *Antichrist*'s refusal to name its characters, which allows them to be defined almost entirely by their actions and emotions on screen, and to reflect broad ideas relating to gender and social norms, rather than simply individual psyches. She is as passionate and emotional as He is cold and clinical; when She breaks down, He takes command of her physical and psychological care. Simmons asserts that He represents patriarchal authority — he demands complete control of her body and her life — and, in response to his cruel manipulation, She rebels. There is a painful intimacy to the representation of this relationship, and in considering Dafoe and Gainsbourg's raw and affective performances, Simmons is careful to acknowledge von Trier's reputation as a punishing director[1], subjecting both his characters and actors 'to his artistic and narrative

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[1] See Pat Dowell, 'Lars von Trier: A Problematic Sort of Ladies' Man?', *NPR*, 6 November 2011 <http://www.npr.org/2011/11/06/142026288/lars-von-trier-a-problematic-sort-of-ladies-man> [accessed 11 September 2017].

tyranny' (p. 9). She also notes the oft-mentioned influence of von Trier's psychological breakdown while making the film on his portrayal of mental illness (p. 16).

As this suggests, Simmons situates *Antichrist* in the context of von Trier's work as a whole, and provides an especially useful consideration of the evolution of his use of female characters who are defined by their suffering. 'The female character's misery', she points out, 'is often generated directly or indirectly by misguided and controlling men' (p. 10). The (mis)treatment of She is central to much of the widespread criticism of *Antichrist*, which is notable for its savage emotions and brutal actions.[2] Simmons addresses this criticism, starting with the scandal following its premiere at Cannes in 2009 and the sustained outrage following its wider release. This includes a discussion on the accusations that *Antichrist* is misogynistic, and that, as in much of his work, the female characters are mistreated by men and denied agency (pp. 10-11). However, Simmons urges us to look past the overwhelming and deeply unsettling violence — including the controversial and horrific scenes of mutilation. She works to convince us that, beneath the surface, *Antichrist* offers a 'genuinely radical and unflinching account of human relationships' (p. 11). She explains that, precisely because the film is *about* misogyny, it serves to emphasise von Trier's criticism of patriarchal society and functions as a progressive study of gender politics. For Simmons, the character of She is therefore drawn as both a sympathetic victim and a 'radically diverse heroine' (p. 15). Indeed, Simmons posits that many of the negative reactions to the film are in fact responses to the way that the character of She actively resists conventional cinematic representations of women.

Extending this defence of von Trier's and the film's feminism, a particularly apt part of Simmons' exegesis is her consideration of the complex and deeply uneasy depiction of motherhood in *Antichrist*. Underlying the grief of She, there emerge indications of her hostility towards her child, and an implication that his death was, if not deliberate, then encouraged. Simmons proposes that the suggestion that She hurt her child implies a rebellion against a culture that insists She be a mother first and above all else. The film subversively draws attention to her subjectivity, highlighting the violent conflict between a woman's role as a mother and other aspects of her identity, specifically She's role as a scholar and as a sexual being. In her discussion of femininity and social conventions, Simmons also turns briefly to Barbara Creed and the anarchic potential of the monstrous feminine, via Julia

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[2] See Xan Brooks, '*Antichrist*: A Work of Genius or the Sickest Film in the History of Cinema', *Guardian*, 16 July 2009 <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2009/jul/16/antichrist-lars-von-trier-feminism> [accessed 11 September 2017].

Kristeva and the obvious abjection that features in the film. She suggests that 'von Trier does not need to create actual monsters, because he is making a statement about the monstrosity placed onto the meaning of femininity itself' (p. 80).

In addition to focusing on gender, Simmons includes an in-depth exploration of von Trier's use of allusion in *Antichrist*. Specifically, she excavates the layers of symbolism in the film, not only the immediately obvious reference to Christianity in the title (though she points out that it originated directly from Friedrich Nietzsche's 1888 book *Der Antichrist*) and in the setting, which is called Eden, but also to myth, folklore, and witchcraft. Simmons aligns *Antichrist* with Swedish films about witches, notably *Häxan* (Benjamin Christensen, 1922) and Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Day of Wrath* (1943). She also considers *Antichrist* alongside Nicholas Roeg's *Don't Look Now* (1973), with its similarly evocative study of a parent grieving after the death of a child and experiencing strange visions; and David Cronenberg's *The Brood* (1979) and Andrej Zulawski's *Possession* (1981), with their study of madness and deteriorating relationships. Simmons draws a surprising connection between *Antichrist* and the Australian New-Wave films *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Peter Weir, 1975) and *Long Weekend* (Colin Eggleston, 1978), characterised as they are by mythic landscapes that are imbued with images of femininity, sexuality, and transgression. She also explores connections beyond cinema, including the Swedish plays of August Strindberg (who, von Trier has asserted, exerted a strong influence on *Antichrist*), such as *The Father* (1887). She further points to a connection with the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, Henri Rousseau, and Thomas Cole. This reference to fine art is especially apt here, as it allows for the discussion of haptic visuality. These works offer 'the spectator an intimate sense of surface and touch' (p. 24), highlighting the extent to which von Trier encourages the engagement of all five senses in those watching the film.

Simmons equally works to situate *Antichrist* within the horror genre, exploring how von Trier combines the fantastical with the realist tradition. The film abounds in tropes familiar from horror films: a remote location (specifically, a cabin in the woods), a psychotic woman, and body horror. The supernatural elements tie the film into the sub-genre of natural horror, with the woods and its creatures seeming strange and dangerous. Simmons specifically positions the narrative as one that is enacted in a gothic space, a place where the familiar is made strange and the truth hidden in 'an entangled mess of questions, issues and incongruities' (p. 22). Interestingly, she also suggests a literary link to the unreliable narrators in the works of Edgar Allen Poe. In particular, Simmons highlights von Trier's interest in

folklore, describing the film as a dark fairy-tale. Witchcraft is a persistent thread throughout *Antichrist*: She believes herself to be evil, a witch to be burnt (p. 41). Simmons points to the precedent of witches in forests that is referenced here, as well as the inclusion of the 1487 witch-hunting manual *Malleus Maleficarum* from She's unfinished thesis. This is a persuasive consideration of the connection between the horror genre and folklore, which further serves to emphasise Simmons's insistence that *Antichrist* is a 'densely layered film in its employment of a symbolic vocabulary' (p. 21).

In her description of *Antichrist* as exposing emotions as if they are bleeding wounds (p. 11), Simmons points to how von Trier blurs the line between external horror and internal conflict. It is conflict that dominates the film, between emotion and intellect, autonomy and social conventions, and the perspectives of He and She. Simmons uncovers multiple layers in *Antichrist*, and, importantly, re-evaluates von Trier's representation of women as complex and powerful, opening a space for a broader study of the visual and philosophical potential of the horror genre.

Kate Robertson

Timothy C. Baker, *Contemporary Scottish Gothic: Mourning, Authenticity, and Tradition*
(Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014)

From *The Body Snatcher* (1945) to *Brave* (2012), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) to James Robertson's *The Testament of Gideon Mack* (2006), Scotland is continuously depicted in both literature and film as fundamentally linked to ideas of the supernatural, haunted pasts, and the Other. While these elements adhere to an undeniably gothic aesthetic, it is only recently that any sustained interest in establishing Scotland as a site for the gothic has emerged, with critics such as David Punter, Kirsty MacDonald, and Ian Duncan each tracing a national Scottish tradition.[1] Timothy C. Baker, in this monograph, seeks to further this discussion in a sustained study of contemporary examples of 'Scottish Gothic', a genre which, as Baker states, problematises such an analysis by having no clear point of origin, nor a 'cohesive body of work or a fully developed tradition' (p. 5).

Baker's introduction serves as a functional overview of the gothic in general, introduced as the progenitor of Scottish gothic, before moving specifically into what constitutes both the 'contemporary' and 'Scottish' sub-divisions. Previous academic opinions on the matter, from Cairns Craig, David Punter, and Ian Duncan amongst others, are offered up for consideration, and provide a significant critical basis, which the research employed throughout the book expands upon and develops. The introduction focuses specifically on certain conventions of the gothic (the prevalence of fear, and a problematic relationship with history, to name but two) and how these have shaped critical definitions of Scottish gothic, comparing and contrasting it to a classical gothic canon defined by Ann Radcliffe, Horace Walpole, and Matthew Lewis. This works well to situate Scottish gothic within the wider framework of the established tradition of eighteenth-century gothic texts, and helps assuage the genre's lack of a definitive origin by aligning it with that of the gothic itself.

A significant portion of the introduction is also devoted to introducing the 'widely neglected' theme of mourning in gothic literature, with Scotland being cited as an 'especially useful focus for such study' due to recent socio-political historical events that call into question ideas of national identity (pp. 16, 23). Such questions raise ideas of a collective or national mourning, which Baker focuses on in this text, pointing towards a Scottish gothic

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[1] David Punter, 'Heartlands; Contemporary Scottish Gothic', *Gothic Studies*, 1 (1999), 101-118; Kirsty MacDonald, 'Scottish Gothic: Towards a Definition', *The Bottle Imp*, 6 (November 2009), 1-2; and Ian Duncan, 'Walter Scott, James Hogg, and Scottish Gothic', in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 70-80.

tradition of collective mourning over issues of lost or mitigated nationhood and nationality (p. 19). In the rest of the book, the Scottish gothic is divided into five distinct themes, with a chapter devoted to each, containing a close analysis of three or more examples from contemporary Scottish literature that exhibit gothic motifs, often in direct comparison to classical examples of the same, specifically Walter Scott, James Hogg, or Robert Louis Stevenson. The textual analyses that follow the introduction offer an in-depth and much-needed exploration of a large number of texts by Scottish authors, though Baker states that this is not intended to represent an exhaustive list of Scottish gothic authors. The first chapter examines the relationship of contemporary authors to their predecessors — James Robertson to Scott for example — and the relationship between individual text and literary tradition, before subsequent chapters move on to highlight the relationships between the text under discussion and a variety of tropes and themes, including identity, the reader, history, animals, and community.

The first chapter, titled 'A Scott-Haunted World', works to outline the place of Sir Walter Scott's works in contemporary literature, examining the ways in which works such as the *Waverley* novels (1814-31), particularly *Old Mortality* (1816) and *A Legend of the Wars of Montrose* (1819), continue to influence contemporary Scottish texts. Scott's 'Phantasmagoria' (1818) and its relation to James Robertson's *The Fanatic* (2000) form the main textual analysis of this chapter, along with an analysis of Robertson's *The Testament of Gideon Mack* (2006). Baker reads Scott as a pseudo-Walpolean progenitor of Scottish gothic, and as a specific static point in Scotland's literary past, one which is consistently textually alluded to, though often not in the most favourable terms. He writes,

> Many writers on Scott view him primarily as a constraint. Robert Louis Stevenson, for instance, while figuring Scott as 'the ever delightful man, sane, courageous, [and] admirable', nevertheless cautions a friend not to make a comparison between them, as Scott's novels are 'full of sawdust'. […] As much as he admires Scott, Stevenson protests that Scott's work is already relegated to history. […] Scott is both resigned to the past and yet persistently invasive […]. (p. 51)

Baker posits Scott as a 'haunting figure' within contemporary Scottish gothic, serving as that past which returns intertextually, invasively, to haunt the present, and a 'central, defining figure' of the genre, whose works 'are marks against which to measure your own value'(p. 51), ultimately arguing that in the depiction of 'phantasmatic narrators', and via his own continuing intertextual hauntings, Scott sets forth a paradigm of the importance and instability of texts within the Scottish gothic.

Chapter Two continues with the theme of instability attributed to Scott in the previous chapter, but moves on to examine it via a focus on the ubiquitous, though often critically neglected, trope of the found manuscript. Baker first introduces a particular Scottish issue of anxiety over authenticity, tracing it back to the fraudulent claims over James Macpherson's publication of the first *Ossian* poems in 1761, before linking this to the rise of prose forgeries in the nineteenth century and to the production of James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), thus creating a strong connection between forgeries, impostures, and a Scottish literary tradition. The trope of the found manuscript, Baker writes, may no longer be intended to 'fool the reader', but 'nevertheless suggest[s] a sustained interest in questions of textual authenticity' (p. 55). After this, the chapter analyses Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992), and Andre Crumey's *Mr Mee* (2002), exploring how both texts use the frame manuscript to destabilise the idea of authorial authenticity, foregrounding intertextual play to allow room for personal interpretation, while simultaneously denying the resolution of identity. As Baker asserts,

> Intertextuality does not clarify situations or identities, but rather suggests that any apparent reality can only be known through the relations between texts. Literature teaches us not how to be ourselves, but rather that no self is possible within literature: literature makes space only for itself […]. (p. 69)

As Baker contends earlier, the found manuscript is a trope that often only references itself, literature making space only for itself, and this idea forms the crux of the chapter. Here, he links the found manuscript and the effects of its use in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* to those that he has previously established in both *Poor Things* and *Mr Mee*, before analysing three texts that subvert the trope: Denise Mina's *Sanctum* (2002), Morag Joss's *The Night Following* (2008), and A. L. Kennedy's *So I am Glad* (1996). From this, Baker argues that, despite the differing uses to which they put the found manuscript, within each text there is an 'implicit claim that identity is textually formulated', an idea he links not only to postmodern or metafictional practices, but intrinsically to the gothic, and Scottish gothic by association (p. 88).

Following on from the previous discussion of Scottish gothic frame manuscripts foregrounding ideas of authenticity, Chapter Three, 'Fantastic Islands', examines its use within the genre to 'address the much broader issues of history and communal memory', specifically to question the stability of any historic narrative (p. 89). Baker's focus in this chapter is on the relationship between the liminal and the central, focusing on island

narratives within contemporary Scottish gothic and their revelation of hidden histories. Louise Welsh's *Naming the Bones* (2011) and Sarah Moss's *Night Walking* (2012) are both shown to question the ways in which we produce histories and the layers of meaning imposed upon our own histories. Baker outlines how both the novels' protagonists 'resolve' their found manuscripts, discovering not a manuscript specifically, but rather a dead child whose story must be discovered. In doing so, they are both move from the peripherals of society to the centre through the renewal or gain of some form of familial relationship as reward for their discoveries. The chapter then moves into an analysis of Alice Thompson's *Pharos* (2002), Jess Richards' *Snake Ropes* (2012), and Alan Warner's *These Demented Lands* (1998). These texts extend the exploration of the creation of identity through found manuscripts and layers of identity, as explored in Chapter Two, but also illustrate 'the complex relationship between writing as the establishment of identity and the repression of the same' (p. 104). These specific Scottish island-gothic texts suggest that a liminal perspective on society is an ideal means through which to scrutinise the history of the cultural centre, and that 'textual authority is most meaningful when it is used to illustrate gaps in experience and narrative' (p. 110), gaps which are made all the more visible via this liminal view. The found manuscript is shown here to destabilise the relationship between text and world, calling into question the ways in which we construct histories and selves from the remains of other narratives.

Chapter Four, 'Metamorphosis: Humans and Animals', moves away from analyses of frame narratives, instead focusing on the typical gothic convention of metamorphosis. To begin, the chapter introduces Ali Smith's story 'The Beholder' (2013) as illustrative of the emerging idea of symbiosis, rather than full metamorphosis, in relation to characters in Scottish gothic; Baker introduces and explores the theme of how the invasion of the natural, in this case a rose bush growing from within the protagonist's chest, 'invites a reconsideration of the very categories of the self and other', as the character does not metamorphose as a result of this invasion, but instead develops as an individual (p. 117). The chapter then moves to an examination of Iain Banks's *The Wasp Factory* (1984), Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia* (2010), and Alice Thompson's *The Falconer* (2008), commenting on the way that their protagonists navigate animal deaths. These are shown to take a variety of forms, from oracular to heraldic interpretations of bodies, though always linked to the central motif of mourning. Mourning once again becomes the central focus of the analysis that follows, as Baker suggests that death opens up space for a 'consideration of suffering, the

nature of the relationships between humans and animals, and the possibility of transcendence or liberation' (p. 136). Both *The Locust Room* (2001) and *Glister* (2008) by John Burnside are used to exemplify this point, by examining the post-human aspects of the rapist character of *The Locust* as 'neither wholly human nor animal', and arguing that, in *Glister*, the reconciliation of human and animal is always 'framed in terms of their mortality' (pp. 137, 146). Here, Baker suggests that death is a prevalent, and indeed necessary, force in the analysis of humanity's relations to those of the frequently Othered animal kingdom.

The final chapter, 'Northern Communities', moves the analysis away from Scotland specifically and makes an argument for the trope of the gothicised North, which is explored in Sarah Moss's *Cold Earth* (2010) and John Burnside's *A Summer Drowning* (2011). While neither text uses a Scottish setting, nor is 'Gothic in a simple sense', Baker still justifies their analysis as part of his argument as a whole due to their questioning of 'the relationship[s] between haunting, mourning, and storytelling' (p. 148). The chapter begins by focusing on key themes of 'far north' narratives (those set in Greenland and Antarctica, for example), highlighting these spaces as those which repel community, reconcile a myriad of opposing tendencies, and function as sites where 'questions of politics and society, of utopian communities, and metaphysical notions of grace and care, cease to matter' (p. 151). Both *Cold Earth* and *A Summer Drowning* are used to exemplify these themes, though Baker eventually circles around to the key themes of authenticity and reader response that have been threaded through each preceding chapter. In this case, the chapter focuses on the way in which both texts present communal acts of reading, acts which are ultimately insufficient to help people come to terms with grief and death. In both novels, Baker argues, 'there is a persistent sense that no story, and no haunting, will ever be enough; death remains a mystery, and grief is continually isolating' (p. 160). While somewhat disconcerting, as arguments go, it does tie into the overall theme of this monograph, as expressed in the previous chapter: 'Rethinking the human fundamentally necessitates rethinking stories themselves' (p. 147). In keeping with this, in the short conclusion that ends this chapter, and by extension the book, Baker details the importance of his study, making an impassioned and concrete argument about not only the validity of the genre, but the wider implications that research into such would raise about literature as a whole.

Contemporary Scottish Gothic is a well-researched and written work that comments on emerging trends in an ever-growing field. While, critically, the text utilises the work of Jacques Derrida and Martin Heidegger to great success, the idea of post-postmodernity is

entirely ignored. The majority of texts analysed by Baker date well into the period critically accepted as after the death of post-modernism, and certain themes — the desire to escape Scott while being continually drawn back to his work; the wish to move beyond postmodern conventions of traditional frame narratives; the return of history as observed by the liminal, to outline a few — certainly tie into ideas of the metamodern, if not many of the other possible -isms currently being postulated, and any addition in this regard would only have added to the points argued throughout. This does not detract in any way from the quality of the critical analysis, however, which is exceptional throughout and brings new light to texts that deserve more attention. With the recent surge in eco-gothic criticism, Chapter Four's examination of an optimistic human-natural hybridity is sure to be germane to any scholar researching the subject. Scholars whose work focuses on experimental or metafictional works may also find the text useful, alongside those with an interest in contemporary trends in the gothic genre.

Daniel Southward

BOOK REVIEWS: FICTION

Martina Devlin, ***The House Where it Happened*** (Dublin: Ward River Press, 2014)

Martina Devlin's novel, *The House Where it Happened*, draws on a number of historical events — the Plantations of Ireland, the murder of Catholic women in 1641, and the persecution and prosecution of eight women of Islandmagee in 1711 — and weaves these together in a compelling tale of the persecution of witches in Ireland in the early eighteenth century.[1] Seen through the eyes of Ellen, the housemaid of Knowehead House, a story unfolds of witchcraft, madness, the suppression of the Catholic majority and the rule of the Presbyterian Church on Islandmagee (a peninsula in County Antrim). The novel opens with a letter from Maud Bell to her husband, Frazer Bell, telling of the events on Islandmagee in January 1641, when twenty Irishwomen and their children were driven to the edge of the cliffs by soldiers from the nearby castle at Carrickfergus. The fragment of the letter stops before the reader learns of the fate of the women and children, but the tale slowly unfolds as the novel progresses.

Knowehead House has been built on land forcibly taken by the Scottish during the time of the Plantations in the early seventeenth century. The house, which can be read as a character in the novel, is a troubled one, beset by unsettling events which cannot be explained with logic or reason. A small family live in the house: James Haltridge, a man of business with interest in the sugar trade; his wife, Isabelle; and their two children, James and Sarah. The house is managed by two indoor servants, Ellen (the narrator) and the cook, Peggy McGregor.

When Isabelle's cousin, Mary Dunbar, comes to stay, the atmosphere in the house darkens, and mysterious, inexplicable events occur: witches' knots appear in an apron; a cap belonging to Haltridge's dead mother, in which she was buried, is found in the folds of the same apron; and Mary claims that she is visited by witches who torment her, causing havoc in her bedroom and forcing her into behaving in ways associated with witches and harlots. Mary's allegations are accepted with alacrity by the local Presbyterian minister and the Elders of the church, particularly when she identifies eight local women as her tormentors, claiming that they are led by the spirit of Hamilton Locke, a participant in the murders in

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[1] There are a number of accounts of the trial of the women of Islandmagee, including Andrew Sneddon's *Possessed by the Devil: The Real History of the Islandmagee Witches and Ireland's Only Mass Witchcraft Trial* (Dublin: The History Press Ireland, 2013).

1641. The household at Knowehead House and the local population are whipped up into an anti-witch frenzy and their imaginations are given free rein in a fit of religious mania. However, there are some in the community who find it hard to believe Mary's accusations; Ellen, for example, wonders at one time, '[w]as it possible Mary Dunbar was the witch, and not the witched' (p. 134).

The eight women are unable to defend themselves against Mary Dunbar's eloquent and convincing allegations, and during their trial she elicits the sympathy of both judge and jury, to say nothing of the crowd that gathers to listen to the evidence of ministers of the church and other leaders of the community. Although the women are convicted of witchcraft and imprisoned for twelve months, Knowehead House remains the site of unexplained activity, a haunting alluded to both at the beginning of Ellen's narration and in an apparently contemporaneous report reprinted in 1822 by Samuel M'Skimin. The house, according to this report, 'had for some time believed to be haunted by evil spirits', and this haunting does not cease until Ellen intervenes.[2]

In an article written in 2014, Martina Devlin describes her emotions when she first 'stumbled across a passing reference' to the witch trials of Islandmagee in 1711. The story, Devlin says, 'fascinated' her, continuing,

> Every age has its witches, people marginalised by society. In writing *The House Where it Happened*, I wanted to give back their voices to those eight women. They were silenced twice: once in the courtroom, where they were disbelieved, and later by being written out of history. I also found myself pondering Mary Dunbar: was she mad or bad.[3]

Devlin has drawn very effectively on archival material which adds a certain verisimilitude to the tale, and it works well as a piece of fiction, as she redresses the balance in her defence of the eight women accused of witchcraft. The novel, however, is not entirely satisfying. The very act of manipulation of the historical facts has led Devlin to exclude some of the original actors and to change the names of others in this horrific trial. It is not, therefore, an accurate account of the story of Mary Dunbar, Knowehead House and the inhabitants of the peninsula of Islandmagee; as a historical gothic tale, however, it is both engaging and entertaining.

Nicola Darwood

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[2] Samuel M'Skimin, cited in 'R. Y.', 'Witchcraft in Carrickfergus, County Antrim', *Dublin Penny Journal*, 1.47, 18 May 1833, pp. 2, 5 <www.libraryireland.com/articles/CarrickfergusDPJ1-47> [accessed 28 April 2017].

[3] Martina Devlin, 'Witch Trials — Forgotten Women of a Bewitched Ireland', *Independent*, 7 September 2014 <http://www.independent.ie/entertainment/books/witch-trials-forgotten-women-of-a-bewitched-ireland-30565560.html> [accessed 28 April 2017].

Tim Hodkinson, *The Undead* (Craigavon: Acett, 2016)

It being difficult to escape from the shadow of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818) when writing a gothic horror, Tim Hodkinson has done the next best thing: set this tale some years after Victor Frankenstein created his monster, when strange occurrences suggest that somebody has been following in the scientist's footsteps.

The novel is set in 1839, primarily in Belfast, but we see enticing glimpses of Dublin, as well as some of the more rural areas of north-east Ireland. Hodkinson does a wonderful job of depicting Belfast as a truly gothic city: there is a sense of decay — both physical and moral — that is choking the city, as industrialisation increases and murder roams the bleak back-streets. The city seems to exist in eternal darkness and, even during the day, oppressive dull grey tones and impenetrable downpours are a constant feature. The action begins with rumours of a murderer on a killing spree; and when protagonist Constable Abraham Harpur hears that the person responsible is a criminal who had been executed, he begins to realise that he may need some help. Enter the enigmatic Captain Joseph Sheridan (a nod to J. Sheridan Le Fanu), a detective specialising in the supernatural, who has become obsessed with finding evidence of life after death. These two men are joined in their quest by the ambitious Emily Brunty (perhaps again an allusion to another renowned gothic novelist), the niece of a reverend in Belfast, who is attacked by the undead in the opening scene.

We have all the elements in place for a gothic-horror thriller, and that's exactly what's delivered, but there are times when it can read as formulaic and clichéd. We have the mystery of the supernatural, the sensationalism of the gruesome deaths, the brooding anti-hero in detective Sheridan, as well as the idea of place (in this instance, the city of Belfast) as another character. All this does not necessarily impede a novel such as this — indeed the knowing nods and winks to the gothic can be a nice touch at times — but there is sometimes a lack of subtlety here. For example, it's as if the novelist thinks that the idea of the undead roaming a city preying on its inhabitants is not enough, so we have all manner of supernatural beasts included, not least the banshee and faeries. The melodrama that we often see in the gothic novel is also overdone somewhat; we are told on quite a few occasions of hysterical women (and 'nearly hysterical' men) and there is plenty of wringing of hands. Despite this, there are some genuinely unnerving — and in some cases, downright horrific — scenes, particularly as the author gets comfortable with his subject matter, towards the middle and end of the work.

Treating novels set in Ireland, particularly around this time, will inevitably draw on political and sociological themes in order to frame a narrative. All the primary characters of

the story — Sheridan, Brunty, and Doctor Kirwin — are from the upper echelons of society, and it is these characters that drive the story. There is, however, the notable exception of Constable Harpur. Harpur's character is the sidekick to Sheridan's more nuanced intellectual, a man who is at times exasperated at Sheridan's use of logic and reason. Those not from the privileged elite do of course feature in the story, but the events that unfold simply happen to them: they are powerless to impact them, either in a positive or a negative sense. This is despite such characters having on occasion special 'innate' knowledge of the supernatural. In Belfast we learn of divisions between the 'Protestants' and the 'Catholics', but the stories of these people — despite their being fed upon by the undead — are rarely fleshed out in a realistic or sympathetic manner.

On the whole, however, there is the bones of an exciting novel here, albeit one that could do with extensive editing. We have the main components of the quintessential gothic novel, but there are times when cliché and a lack of subtlety interrupt its flow.

Brian Ó Faoláin

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John C. Tibbetts, *The Gothic Worlds of Peter Straub* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2016).

*Please note that some of these books may already have been placed with potential reviewers.
For a complete list of books available for review, please email irishjournalgothichorror@gmail.com.

FILM REVIEWS

Get Out, dir. by Jordan Peele (Universal Pictures, 2017)

In many respects, *Get Out*'s central premise is nothing new: the image of the seemingly perfect family concealing an awful secret beneath its suburban façade has become so ubiquitous in the horror genre as to have passed into cliché. Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives* (1972) is perhaps the best-known incarnation of this trope, following one woman's discovery that the Men's Association in her new hometown is replacing its members' wives with hyper-feminine, subservient, domesticated robots. What has earned *Get Out* such acclaim from audiences and critics alike, however, is not an upending of suburban-gothic conventions, but rather an expanding of them. Although the plot may be familiar, such a prominent tackling of racial issues is rare within a subgenre overwhelmingly concerned with the domestic ennui of wealthy white people.

Get Out follows Chris Washington (Daniel Kalluya) on a trip to meet his girlfriend Rose's (Allison Williams) family, the Armitages. The tensions at play start off small: 'Do they know I'm black?' he asks Rose. 'Should they?' she replies, assuring him that he doesn't need to worry, that her dad 'would have voted for Obama a *third* time if he could'. To talk of microaggressions — that is, small acts of unthinking discrimination against minority-group members, often invisible to the perpetrators — is to invite sneers from certain corners of society these days; the Left, we are told, is too sensitive, overly PC, and looking for antagonism in every small gesture. A major strength of *Get Out* is in Peele's ability to show his audience (at least, those members of his audience for whom these aren't already everyday experiences) exactly how it feels to navigate difference, to be viewed in every moment as a member of the outgroup, even as those around you hastily attempt to correct their prejudice. Although the Armitage family welcomes Chris with open arms, every interaction is in some way racially charged; Rose's father, Dean (Bradley Whitford), explains how proud he is that his own father ran alongside Jesse Owens in the 1936 Olympics, and her younger brother (Caleb Landry Jones) speculates excruciatingly that Chris's 'genetic makeup' would make him an excellent MMA fighter. Beneath their all-too-earnest exteriors lie constant reminders that they view their guest as 'Other'.

Underpinning Chris's discomfort at this hyper-enthusiastic welcome is a simple, stark fact: all of the Armitages' domestic staff are black. Walter the handyman (Marcus

Henderson) and Georgina the housekeeper (Betty Gabriel) are the only other non-white people around Chris, but they seem just a little *off* to him. Their speech is formal, as though they are much older than their appearances suggest, and when they are not performing household duties, he catches them engaging in odd behaviour: Walter dashes around the ground at alarming speeds during the night, and Georgina stares at herself intently and at great length in the mirror. Rose's parents pay lip-service to the imbalance of power in the household: 'I know what you're thinking ... Come on, I get it. White family, black servants. It's a total cliché ... But boy, I hate how it looks.' Yet the inadequacy of the limp explanation hammers home an obvious truth: actions speak louder than words, and the Armitages are acting *really weirdly*.

Compounding Chris's discomfort is Rose's mother, Missy (Catherine Keener), who insists upon treating him to a therapy session, ostensibly to help him quit smoking. The session is nothing more than a pretext for *hypno*therapy, however, during which Chris finds himself paralysed and trapped in what Missy calls 'the sunken place' — an outer-space-like void with a small window, like a TV screen, acting as the only connection to the real world. On waking the next morning, he chalks it all up to a nightmare, but discovers that Missy has used the session to hypnotise him into giving up cigarettes. Her actions retain a benign veneer, but at the same time deepen the uneasy power dynamic at play in the Armitage household. They not only hold people of colour in economic thrall, but in psychic thrall as well, and the casual way in which Missy can deny Chris agency belies the deep, dark family secret that the film is leading its audience to discover.

Interactions with Rose's family and their friends continue to unsettle Chris, though he has difficulty distinguishing between real danger and the casually hurtful remarks that fuel the background discomfort of his daily life. At an unexpected get-together hosted by the Armitages, Chris must endure ever more cringe-inducing comments from the family's neighbours and friends. They 'know Tiger' (Woods, that is), tell him that '[b]lack is in fashion', and — upon meeting one woman's *much* younger black partner — ask her '[s]o, is it true? Is it better?' 'It's like they haven't met a black person that doesn't work for them', Chris laments. Even the few other black people at the party make him uncomfortable. One man in particular, introduced as Logan (Lakeith Stanfield), baffles Chris; his reaction to Chris telling him that it's '[g]ood to see another brother around here' is stiff and awkward, and he dresses anachronistically in a straw hat and beige jacket. Longing for someone to understand the discomfort, Chris snaps a photo of Logan to send to his friend, but the flash provokes a

reaction — 'Get out!' he screams at Chris, with fear in his eyes. At the same time, although Chris doesn't see it, the audience is privy to a secretive auction in which Dean Armitage accepts bids on a photograph of his daughter's boyfriend.

From here, Chris must begin to confront malice of a much more active sort; after sending the photo to his friend Rod (Lil Rel Howrey), who works as a security officer for the TSA, he learns that 'Logan' is actually Andre Hayworth, the subject of a missing persons case, who disappeared from an affluent suburb six months previously (and whose abduction, we realise, was depicted in the film's opening scenes). He also finds a secret stash of photographs of Rose with old partners — all of them black, contrary to a previous conversation in which she told him he was the first black man she had dated, and amongst them Andre, Walter, and Georgia. It transpires that Rose's grandfather pioneered a means of immortality in which the brains of older people are transplanted into the bodies of much younger people, while the original person maintains a sliver of consciousness in the 'sunken place' for eternity (Peele mercifully does not dwell too much on the specifics of the science behind this, sparing his audience from *Star Trek* levels of technobabble). The Armitages, it becomes clear, have designated Chris as the next vessel for one of their old, wealthy, white friends, who see black people not as people, but as something to appropriate.

The remainder of the film charts Chris's escape from his would-be corporeal colonisers, culminating in the film's most powerfully empathy-inducing moment: the arrival of a police car. Where film audiences are used to flashing lights and sirens signalling relief and delivery from trauma, Peele instead induces sinking dread; Chris is a black man surrounded by countless white bodies, and Rose takes the opportunity to cry out for help, knowing that in the eyes of the American police force, blackness is all too often immediately equated with guilt. Luckily, the driver is actually his friend Rod in a car borrowed from work — an ending that Peele didn't originally envision for the film, but included due to a perceived shift in societal attitudes to his film's subject. Speaking on a *Buzzfeed* podcast, he explained that when he began making the film, '[p]eople were saying, like, "We've got Obama so racism is over, let's not talk about it". It's a wrap. That's what the movie was meant to address.'[1] In that context, Peele envisioned a much bleaker ending that would shock audiences into a new perspective on 'post-racial' America. Recent political upheavals, however, prompted him to rethink this approach: 'It was very clear that the ending needed to

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[1] *Another Round*, 'Episode 83: Incognero (with Jordan Peele)', 1 March 2017
<https://www.acast.com/anotherround/episode-83-incognegro-with-jordan-peele> [accessed 27 October 2017].

transform into something that gives us a hero, that gives us an escape, gives us a positive feeling when we leave this movie.'[2]

In a *Variety* review of the film, Peter Debruge astutely observes that 'Peele hasn't gone after the easy target (assumed-racist Trump voters)' in his depiction of modern-day racial tensions, but that doesn't mean the film isn't potentially heralding a new wave of Trump-era horror.[3] In satirising liberal attempts to divest themselves of complicity in racial injustice, it sounds a strong warning about the dangers of inaction and the refusal to confront ingrained attitudes about race held by self-proclaimed 'allies'. Well-meaning white people may not, in real life, be literally inhabiting the bodies of black people — or fastidiously keeping whites and colours apart whenever possible, as Rose does when she eats her milk and her fruit cereal separately — but *Get Out* forces us to confront our willingness to simultaneously fetishise black culture and also insist that we bear no responsibility for society's racial divide. The film is set to become a staple in horror studies over the coming years, with a collection of dedicated essays already in progress with the University of Texas Press, and with good reason — the best horror tells us more about the context that produces it than it does about imaginary monsters, and Peele has expertly captured what, sadly, far too many people already know: being black in the twenty-first century can still be really scary.

Emily Bourke

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[2] *Another Round*, 'Episode 83'.
[3] Peter Debruge, 'Film Review: "Get Out"', *Variety*, 24 January 2017 <http://variety.com/2017/film/reviews/get-out-review-jordan-peele-1201968635/> [accessed 27 October 2017].

***Beware the Slenderman*, dir. by Irene Taylor Brodsky** (HBO/Warner Bros., 2016)

Sleek, polished, and undeniably emulating the recent trend in gripping, Netflix-style true-crime documentaries, Irene Taylor Brodsky's *Beware the Slenderman* (2016) begins in a tone similar to its predecessors. Ominous dark music pulses in time with dislocated images of a child jumping in the air, leaves falling, sunbeams penetrating woodland canopies, and snippets of computer screens. As the title music changes to softer, more melancholic piano, drone footage of blue skies and the sound of police sirens provide the backdrop to a dispatch call via an officer who has information received from a distressed passer-by: 'He came upon a 12 year-old female. She appears to have been stabbed.' 'She appears to be what?' asks the dispatcher. 'Stabbed', the officer states. 'Stabbed?' 'Correct', confirms the officer.

On 31 May 2014, twelve year-old Morgan Geyser and Anissa Weier, having spent the previous night together at a sleepover with their friend Payton (Bella) Leutner (also twelve) stabbed Leutner nineteen times and left her for dead in a wooded area in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Reports surrounding the case claimed that the two girls had plotted to kill for over a year, intending to deliver the victim as a form of sacrifice to the online fictional character known as the 'Slenderman'. Though seriously injured, Leutner survived the stabbing. After being reprimanded in a juvenile detention centre and psychiatrically assessed for over a year, the girls (now fifteen) will, it has recently been announced, be tried as adults. While the manner in which these teens will be tried has caused a degree of debate concerning juvenile culpability, arguably what has dominated this case from the start is the alleged correlation between the girls' actions and an internet meme. So intertwined and sensationalised have the attempted murder and the fictional character become that the majority of media reports have dubbed that case 'The Slenderman Stabbing'. And unfortunately, symptomatic of this sensationalism is *Beware the Slenderman*. Aired earlier this year, HBO's documentary conceals its own brand of sensationalism behind an exploration of the genuine grief of two sets of parents, whose lives have been irrevocably torn apart by the actions of their daughters on that day in Waukesha. The documentary is ostensibly ambivalent, but this ambivalence betrays a greater goal — creating a narrative that reinforces the notion that two girls were ultimately corrupted not by the ravages of mental illness, but by an internet meme.

It seems that the very artificiality of the Slenderman's past grants internet users licence continually to reproduce his origins in more 'authentic' ways. His myth grew out of a Photoshop competition on the horror forum somethingawful.com in 2009, when Eric Knudsen — known on the forum as 'Victor Surge' — edited a sinister-looking figure into the

backgrounds of two images of children. At every opportunity, Brodsky uses clips and images taken from depths of the internet, presenting this meme in every conceivable format. The opening shot is of a point-of-view camera, running through woods in the dark. With panting in the background, the screens crackles every so often, implying this is streamed footage intermittently disturbed by signal faults. As the handheld camera pans over the dark branches and bushes, momentarily illuminated is a pale-faced, tall, and slender figure watching her, only to disappear. Still unidentified, she begs for help. 'Please', she calls, before stumbling, seconds before her scream pierces the image of a glowing white face, pixelated and distorted, spliced with imagery that evokes a satanic ritual. Suddenly a computer mouse click is heard and the screen goes black, reinforcing the digital nature of the meme's cyber-mythology.

Thematically, the documentary follows quite a compelling narrative as the audience is presented with academic and digital expertise, alternating with courtroom interviews and online content. This cornucopia of footage is intertwined with grainy, unnerving CCTV footage of the police interrogations of the two young girls shortly after they were taken into custody. This CCTV footage, which is not unlike the coarse Slenderman-related short film of the opening, frames the majority of the documentary. These clips, however, make for more troubling viewing when we consider that before us are two young girls, unaccompanied by their parents or guardians, answering a series of questions about the attempted murder of their friend with a disconcerting coolness. In scenes reminiscent of the young Brendan Dassey in *Making a Murderer* (2015), whose learning difficulties made for uncomfortable watching as detectives probed the depths of his limited knowledge of the murder his uncle was charged with, both Morgan and Anissa are asked a series of questions which reveal less about the actual murder and more about how complex and disturbing their relationship is with the reality around them. 'Morgan and I were gonna be like lionesses, chasing down a zebra', Anissa tells the detective. Asked why she stabbed her friend, she confesses to Detective Tom Casey that Peyton's stabbing was 'necessary'. This, compounded with Casey's own account in court of Morgan's lack of emotion and remorse during the interrogation, creates a stark juxtaposition to the scenes which follow: a home movie of the infant Morgan, cherubic, gurgling and sitting in a high chair as her mother repeats, 'Hi Morgan, Hi Morgan'.

Beware the Slenderman does suffer from its own sensationalism, but, perhaps to its credit, the way in which it humanises both of the girls' parents and conveys the depth of their suffering is commendable. Brodsky delicately balances sentimental accounts of the girls as babies and nostalgic anecdotes from their childhood with interrogations and court hearings.

As such, at the centre of this documentary is a recognition that while, two little girls attempted to murder their best friend, in doing so they also destroyed their parents' lives. Interestingly, the parents are quick to sideline Slenderman in favour of discussing the few — if any — warning signs they should have perceived, and their struggle to come to terms with their new lives. 'My focus is Anissa', Anissa's father remarks, 'not Slenderman'.

As their parents strive to locate the girls and their own suffering at the centre of this case, however, the focus of this documentary *is* unequivocally Slenderman. Subsequently, in an effort to emphasise their suffering and stark bewilderment, both the Geysers and Weiers are ultimately presented as victims not of this sad situation, but of the ubiquitous meme. Justification for such a suggestion is compounded by the wealth of academic and expert scrutiny, which Brodsky layers throughout the documentary, in order to imply dramatically the alleged that hold Slenderman had and continues to have on the lives of young teens. In gathering such validations throughout her documentary, by the end of the feature it is suggested that we should all be wary of Slenderman and his alleged powers.

While Brodsky does pay particular attention to invoking a more academic and professional analysis of the meme and the case surrounding it, speaking to a panel of experts on folklore, digital culture, and memes, the director must also be praised for giving special attention to Anissa's childhood friend Maggie, and allowing her evaluation of the situation some considerable weight. We are first introduced to Maggie sitting in the Weier's kitchen speaking to an overly enthusiastic Anissa, who has collect called from prison. Recommending that Anissa does not smile 'too much' when she sees her in court the next day, Maggie's insight into exactly what happened is arguably the most measured, coherent, and poignant of all. Dismissing Slenderman as a principal factor in the case and seeking to undermine the influence of the meme, she maintains that she never knew 'where the whole Slenderman thing started because Anissa never talked about anything like that. Nobody ever talked about Slenderman.' Offering an alternative she adds, '[Anissa] is easily frightened. … Maybe she did it because she wanted to be noticed.' Explaining how Anissa would regale her with tales of how popular she was at school, when the reality was that she was marginalised and bullied, Maggie continues her analysis of the case with a simple, 'she was a follower … I just think that some kids are big believers. They can't help but believe everything they hear.'

Her simplified diagnosis that some kids just 'believe everything they hear' contrast with an astute understanding of a condition which court-appointed psychiatrist to Anissa, Dr Michael Caldwell, describes as a 'delusional disorder caused by schizotypy'. Considered to

be a 'diminished ability to determine what's real and what's not', which many people exhibit, Caldwell is quick to add that Anissa did not display psychopathic characteristics. When she was examined, Morgan's diagnosis proved even more illuminating. Explaining her condition, Dr Kenneth Casmir explains in court that Morgan was diagnosed with schizophrenia, amongst other issues, and that her delusions were created by her untreated schizophrenia and manifested in the desire to appease a fictional character that she was fixated upon. Despite being hinted at by Morgan's mother earlier in the documentary, when explaining that her daughter didn't respond to the death of Bambi's mother the way she would have anticipated, the issue of the girls' mental health is only considered in any great fashion within the final twenty five minutes of the two-hour documentary.

Charged with attempted first-degree murder and awaiting a trial which may constitute a 65-year sentence, the girls will be tried as adults. 'That was the biggest moral question here', states Brodsky. 'Not whether they did it, but how accountable do we hold children that commit crimes we call adult crimes.'[1] Unfortunately, such an exploration is never fully realised. In an effort perhaps to sidestep issues of juvenile culpability in cases such as this, *Beware the Slenderman* makes an age-old case for the dangers of the media. Following a well-trodden road, we see decontextualised images from the girls' internet history, stories emulating Slenderman, and tales of how Slenderman is the refuge of the 'odd'. Yet in questioning juvenile culpability, Brodsky misses a superb opportunity to delve into childhood mental illness and de-mythologise its place in society. Instead, the film chooses to analyse an internet meme and locate its fleeting relevance at the centre of an attempted murder case.

Morgan and Anissa are two friends that met by remote chance, one with delusional schizophrenia and the other with schizotpy. It was a perfect storm in which their respective conditions complemented each other and created a space for a shared delusion to be nurtured and executed. We need not be wary of the Slenderman; rather, careful attention must be given to a society that would rather learn about the black magic of the boogieman then give credence to the depths of illness that the human mind is capable of.

Sarah Cleary

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[1] Abigail Jones, 'Beware the Slenderman: HBO Goes Inside the Story of the Girls Who Tried to Kill for an Internet Meme', *Newsweek*, 19 January 2017 <http://www.newsweek.com/beware-slenderman-hbo-documentary-544221> [accessed 10 April 2017].

The Girl With All The Gifts, dir. by Colm McCarthy (Warner Bros/Saban Films, 2016)

Polite, intelligent, twelve-year-old Melanie lives in a cell, her world a military base, just a few corridors and a classroom she only sees when shackled into a wheelchair. Her handlers deal with her as if she's a deadly cross between a feral beast and an unexploded bomb. Why are Melanie and the other children held at the base, and what is the terrible secret she holds?

Colm McCarthy directs this feature with a script by Mike Carey, developed from Carey's own novel of the same name. McCarthy last directed a feature in 2010 with Outcast, but has been honing his skills on television with an impressive portfolio of work on *Dr Who* (2005-present), *Peaky Blinders* (2013-present), and *Endeavour* (2012-present). His deft touch and astute sense of pace keep things progressing steadily, allowing his young star to deliver an engaging and moving performance. Though completed on a modest budget, the film displays surprisingly high production values and boasts an excellent cast. Melanie is skillfully played by Sennia Nanua, as is her teacher, Miss Justineau, by Gemma Arterton. Glenn Close plays Dr Cardwell, who looks at Melanie as if she's a lab experiment, and Paddy Considine is the demanding, and at times brutal, Sergeant Parks. Carey's background in comics shows in the economic and skillful establishment of character and situation, fleshing out the pertinent points, and allowing the audience to draw the rest of the information by implication and inference. He quickly sets up an original, immediate, and intriguing premise, but it is the complexity of his characters that keeps us watching.

The narrative builds gradually, drawing us in, revealing layer on layer of harsh strangeness in Melanie's world, before the reveal which makes sense of her situation — she is one of a small group of second-generation zombie offspring who somehow retain their cognitive abilities despite their cravings for human flesh. The accretion of harsh otherness and Melanie's acceptance of it as normality provide some of the most moving moments in the film, which outlines the character relationships clearly and succinctly. Carey sets out his stall early, linking the unfolding story to tales that Justineau reads aloud to her captive class, referencing both Pandora and Odysseus. These Greek myths allow the film to draw parallels between Melanie and Pandora, who unwittingly releases numerous woes on humankind, surrounding bright, happy Melanie with a sense of suspense and foreboding, and with the homeward quest of Odysseus, foreshadowing the travels and trials ahead of the characters.

Forced to flee the confines of the base, the group's journey through a hostile hinterland removes the characters from the rigid martial structure which defined their

previous interactions. Barriers are broken, enemies become allies, allegiances shift, and true natures are revealed. Melanie and Justineau undergo the greatest growth, displaying formidable intelligence and strength, and even brutality when required. The brusque Parks softens, recognising the humanity of those he treated as objects. Only Close's Cardwell is a ruthless constant, intent on doing dire things for the very best of reasons, and this lack of growth proves to be the root of a catastrophic undoing.

The journey, again an unforced echo of Homeric narrative, places the characters in situations where only the captive Melanie, still handcuffed and muzzled, can help them, while ironically she has the most limited experience of the world. Forced to seek help by the most direct route, they pass through the heart of the now-dead and heavily infested metropolis of London. This city, once a hive of life and human activity, is overgrown, returning to nature, and makes aliens of the living. Here, the film encapsulates the greatest dangers visually in the use of an iconic London landmark, subverted by fungal growth. The only inhabitants are the plentiful 'hungries' — infected, effectively dead humans animated by the fungal infection. These mammal-mushroom hybrids snap and bite, then die as the host succumbs to the fungus consuming its flesh. In their final stage, these victims gather and help form huge mycelial lattices as the fungus matures its spore pods.

Kristian Misted's production design largely eschews slick, easy CGI for finding real locations that have been abandoned and overgrown, augmenting and adapting them convincingly through Barber's skilled art direction. Many of the aerial shots were filmed in Pripyat, near the Chernobyl reactor. This use of a city abandoned so hastily by humanity adds a frisson of chilling reality and offers a genuine vision of what happens when our technology and ambition outstrip our ability to control them. The grassy avenues and decaying buildings are a timely reminder that we are limited, and that even our great achievements — cities, culture, society — can be swept away in a few years by simple neglect. McCarthy and Carey perhaps remind us that we are passengers on this planet, and are stewards, not owners, and that it might serve us well to respect the planet, nature, and each other more.

The cinematography by Simons Dennis is luminant and dynamic, showing the appeal and danger of a world which clearly doesn't miss humanity. The emotional core of the film is completed by Cristobel Tapia de Veer's music, which mixes ambient sounds, rhythmic chant, and the attenuated sound of the Theremin to convey the beauty, strangeness, and horror of this post-human world. An invasive fungal infection is used as a biological vector for the apocalyptic plague and this idea is communicated very effectively — the make-up team

depict the vermiform and mycelial invasion of human flesh, the infection's growth, as it progressively changes the texture of the tissue. Eventually this transgressive transformation from animal to vegetable is completed when fruiting bodies, in the form of husk-like spore pods, hang from the now-inert eyes and mouth.

This is the third time this unusual fungus has appeared in moving-image horror narrative as a specific vector for transforming infection.[1] Carey's choice of Ophiocordyceps Unilateralis as a plausible cause of infection means that technically this isn't a 'true' zombie movie, since the victims of the plague are parasitised and don't actually die and rise again. In spite of this fine technical distinction, it must be acknowledged that in horror narrative, the zombie has a strong record of adaptability and responsiveness, which belies its often-dishevelled appearance and shuffling gait. This ironic vitality may be due in large part to the creature's deeply political and philosophical roots, emerging from folklore into popular culture as a direct consequence of the United States' colonial expansion into Haiti. William Seabrook's travel narrative, *The Magic Island*,[2] depicts imagery of Haitians that help to vindicate the US interventions on the island, and some have speculated that Seabrook's book informed the Halperin brothers' film *White Zombie*, the first on-screen appearance of the folkloric creature, in 1932.[3] Persephone Braham notes that the zombie became a 'potent symbol of colonial and postcolonial relationships',[4] and that it '[r]eflects the anthropophagic patterns inherent in capitalist enterprise'.[5] It is clear that the narrative potential offered by this interstitial figure raises questions that address key human issues: consciousness, identity, responsibility, consumerism, politics, and the dichotomy of being human; materiality versus spirit, object versus subject, the status of an animated corpse that cannot hunger but that continues to consume destructively. The qualities of the traditional zombie have been accentuated by the addition of a transmissible element, perhaps transposed from folkloric lycanthropy, by which every encounter becomes a potential infection, making all narrative protagonists in such texts into zombies-in-waiting.

While not as fiercely original as it might at first appear, McCarthy's film delivers some great storytelling and does a wonderful job of presenting a post-human world. Its

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[1] Ophiocordyceps first appears as an invasive, mind-altering infection in video game *The Last of Us* (Naughty Dog, 2013), and reappears in Corin Hardy's *The Hallow* (2015).

[2] William Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (New York: Dover Books, 2016).

[3] Robert Spadoni, *Uncanny Bodies: The Coming of Sound and the Origins of the Horror Genre* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2007) p. 123.

[4] Persephone Braham, 'The Monstrous Caribbean', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. by Asa Simon Mittman and Peter J Dendle (Oxford: Routledge, 2016), pp. 17-47 (p. 39).

[5] Ibid.

massified, infectious antagonists resonate with significant political and philosophical meaning, but in the end, it is really the development of the characters and the skill with which their fears and strengths are portrayed that takes *The Girl With All the Gifts* beyond the conventional emotional limits of the horror genre.

Gerard Gibson

It Comes at Night, dir. by Trey Edward Shults (A24, 2017)

The proliferation of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives in American literature and film in the years following the 9/11 terrorist attacks remains one of the day's most striking, if predictable, cultural consequences, and sixteen years on, the trend shows no signs of abating. Both the 2008 economic collapse, and, more recently, the surprise election of Donald J. Trump to the White House in November 2016, have inspired new waves of dystopian and apocalyptic texts in film and fiction. Alongside eco-catastrophe, one of the most frequently deployed means of bringing about the rapid collapse of 'Civilisation as We Know It' is also one of the most historically resonant: the outbreak of a rapidly spreading and uncontainable contagious disease.

The frequency with which plague epidemics depopulate the United States in film and fiction surely owes much to the fact that the continent has already seen one civilisation (that of the Native Americans) seriously destabilised by infectious disease. In these narratives, however, it is invariably white characters and communities that find themselves devastated by contagion, and the survivors and their descendants often find themselves 'regressing' to a much more primitive, and even 'Indian-like' hunter-gatherer state, thereby transforming those who have benefitted most from the consequences of European colonisation into de facto victims themselves. Early twentieth-century examples include Jack London's 'The Scarlet Plague' (1912), George Stewart's *Earth Abides* (1949), and Stephen King's *The Stand* (1978), while more recently, *Carriers* (2009), *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014), Emily St John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014), and Alexandra Olivia's *The Last One* (2016) all deal with broadly similar themes. As in these texts, in *It Comes at Night*, the outbreak of a horrific infectious disease is the catalyst for the sudden and violent breakdown of every certainty that white, middle-class America holds dear. It's a familiar premise lent intense contemporary resonance by the fact that the economic stability of the middle-income United States is in long-term decline; long-standing racial tensions have only intensified in recent months; and, as demographers have for some time been pointing out, white Americans will soon no longer be in the majority (as the Census Bureau noted in 2012, 2011 was the first recorded year in which more 'minority' than white babies were born in the US).

The film — the second by writer/director Trey Edward Shults — is an intelligent, intense, and formally restrained exploration of paranoia, claustrophobia, and the devastating but seemingly inevitable erosion of pre-catastrophe moral standards. Its small cast, isolated setting, siege mentality, and pervasive feeling of dread (reinforced by the film's many long,

Kubrickian tracking shots) also evoke *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), another bleak exploration of the ways in which previously 'decent' and law-abiding people turn on each other when placed under intolerable strain. Like Romero's film, *It Comes at Night* has also been interpreted by many critics as articulating something resonant about the current state of the nation — in this instance, the sense of despair and helplessness that, for many commentators, has characterised the chaotic first year of the Trump presidency.[1]

Within this rapidly disintegrating social and civil framework, Shults rapidly establishes that brutal and unsentimental pragmatism is now the core survival strategy for his main characters, family man Paul (Joel Edgerton), his wife Sarah (Carmen Ejogo), and their sensitive seventeen-year-old son, Travis (Kelvin Harrison Jr), who have fled the unnamed city and boarded themselves up in a large wooden house in the forest. The film opens as Paul and Travis take Sarah's father (the owner of the house, who has already been infected by the deadly contagion) out into the verdant woodland. Paul shoots the old man dead, and the body (which is covered in Bubonic-plague-style buboes) is then doused in gasoline and burned. It's an act of clinical, brutal efficiency that reinforces the fact that pre-plague sentimentality can no longer be indulged in by those who hope to survive.

Crucially, the outbreak has obviously been active for some time, and we are not shown any scenes set before the epidemic began. References to the pre-plague era are brief and often cryptic. There is no TV, radio, or electricity, and the house must be locked down every evening, with the only key to the ominously red front door being that held by Paul alone. The threat of infection remains a constant, looming source of terror, and even travelling a few miles is fraught with peril because other (possibly infectious) survivors lurk by the roadsides, ready to rob and kill passers-by. Try as they might to focus on practicalities such as food, water, shelter, and security, Paul and Sarah remain acutely conscious of the fact that even the smallest mistake or instant of bad luck will likely have fatal consequences.

The lack of reference to the outside world — aside from some brief references to the fact that the cities are now a no-go area — reinforces the sheer hopelessness of the situation. The isolation of this core family group is violated when they discover a desperate man breaking into their house in search of supplies. Will (Christopher Abbott) is looking for food and water for his wife Kim (Riley Keough) and young son, who are in holed up in a cabin

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[1] See, for instance, Aja Romano, '*IT Comes at Night* is a Terrifying, Uncomfortably Relevant Horror Masterpiece', *Vox*, 8 June 2017 <https://www.vox.com/culture/2017/6/8/15739132/it-comes-at-night-review-dystopia-politics> [accessed 7 September 2017]; and Michael Gingold, 'Is *IT Comes at Night* a Horror Film for Trump's America?', *Birth.Movies.Death*, 8 June 2017 <http://birthmoviesdeath.com/2017/06/08/is-it-comes-at-night-a-horror-film-for-trumps-america> [accessed 7 September 2017].

some miles away. After some tense negotiations — initially conducted when Will is tied to a tree with a gun at his head — Paul decides to invite the other family to move into the house so that the two groups can share resources and security duties. Though the arrangement initially seems to go well, it isn't long before their enforced proximity and mutual paranoia begin to create dangerous tensions.

The fact that none of this is likely to end well is foreshadowed from the outset by the surreal night terrors experienced by Travis, the well-mannered teenager who is still too young to be considered a true adult by the others, but too old to engage fully with toddler Andrew (despite treating the child with playful kindness). Travis is obviously deeply traumatised by everything that has happened. His feverish nightmares provide some of the film's most vividly disturbing moments, as he is tormented by visions of plague-ridden, blood-spewing loved ones, which only become more extreme as he finds himself increasingly attracted to Kim. Whether Travis's dreams should be seen as prophecy, foreshadowing, or something else ultimately remains unclear (as does the exact nature of the 'It' referenced in the title). Nevertheless, they do undoubtedly reflect the film's pervasive miasma of anxiety, despair, and mutual mistrust.

It should also be noted that Travis is of mixed race (his mother Sarah is black); everyone else in the film, save for his dead grandfather, is white. Though there is, on the surface, no overt racial tension in the film, the household is one in which white and black characters are compelled to share resources uneasily, and in which the sole mixed-race character is the most visibly traumatised, sensitive, and perhaps even dangerously unstable figure in the narrative. Indeed, one of the nagging questions left by the film is the extent to which Travis deliberately or otherwise helps bring about the incident that precipitates the final, fatal confrontation between the two families.

In addition to these implicit racial anxieties, relationships between the two families are also subtly shaped by class-based tensions. Will and Kim clearly hail from a lower socio-economic and educational background than Paul and Sarah, which may play into the householders' growing fear that their new guests may in fact covet their property and position. Paul is a middle-class white man with a teaching background, and in one of the film's more on-the-nose conceits, was an expert on doomed societies (Ancient Rome, to be exact), who now gets to witness the collapse of North-American civilisation unfolding in real time. This suggestion that recent events have a clear historical precedent is reinforced by the film's intermittent visual references to a previous devastating outbreak, the Black Death.

Though a less subtle film may have been tempted to depict Paul as a familiar species of domestic tyrant — the domineering and paranoid patriarchal archetype that has haunted the American gothic since the publication of Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* in 1798. To his credit, for most of the movie's run time, Shults makes Paul's controlling tendencies seem like an understandably pragmatic response to dire circumstance. In addition, Paul's obviously warm and loving relationship with his wife and son helps us understand that, no matter how brutal his defensive measures may be, like everything else, they are undertaken with only their safety in mind. It also helps that Sarah too is a nuanced and strong-willed character, who, crucially, can be held equally responsible for shocking acts of murder that occur at the end of the film. This welcome note of moral complexity extends to the secondary characters. Though they are mainly seen through the eyes of Paul, Sarah, and Travis, it is also clear that, whatever the less-well-off couple's real plans might be, Kim and Will ultimately only want what is best for their child as well. Indeed, everyone in the house just wants to protect their own. As a result, the despairing final moments of the film, which highlight the utter futility and moral cost of this 'family first' policy, are rendered all the more devastating.

The film's climactic acts of brutal violence are all the more terrible then, because they save no one and accomplish nothing. The characters who remain alive in the stark final moments can be certain only of two things: death is inevitable, and fear has turned them into monsters. The nebulous 'It' that has stalked the family since the plague began — ultimately perhaps more representative of their increasingly paranoid mindset than any literal external threat — has come for them at last, and this time, there can be no escape. If the film is interpreted as an oblique commentary on the political and social climate of the United States in late 2017, it's unlikely that we will see a bleaker, more despairing vision of a world in which the very worst has come to pass, all hope is lost, and reason and compassion have been overtaken by self-interest and panic.

Bernice M. Murphy

***It*, dir. by Andy Muschietti** (Warner Bros., 2017)

It probably goes without saying that we're in the middle of an evil-clown zeitgeist. If the first decade of the new millennium was all about sparkly vampires, now the men in red noses are having their moment at the forefront of horror. This resurgence of the clown in popular culture may have gained momentum from Chris Nolan's Batman grim-fest, *The Dark Knight* (2008), wherein the late Heath Ledger captivated audiences with his performance as the Joker, an enigmatic sociopath in flaking clown white. Notable entries from the horror genre in recent years include Captain Spaulding from Rob Zombie's *House of 1000 Corpses* (2003) and *The Devil's Rejects* (2005), as well as the gruesome Twisty the Clown from *American Horror Story: Freak Show* (2014). The latter half of 2016 even brought us alarming news of a real-life plague of clowns, reports pouring in from around the world of sinister costumed figures seen lurking at roadsides and near schools. The hysteria lasted until (as the old joke goes) the clowns' leader got elected president, and they have all since gracefully retired back into the realm of fiction.

Given the general hype, it was only a matter of time before the most famous creepy clown of them all would be given a reboot. *It* (2017) adapts Stephen King's 1986 novel of the same name and follows the iconic 1990 miniseries starring Tim Curry. The film tells the story of a group of adolescent underdogs who name themselves 'The Losers Club'; one of the club's members, Bill (Jaeden Lieberher), is a thirteen-year-old boy with a debilitating stutter, mourning the disappearance of his little brother Georgie (Jackson Robert Scott). Unable to accept the loss of Georgie (who is snatched from the street one rainy day while Bill is laid up at home, sick), Bill teams up with friends Bev (Sophia Lillis), Ben (Jeremy Ray Taylor), Eddie (Jack Dylan Grazer), Richie (Finn Wolfhard, of *Stranger Things* (2016-present) fame), Stanley (Wyatt Oleff), and Mike (Chosen Jacobs). Their teen sleuthing leads them to the town's sewer system, and, inevitably, to 'It' — a shape-shifting entity that most often takes the form of 'Pennywise the Dancing Clown' (Bill Skarsgård). 'It' lurks beneath the town of Derry, Maine, resurfacing every twenty-seven years to snatch up children and devour them so it may sustain itself through another hibernation.

It starts off strongly: the opening scene, teased extensively in trailers and promotional materials, is undoubtedly the film's most chilling and memorable. Georgie chases his paper boat to a storm drain, then ducks down to search for it, unexpectedly encountering in the drain the face of a clown. This scene derives its power from the use of colour (the unrelenting

greys of the rained-out street contrasted with the vivid yellow of Georgie's raincoat and Pennywise's shock of red hair) and the contrast between the child's knowledge and that of the adult audience: the sewer, as we all know, is not the right place for a clown to be, but little Georgie believes the story that a storm 'blew the whole circus away'. To us, Pennywise's laughter is sinister, but to Georgie it is infectious, and he is easily — and fatally — persuaded to reach his hand back in for the boat.

It is in this first scene that Bill Skarsgård shows what he can do, walking the fine line between charming and sinister, putting on a bubbling and cartoonish voice as he lures the little boy to his doom. Sadly, the rest of the film leaves him almost without dialogue, relying instead on visual effects to convey the character's danger and horror. This is not, I think, due to a lack of ability on Skarsgård's part, but rather a self-conscious choice on the part of the filmmakers. This iteration of Pennywise is much more dour and demonic than the 1990 version, and lacks the darkly humorous touches that Tim Curry brought to the role. This is signalled even by the costume choices: Curry's Pennywise actually looked like a party clown, bright and larger than life in his romper suit of blue and yellow satin. Skarsgård's Pennywise wears a conspicuously old-timey costume, replete with heavy ruff and knickerbockers in a grubby grey-white. Curry's Pennywise was savvy, knowing how to blend in with modern kids' culture; Skarsgård's is a relic of the early 1900s, perhaps indicating that the alien or demonic entity took on the persona as part of the detritus that floated down into its lair long ago, and has no real understanding of what it is supposed to be emulating.

Another key contrast between the 1990 and 2017 adaptations is the pacing. The 1990 miniseries' two-episode format and run time of over three hours meant that there were considerable (and often, frankly, boring) lulls in the action. The 2017 film's pacing is frenetic by contrast: the set-pieces ('It' manifesting each child's fears; 'It' emerging from a slide projector; various antics in an abandoned house) come so quickly that they almost tread upon one another's heels. The pacing, along with advancements in SFX, gives the 2017 film much more visual interest and overall slickness than its predecessor. The downside to this rapid cycling through action set-pieces is that it makes 2017's *It* rather episodic, without a sense of building tension or an obvious narrative arc — a common problem in current mainstream horror, where scare scenes seem to be designed separately and later fitted somewhat arbitrarily into a sequential narrative (I'm looking at you, James Wan).

However, the scares that *It* delivers are generally effective. In a post-Wan era, I have to applaud the fact there is nary a jump-scare, the film being much more reliant on the

grotesque and, particularly, on what is goopy, contaminating, and abject — the 'grey water' of the sewers; the boils and weeping sores of the leprous vagrant that 'It' transforms into to haunt the germophobic Eddie. Similarly, the blood that sprays into Bev's bathroom in a particularly harrowing and well-executed scene recalls King's *Carrie* (1974) in its use of menstruation as a source of horror and anxiety for the adolescent girl. The film falters, however, when it becomes too reliant on CGI: the scene where Pennywise emerges from the projector screen is obviously a sop to the 3D crowd, and looks fake and ridiculous in 2D, as does the scene where Pennywise dances, his body oscillating and face remaining still as he performs what I can only describe as a furious hornpipe.

Many critics have already commented that the real appeal of *It* lies in the film's young stars, who bring a warmth and naturalism to their roles. The central group of characters all appear fully fleshed-out and differentiated; they swear, tease one another relentlessly, and have lively exchanges of irreverent blue humour — much more like real adolescents than the one-note, sanitised versions that so often appear in film and TV. In this respect *It* succeeds where the other major King adaptation of the year, *The Dark Tower*, failed: it charms the adult audience into sympathising with its young protagonists. It should be noted that these protagonists are brought forward in time by the new adaptation. While King's novel had the children's part of the narrative occur in the late 1950s, *It* (2017) propels them into the late 1980s, as signalled by high-handled BMXs, Walkmans, and Ben's secret love of New Kids on the Block. King's 'Losers Club' members were afraid of classic Universal movie monsters such as the mummy and the werewolf, creatures any child of the time might have caught on late-night TV. The 2017 *It* revamps these sources of fear, replacing them with monsters that its modern audience might actually find scary: Stanley is terrorised by a version of a picture hanging in his rabbi father's study, of a long-faced Modigliani woman with blank, asymmetrical eyes; Mike is literally haunted by memories of the town's racist violence, hands clawing around a door as African-American victims try to escape a fire set by those attempting to drive them from the town.

These changes add freshness to the narrative, but I could not help but wish that the filmmakers had been more extensive with their changes, as a certain tokenism remains — inherited from the source material, of course, but not sufficiently altered or addressed. Bev remains the only female character in the group, cast at the end in a damsel-in-distress role by the plot, and as a romantic prize by both Ben and Bill. Particularly tonally jarring is the sequence where Bev, distraught at the sexually menacing attentions of her father, chops off

her long red hair into a tomboyish style. She joins the boys at a local quarry, where they all strip down to their underwear and go swimming. Afterwards the boys openly stare at Bev's semi-naked body as she lies sunbathing and the scene is played for laughs, in a sort of fond well-boys-will-be-boys way, rather than as another disturbing example of the sexual objectification of a traumatised girl. There is also no real attempt to fill in the details of Mike's experience of racist violence (the impression given is that racism in Derry is the work of a few misguided yokels, rather than anything prevalent or systemic). The horrifying events that resulted in Mike's parents burning to death are only briefly alluded to and conflated, in a way that I found narratively confusing, with the earlier arson attack that took place at the 'Black Spot' club.

The film has already become an outstanding commercial success (it is now reportedly the highest-grossing R-rated movie of all time)[1] and the director has spoken of his plans to involve the original cast in a sequel, where the young actors will reprise their roles for flashback scenes.[2] The main plot, however, will be set twenty-seven years on, as the protagonists return to Derry as adults to defeat the ancient evil their younger selves merely wounded. Pennywise the Dancing Clown will rise from the sewers again, and maybe this time he'll treat us to a Charleston, or a hip-hop dance-off. It'll probably look great in 3D.

Kate Roddy

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[1] See Matthew Jacobs, '*It* Keeps Scaring up Crazy Good Profits', *Huffpost*, 22 September 2017 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/it-box-office-highest-grossing-horror-movie_us_59c54130e4b06ddf45f7b380> [accessed 5 October 2017].
[2] See Anthony Brezican, 'Stephen King's *It*: Exclusive New Details on the Sequel', 11 September 2017 <http://ew.com/movies/2017/09/11/stephen-king-it-sequel-details/> [accessed 5 October 2017].

The Beguiled, dir. by Sophia Coppola (Focus Features, 2017)

Sunlight rarely breaks through the canopy of Southern live oak in Sophia Coppola's *The Beguiled*. The girl's boarding school at the heart of the story is often in shadow, sometimes bathed in a golden half-light and, briefly at dawn and dusk, fixed in the glare of a distant sun that creeps around the edge of the trees to strain the eyes of those accustomed to the shade. The visual tropes of the Southern gothic are captured in every shot — the close, drooping trees, the subtropical haze, and the grandiose classical styling of the 'big house'. The school is its own world, isolated by its difference from its surroundings (traditionally characterised by gentility amidst suffering, here by femininity in wartime) rather than physical separation. The 'real' world of the American Civil War exists only distantly on the periphery. When the world intrudes, always in masculine form, it invariably presents a threat to the order that exists within the school's gates.

Coppola's film is the second adaptation of Thomas P. Cullinan's novel of the same title. The 1971 film, directed by Don Siegel and starring Clint Eastwood, is a lurid but now well-regarded psychological thriller that plays heavily on its Freudian elements: the director claimed to have based it on 'the basic desire of women to castrate men'.[1] Despite critical acclaim, the Siegel/Eastwood film was a box-office flop and faded into relative obscurity for some years. The 2017 film has received greater plaudits, with Coppola herself winning Best Director at the Cannes Film Festival. The film seems also to have found its audience, performing respectably in cinemas for a piece focused on undeniably adult subject matter.

Colin Farrell plays John McBurney, a wounded Union soldier taken in by the girls at Miss Martha Farnsworth's Seminary for Young Ladies. During his convalescence, McBurney ingratiates himself with the women of the household — presenting hard-working honesty to the headmistress (Nicole Kidman), while making romantic overtures to the quiet governess, Edwina Morrow (Kirsten Dunst), and indulging the sexual curiosity of the eldest girl (Elle Fanning). The women are persuaded to hide him from Confederate searchers, but the hothouse atmosphere quickly leads to suspicion, jealousy, and a tragic end. The film closes with a shot suggesting that the school's internal order has been reasserted and that its boundary with the outside world has been restored.

The Beguiled is a dreamlike film, punctuated with flashes of violence. The different varieties of half-light (under canopy, through curtain, from candle) give the school a hazy and

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[1] Quoted in Patrick McGilligan, *Clint: The Life and Legend of Clint Eastwood* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), p. 186.

unreal quality that persists from the first shot to the last. Kidman and Dunst both give enigmatic performances that maintain a careful balance between mystery and realistic understatement — their characters understand one another, and it is left to the audience to interpret the details of their relationship (perhaps in deliberate contrast with Siegel's version where the headmistress's back-story was made explicit via flashback). Dunst makes Miss Morrow a study in internal conflict — torn between her duties and her desires — and in doing so seems to reflect the overall schema of the film. The characters, and the world conjured by the film, exist in a variety of liminal states: between girl and woman, prisoner and guest, war and peace, light and shadow. It takes only the smallest leap of imagination to place the film on the cusp between sleeping and wakefulness, with its moments of trauma acting to wrench the viewer fully awake to confront the reality forcibly intruding on the school's golden twilight world.

Coppola's film is artful, intelligent, and discomforting. It seems almost churlish to complain that it lacks ambition: it leans heavily on familiar Southern-gothic tropes (in particular on the sexual dynamics of class and age, and the closed world of the — in this case metaphorical — plantation house) though it renders them with skill. The casting is strong, but each of the principals is playing a role they have practiced in other films. Farrell's roguish charm is always a reliable feature, Kidman always excels in the role of an icy authority figure, and Dunst seems to reprise elements of the performances she gave in Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011) and last year's *Midnight Special*. Much has been made of former child star Elle Fanning's breakthrough adult performance, but this too recalls Fanning's part in *The Neon Demon* (2016). It is both sad and predictable that Fanning should have first gathered notice in the role of a sexually forward teen, and her part here displays less complexity than she was able to display in the otherwise unremarkable *Live By Night* (2016). Furthermore, elements of the source material that might have complicated the clarity of Coppola's gender conflict have been excised, notably the slaves and bi-racial characters that appeared in both the novel and the 1971 film.

The piece limits its goals so as better to hit them, and does so in a concise 94 minutes, but the viewer is left with the sense that they have not been challenged. *The Beguiled* is an excellent piece of craft — a technically perfect gothic thriller — but it lacks the spikey interest of the comparable *Lady Macbeth* (2017) or the innovation of Coppola's earlier works.

Richard Gough Thomas

***Pet*, dir. by Carles Torrens** (Orion Pictures/Samuel Goldwyn Films, 2016)

Stories of captivity have become uncomfortably familiar in recent times, with names like Ariel Castro, Wolfgang Priklopil, and the notorious Josef Fritzl infiltrating the cultural consciousness as legitimate monsters, far surpassing those of even Stephen King's wildest imagination. Cinematic representations of such ordeals need to be handled with sensitivity, perhaps most successfully accomplished by Lenny Abrahamson, who directed Brie Larson's Academy Award-winning turn in *Room* (2015). The plot focuses on the aftermath of confinement, as a mother tries to integrate her son into the world he never knew existed following their escape after spending years in a garden shed.

Lately, the horror genre has seen several high-profile films grounded in diverse scenarios of detention, but principally structured as psychological thrillers. Key entries in this subcategory include Fede Alvarez's taut home-invasion shocker *Don't Breathe* (2016), which depicts thieves trapped during a botched robbery, ultimately discovering an even more disturbing incarceration. Alternatively, Dan Trachtenberg's *10 Cloverfield Lane* (2016) trades on the paranoia of imprisonment, as the protagonists survive the fallout of an apparent chemical attack in an underground bunker. Lastly, in a critically lauded return to form, M. Night Shyamalan's *Split* (2017) details the seizure and internment of three young women by a man with dissociative identity disorder. The girls must contest with their captor's multiple personalities even when, in a signature twist from the director, they take a turn for the supernatural. On foot of this comes *Pet* (2016) from Carles Torrens — whose sole other feature credit is the forgettable haunted-house yarn *Apartment 143* (2011) — which anchors its story of captivity in the prison that is toxic relationships.

Pet follows Seth, a mild-mannered animal-control worker played by *Lost* (2004-10) and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy's (2001-03) Dominic Monaghan. Seth is a seemingly harmless soul who lives aimlessly on the fringes of society with little in the way of meaningful human companionship — his job at the pound shows that he is more at ease interacting with dogs, greeting them as people and even comforting a dying German Shepherd. This characterisation of his life is accurately introduced in the film's dreamy opening image of a tropical beach. This peaceful establishing shot is interrupted by a beeping alarm clock, evoking the John Donne verse 'no man is an island', and establishing Seth as a loner about to be abruptly roused from his routine solitude.

On the bus one day, Seth recognises an attractive woman as a former schoolmate and now waitress named Holly (Ksenia Solo). Here, Solo's petite frame, silky blonde hair, and

piercing blue eyes code her as an ethereal figure of delicacy and innocence, particularly when juxtaposed against Monaghan's unconventional leading-man looks. This is a significant scene in *Pet* in terms of exposition and cinematography, as it serves to calibrate the audience's perceptions of the characters; Seth's point-of-view perspective is associated with the 'threat' of the male gaze, which simultaneously emphasises Holly's vulnerability. Although Seth awkwardly tries and fails to arrange a date with Holly, he remains undeterred, and scours her social-media profiles, compiling information about her assorted predilections. This parasocial cyber-stalking not only modernises the dating paradigm, but its colloquial designation as 'creeping' further portrays Seth as a sinister outsider, who pursues Holly with flowers and unsolicited visits to her workplace, only to find his advances squarely rebuffed.

In a subversive development, Holly is revealed to have slaughtered her friend Claire — played by *iCarly* (2007-12) staple Jennette McCurdy — for sleeping with her boyfriend Eric (Nathan Parsons). Claire materialises intermittently as a mental construction of Holly's unresolved emotional baggage, returning as a devil on her shoulder to haunt her with the spectre of her guilt. Having evaded justice for this crime, Holly has acquired a penchant for the exhilaration of indiscriminate killing. After reading details of her secret activities in her journal, Seth abducts Holly, holding her in a cage in a dank disused basement in an effort to halt her hostilities and assist in her rehabilitation. From here, the film tracks each party's struggle to assert dominance over the other.

Seth is first to state his authority as Holly grasps his trouser leg from her pen, calmly explaining that they must 'establish some boundaries'; he evaluates her outburst and concludes that 'this doesn't work'. However, while he gains control over her freedom of movement, Seth immediately inherits a duty of care, feeling obliged to tend to Holly's basic needs, of which food, for example, becomes a crucial strategic battleground. Holly's threat of suicide triggers Seth to call her bluff by restricting her diet, a tactic which she later adopts, bidding to starve herself. This refusal to eat fortifies her position by deepening Seth's attachment to her. These daily encounters give Holly an opportunity to enact new charades, accelerating the growth of the couple's relationship and reinforcing their artificial rapport.

This power play fuels *Pet*'s engaging storyline, and continues to swing back and forth throughout. The hierarchy of domination, and the internal logic of each of the pair's evolving ties, progresses from rigidly distinct to increasingly multifaceted, having transitioned far past besotted suitor and object of desire. It is following the kidnapping that each configuration of their bond — including prison warden and inmate, resentful partners, and accomplices to

surly security officer Nate's (Da'Vone McDonald) eventual murder — revolves around Seth and Holly's co-dependency. The reversal of this dynamic underwrites the final form of their toxic link, as Seth assumes the role of ever-present therapist-cum-sponsor.

Solo delivers a consistently convincing performance as Holly, deftly shifting her facade to accommodate her various personas, from helpless victim, to coldly detached, to teasingly flirtatious. Holly's range of interchangeable presentations discloses a complex being, who exploits her feminine wiles to toy with Seth's affection and sexual attraction for her. This deception extends her persona beyond simply that of the seductive *femme fatale* of *film noir*, into one governed by pathological jealousy, callousness, and manipulation, in ways that are reminiscent of Rosamund Pike's Amy Dunne in *Gone Girl* (2014). Although Monaghan is certainly satisfactory overall, Torrens' direction of his character is sometimes uneven, specifically when Seth laughs after Holly's ex-boyfriend Eric punches him. This instance seems jarring, as his bloody grin says villainous masochist, contradicting his previously shy demeanour and functioning only to add weight to the plot's misdirection. Monaghan's line delivery also carries a laboured quality at times, through his over-accentuation, which, combined with mediocre sound mixing, imbues his dialogue with a disconnected timbre. His gesticulations are highly expressive, however, especially during Seth's anxious contemplation of Holly's request that he amputate a finger as a token of devotion, authentically exhibiting a man buckling under the stress of his dilemma.

What begins as a dark account of unrequited love soon becomes a microcosm of the penal system, raising economic questions about the value of correctional facilities as an effective method for punishing criminality and minimising recidivism. Additionally, *Pet*'s thematic thread that highlights creatures in enclosures initially garners sympathy for Holly, who labels her relationship to Seth as one of 'ownership', with her functioning purely as his 'pet,' which potentially provokes moral anxiety regarding the use of isolation not only in jails, but also for the ethical treatment of wildlife. The detrimental impact of such seclusion is foreshadowed as Holly refers to the self-injurious behaviour of captive great white sharks, describing how the creature 'bashes its brains against the glass every time', before doing likewise herself. Indeed, cinematically, such issues have gained prominence in public discourse primarily in the wake of the damning indictment of SeaWorld in 2013's *Blackfish*.

Overall, *Pet* is a worthwhile psychological thriller, the major strength of which lies in the narrative twist chiefly facilitated by its co-lead actors. The casting of Monaghan and Solo inverts deeply ingrained assumptions about appearances, beauty, and the perceived predatory

nature of men — the latter neatly suggested through the image of a spider in its web after Holly's snatching. In conjunction with clever editing, the selection of these actors reveals how easily an individual's physical allure can bias a spectator's position of objectivity and neutrality, and how quickly the viewer can assign criminal culpability based on incomplete evidence. Tonally, the film is grim and bleak, and competently photographed with a gritty, urban aesthetic utilised across its few sets. Fittingly, it is essentially devoid of any humour, barring the unintentionally amusing moment where an astonished Nate asks Seth, 'are you stabbing me?' as he repeatedly does so.

  Pet culminates with Seth repositioned as Holly's detainee, exposing the vicious cycle of toxic relationships. Here, he is equal parts tragic and pathetic, as a close-up shot divulges that he has sacrificed a second digit out of loyalty to his keeper, suggesting that the inescapability of this type of psychic bondage persists beyond the bars. The stark price he pays endeavouring to recondition Holly represents Seth as the definitive white knight bound by outmoded notions of chivalry. Tellingly, he does not speak in this closing scene, becoming more like an animal than Holly, who relied on her persuasive rhetoric to preserve the balance of power from inside her cage. Now, Seth's sole purpose is to be a sounding-board for Holly's problems; his dishevelled hair, scarred face, and clouded eyes tell a tale of frustration as he is tortured from listening, while his dogged lack of insight suggests that some people will, indeed, do anything for a pretty face.

Gavin Wilkinson

TELEVISION AND GRAPHIC-NOVEL REVIEWS

The Handmaid's Tale (Hulu, 2017)

Hulu's *The Handmaid's Tale* should be recognised as an almost unparalleled triumph for television. Few other adaptations can be said to not only remain as faithful to the original text as this adaptation does, but to build on the original in such a way as to draw in the uninitiated and reward the novel's fans simultaneously. Based as it is upon Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel of the same name, which is one of the cornerstones of modern feminist literature, one might understandably be wary of any attempt to adapt such a formidable text. Relying heavily on the internal monologue of Offred, a woman living in a dystopian US (rechristened 'Gilead') in which the few fertile women who remain in a dwindling population are forced into pregnancy against their will, the novel stresses the loneliness and isolation of her not-so-brave new world. It is a gripping read, and any visual adaptations hoping to depict such isolation and mundanity adequately, without losing the novel's sense of urgency and horror, would, inevitably, need to be handled with care and consideration.

In light of this, the novel's history of successful adaptations should come as a pleasant surprise. Not only has it been adapted for radio and stage, but *The Handmaid's Tale* was also made into a film in 1990 starring Natasha Richardson. While it has taken longer to get to the small screen, it has been worth the wait. Thanks to the season's generous ten-episode arc, there is more than enough time to cover the events of the 300-odd pages, while leaving plenty of room to expand on Gilead and the wider world. The focus of *The Handmaid's Tale* is still Offred, played by self-described feminist Elisabeth Moss, whose quiet determination admirably carries the role. However, the show also takes advantage of the possibilities of multiple perspectives, used to great effect in series like *The Wire* (2002-08) and *Game of Thrones* (2011-present). This is not, however, at the expense of Offred's internal world; instead, the narrative is interspersed with explorations of the various characters who make up her lived existence. Individuals who are seen only through the narrator's point of view in Atwood's text are here given their own story arcs independent of Offred, such as her slimy master, Commander Waterford (Joseph Fiennes) and her best friend, Moira (Samira Wiley). This is a fascinating addition for the novel's fans. What's more, while the external world is shrouded in mystery in the novel, the geopolitics are here brought to the fore; Gilead has become a land of impenetrable borders, as seen in its many policed checkpoints. The state's

extreme propaganda is highlighted, in particular via the glimpses the viewer is afforded of international relations, such as when the handmaids are paraded about to foreign diplomats as pioneers who have volunteered their fertility to ensure Gilead's longevity.

In such a climate of fear and paranoia, it is fascinating to see the tension between the enforced placidity of Offred's daily life (which entails shopping, going for walks with fellow handmaids, and little else) and the undercurrent of violence that occasionally breaks through in the form of stoning and ritualised monthly rape at the hands of her Commander. Perhaps this is why Offred's scenes often have the quality of a Vermeer painting, hinting at things unsaid in the silences between these moments of violence. This is thanks in no small part to the handmaids' anachronistic garb (red robes and white caps, not unlike those found in seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting), and to the show's beautiful evocations of bright sunlight. Handmaids (the few remaining fertile women assigned to high-ranking men, to ensure their lineage continues) are not even permitted to have reading material and are expected simply to remain healthy in order to ensure their fertility — any other activities or sources of potential fulfilment are considered unnecessary, even sinful. Echoes of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wall-paper' (1892) or indeed Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) can certainly be found here. Moss's voice-over undercuts this stillness: as we observe the handmaids dutifully food shopping for their Commanders' families, walking around the town in twos to ensure everyone is always being watched, we also hear about the violation of Offred's human rights, the events that separated her from her husband and daughter, and the numerous strategies enacted to dehumanise her. In addition to this direct narration, the show also uses flashbacks to highlight the political and social unrest which led to the formation of Gilead; we learn, for example, of the creation of laws criminalising the employment of women, and the religious cults preaching that a woman's duty is, above all, motherhood.

The series has been hailed as extremely prescient due to the recent movements in the United States to reduce reproductive freedoms for women. However, the sad fact is that the horrors of Gilead are echoed worldwide. Closer to home, there are strong parallels between Gilead's forced breeding programme and the Irish history of the Magdalene Laundries, in which unmarried pregnant women and girls had their children forcibly taken from them and sold to wealthy families. There are also clear historical links between the series and nineteenth-century slavery narratives, particularly Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), with its particular focus on the separation of mothers and children, the

underground action of groups of rebels, and attempts to find safety in Canada. Indeed, the series makes use of a range of motifs found in slave narratives, such as the slave woman who chooses to throw herself off a bridge rather than submit herself to further degradation. The gothic elements of *The Handmaid's Tale* are especially apparent in these moments, in which we see America's bleak history repeating itself.

As this suggests, anyone intending to follow the series should be prepared for traumatic scenes of physical and sexual violence. However, for anyone who does so, it quickly becomes clear that these scenes, disturbing as they are, are crucial to our understanding of Gilead. In the very first episode, to give a particularly gruesome example, the local handmaids are gathered together and instructed to stone a rapist to death. Despite her initial misgivings, even Offred joins in. While such a scene may appear monstrous and alien to many viewers, it ultimately highlights how Western society demonises the dark, hulking stranger, while ignoring the all-too-pervasive dangers of domestic violence. After all, the handmaids are regularly raped at the hands of the men who themselves have orchestrated this stoning. Almost equally disturbing is seeing individuals who are in positions of power over the handmaids acting out of a horrifically misplaced sense of care, not least of whom is 'Aunt' Lydia (Ann Dowd), the woman tasked with indoctrinating Offred and others in their new roles. We see her shed a tear when the handmaids have their newborn babies taken away from them, yet she thinks nothing of using a cattle prod to keep them in line. A belief that their oversight is genuinely in the best interests of the handmaids is a grotesque demonstration of the paternalism found throughout extremist societies.

Considering how progressive *The Handmaid's Tale* is in many respects, it may feel like nit-picking to point out its shortcomings, of which admittedly there aren't many. There is, however, something a little problematic about seeing Offred, a white American, desperately trying to convince the Mexican ambassador (who is herself a woman of colour) that she is a slave. In a narrative firmly rooted in the conventions of American slavery literature, such a sentiment might hold more weight if the protagonist was similarly African American. One wonders if the decision to depict the protagonist as a straight, white, cis woman was perhaps a slight misstep. Surrounded as Offred is by LGBTQ+ individuals and women and men of colour, including her own husband, daughter, and best friend, *The Handmaid's Tale* cannot be accused of ignoring issues regarding inclusivity and intersectionality. However, having the audience's avatar and guide to this world be both white and heteronormative seems like something of a hand-holding device to ensure

identification with the central character, something I would hope a modern and receptive audience would not require. Similarly, while *The Handmaid's Tale* should be lauded for its examination of intersectional issues, its portrayal of these very issues can occasionally be problematic. In a society in which women are treated solely as human incubators, it is unsurprising that Gilead is extremely hostile towards lesbians (here they are termed 'gender traitors'). Yet, even in light of this, the brutality involved in the show's one depiction of a lesbian relationship is possibly misguided. The focus is almost exclusively on the rueful and violent consequences for these two women — one is brutally executed, and the other has her genitals mutilated and is never seen again — resulting in yet another example of the all-too-prevalent 'Dead Lesbian Syndrome' found throughout Western media.[1]

Such criticisms aside, news that *The Handmaid's Tale* has been renewed for a second season should be welcomed; while it will be interesting to see where it goes without source material (Season One ended at the novel's denouement), the input of Atwood as producer should hopefully ensure that it doesn't go too far wrong. As Season One has left its characters and the world they inhabit poised on the brink of wider-scale rebellion, it is interesting to consider how Season Two may provide Offred with the opportunity to take a more active role in the resistance. Only time will tell what's in store, and until then, *nolite te bastardes carborundorum.*

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Sarah Cullen

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[1] This trope is also referred to as 'Bury Your Gays'. See *TV Tropes*
<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/BuryYourGays> [accessed 3 September 2017].

Emerald City (NBC, 2016-17)

Oz has been re-imagined onscreen many times, the latest production being Matthew Arnold and Josh Friedman's television series for NBC, entitled *Emerald City*. 1939's classic MGM film *The Wizard of Oz* was, of course, a reimagining not only of the books written by L. Frank Baum at the turn of the twentieth century, but also the silent movies he produced about the Land of Oz. With its angry orchard, green-skinned Wicked Witch of the West, her medieval castle and haunted forest teeming with flying monkeys, Victor Fleming's film presented family-friendly gothic elements that ensured audiences would experience Oz as a realm containing danger and frightful inhabitants, but that these could ultimately be overthrown or even become allies. Later rehashings play upon and sometimes enhance these aspects. *The Wiz* (1978) traded the story's pastoral settings for an urban African-American context, transforming the New York City subway and a sweatshop housed in a sewer into regions of peril. Gregory Maguire's *Wicked* (1996) and its sequels, both in fiction and on stage, invert the Witch's evil in order to humanise her. Before Maguire, Walter Murch tried to incorporate elements found in the Oz of Baum's books, but omitted in the first film, with *Return to Oz* (1985), a truly scary movie that 1980s children championed in VHS rentals after a rather poor box office showing. Murch's film opens with Dorothy facing electroconvulsive 'shock' therapy in Kansas for telling unbelievable tales of her adventures in Oz, before being transported back there. The film pits her against the truly uncanny Wheelers, Mombi, and the Nome King, all of which are familiar to devotees of Baum's fourteen-book series (1900-19). Also worth mentioning are *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) and *YellowBrickRoad* (2010), the latter being a low-budget horror film that, while not transporting viewers to Oz, nevertheless riffs off of Baum's creation in largely superficial ways. *Blair Witch* offers a subtler invocation of Oz, less foundational to its story, when the campers discuss which direction to go based on which witch was more evil, the one of the West or the one of the East. As such, *Emerald City* is not the only production in recent memory attempting to repackage Oz in disturbing ways.

This year, NBC broadcast the latest journey back to Oz and, ten episodes later, cancelled it. As such, this review is a post-mortem for *Emerald City*, a series daringly inconsequential in its efforts to update Oz for the twenty-first century; despite its attempt to add meaningfully to the Oz mythos, its failure to connect with viewers means that it is likely to be remembered by few. Trailers teased viewers with a vision of Oz even darker than Murch's — though, as I've been suggesting, fans of the land somewhere over the rainbow

understand that Oz never was safe. As such, director Tarsem Singh's *Emerald City* goes about tarting up Oz with gothic tropes that come off as ham-fisted and, worse, insincere. In our era of nostalgia-driven television shows like *Stranger Things* (2016-present) and the new *Twin Peaks* (2017), *Emerald City* presents an Oz emulating Westeros of *Game of Thrones* (2011-present), muddled up with interludes that evoke *American Horror Story* (2011-present), and costumery reminiscent of that worn by Queen Amidala of the *Star Wars* universe. These costumes, particularly those of Lady Ev (Stefanie Martini), can be quite impressive but, as in *The Phantom Menace* (1999), they cannot be asked to carry the story.

None of this, it should be said, is the fault of the actors. There is a genuine tug of sincerity felt from the cast in the timbre and veracity of their performances, a sense of them giving this show their all. Vincent D'Onofrio's Wizard Frank — named, naturally, after Oz's creator — is thoroughly Trumpian in his aim to defeat magic with guns, guns, guns and his insistence in the third episode that '[a]ll that matters is who you wish to be and how hard you're willing to fight for it'. Unlike President Trump, however, the Wizard errs on the side of science, positioning it against magic throughout the series, presenting the binary upon which the stage is set for a great war coming to Oz. This division, left at the level of 'us-vs-them', is more thoughtfully explored in Maguire's novel; in *Emerald City*, the *Game of Thrones* adage 'winter is coming' is shabbily echoed, via warnings that a vaguely evoked but widely feared foe called 'the Beast' will soon return.

Representing the magic faction are Oz's cardinal witches. After Dorothy (Adria Arjona) disposes of the Mistress of the Eastern Wood (Florence Kasumba) by tricking her into shooting herself in the face with a pistol, Dorothy attains all of the powers of a witch by inheriting the Mistress's ruby gauntlets. These fade from visibility and reappear when Dorothy needs to do something big, like blast a pack of wolves with a shockwave. The other witches, familiar from the books and films, play crucial roles, too, with Glinda (Joely Richardson) displaying a fierce propensity for undermining others, and Mistress West (Ana Ularu) repackaged as a brothel keeper addicted to milk of the poppy, sallying forth while displaying the vulnerability of addiction and dispensing her own brand of justice. Diversity is one thing that plays into this group dynamic — something that actually does make this imagining of Oz interesting. The Witch of the East (Kasumba) is played by a Ugandan-German; the Witch of the North (Richardson) (in the books Glinda is in fact Witch of the South — the decision to change her associated cardinal direction is puzzling here) by an Englishwoman; the Witch of the West (Ularu) by a Romanian; and Dorothy is both explicitly

Hispanic and played by a Hispanic actress. With Baum's disgraceful editorial championing of the genocide of the Sioux, such diversity in the casting of those who rule Oz confirms, for me anyway, Oz's ability to encompass more than its creator could imagine.[1]

But where are the creatures? One of the most charming things about Oz is its intermingling of human characters with non-human characters whose existence relies solely on the logic of magic. *Emerald City* falls flat when it comes to the *things* that are, the books and films testify, living within Oz's borders. Yes, we are teased with a guard wearing a menacing lion-skin helmet, another soldier who is reconstructed in tin, and yet another soldier who is found crucified like a scarecrow — but, as mere men, they are clearly not a lion, a tin man, or a scarecrow. The horrific elements of each character's condition seem overplayed for shock value instead of ensuring that the story maintains integrity. In this way, the repackaging of each character distracts, becoming the only measure by which they are made to matter. The familiar cowardice attributed to Eamonn the lion-guard (Mido Hamada) emerges in his willingness to follow orders to kill a royal family; Jack (Gerran Howell), being rebuilt with tin, is figuratively associated with the pain and plight of Frankenstein's monster; Lucas/Roan (Oliver Jackson-Cohen), whose 'if-I-only-had-a-brain' problem manifests in amnesia, is paralleled, through his crucifixion, with Christ. These associations add layers of potential meaning and interest that, unfortunately, go unaddressed and remain confusing. *YellowBrickRoad* heads in this direction, too, when a murder victim (Cassidy Freeman) is posed on a pole in explicit imitation of the Scarecrow (Ray Bolger) in Fleming's film. Intended to throw off the other characters' bearings, her arms have been crossed by her killer, with fingers pointing either way, the same as the Scarecrow's are when meeting Dorothy. *YellowBrickRoad* presents a gruesome reference to the earlier film, while *Emerald City* draws an intertextual line between Oz's Scarecrow and Christ. If anything, Lucas/Roan being barb-wired to a cross potentially sheds light on the figure of the Scarecrow who readers and viewers already love: why has it not been more obvious to us in the past that Dorothy, in each version of Oz, stumbles upon a crucified being?

Those familiar with Baum's books will feel in the know when the familiar characters and geography of Oz are reconfigured: most compelling is the treatment of the boy Tip (Jordan Loughran), who turns out to be Princess Ozma. Originally a plot point in Baum's sequel *The Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904), Tip/Ozma's sex dysphoria in *Emerald City* plays

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[1] See 'L. Frank Baum Advocated Extermination of Native Americans', *NPR*, 27 October 2010 <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2010/10/27/130862391/l-frank-baum-advocated-extermination-of-native-americans> [accessed 11 August 2017].

out at a time when Americans are debating the rights of transgender members of society. Mixed somewhere in the timeliness of this civil-rights issue is the trope of mistaken or masked sex, a feature of gothic literature traceable back to Matilda/Rosario in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1795). Here, Tip was born Ozma, transformed into the boy Tip for her own protection against would-be assassins, and then restored to Ozma without knowledge of her origins. Her refusal to accept herself as a girl is understandable given her experience as Tip, and plays with some intriguing questions about the nature of identity: what is true about our ideas of ourselves? What is innate? What is performed?

Unfortunately, despite these intriguing moments, *Emerald City* fails to establish and maintain a consistency in tone. Political intrigue is interrupted with incongruous forays into phantasmagoria (most notably the Prison of the Abject, a minimalist mud-hole with a dead tree in it where lost souls writhe around and a flayed man's skin hangs from a branch — it is as if Beckett were doing stage design for the *Divine Comedy*). In the end, the flayed man dons his skin, sprouts wings like Ray Bradbury's eponymous Uncle Einar's, and is seen shadow gliding over Oz. Episode Ten tells us that he is the elusive Beast returned, and that Dorothy is needed to save Oz once again — but thanks to NBC, that story, not one I remember from Baum or any other version, will go untold. And that is just as well.

Steve Gronert Ellerhoff

Alan Moore and Jacen Burrows, *Providence*
(Illinois: Avatar Press, 2015-17)

Alan Moore's *Providence* is a twelve-part graphic novel, begun in May 2015 and completed in March 2017. Moore's latest graphic work is a collaboration with artist Jacen Burrows, exploring and meditating on the horror fiction of H. P. Lovecraft. *Providence*'s creative team is completed by Juan Rodriguez and Kurt Hathaway, who were responsible for colouring and lettering respectively. Moore, author of such seminal works as *The Watchmen* (1986-87), *V for Vendetta* (1982-89), and *From Hell* (1989-96), is often hailed as perhaps the most influential comic-strip writer in the past thirty years, winning multiple Eagle[1] and Kirby awards.[2] Moore takes an accessible but often (but not unjustly) derided medium and, through realism and innovative use of storytelling, character, symbolism, and semiotics, backed by detailed subject research, crafts unique narrative experiences. His works are rich, meaningful, multilayered, and intellectually entertaining. They knowingly deconstruct narrative and offer new perspectives on familiar subjects. There can be little argument that he raised the form of the graphic novel to a level of critical recognition and commercial success that few others have achieved.

Moore first turned his attention to the works of Lovecraft when approached by Oneiros Books to contribute to their 1994 themed anthology *The Starry Wisdom: A Tribute to H. P. Lovecraft*.[3] Moore, familiar with the author from his teens, developed the idea of 'culturing' stories from 'cuttings' of Lovecraft's work, and letting them grow and develop freely.[4] While the book went ahead, much of Moore's material was lost and never retrieved.[5] Moore, disenchanted by the major publishing houses, published *Glory*, an exploration of the metahuman, with Avatar Press, Inc. in 2000. This led to William Christensen of Avatar approaching Moore with the idea of collaboratively revisiting the lost material, resulting in the 2003 anthology publication *Alan Moore's Yuggoth Cultures and Other Growths*.[6] Longer narratives were developed in Antony Johnson's *Alan Moore's The Courtyard* (2009) (an adaptation of a prose story by Moore), and in *Neonomicon* (2010) for Avatar. Each work took

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[1]<http://web.archive.org/web/20070527002925/http://www.eagleawards.co.uk:80/results.asp?year=1985> [accessed 20 April 2017].
[2] See <http://www.hahnlibrary.net/comics/awards/kirbysum.php> [accessed 20 April 2017].
[3] D. M. Mitchell, *The Starry Wisdom: A Tribute to H. P. Lovecraft* (London: Creation Oneiros, 1994).
[4] Alan Moore interviewed by William Christensen, 'The Story Behind the Stories', in *Alan Moore's Yuggoth Cultures and Other Growths*, ed. by William Christensen (Urbana: Avatar Press, 2003), p. 29.
[5] Christensen, p. 30.
[6] Scott Thill, 'Alan Moore Gets Psychogeographical With Unearthing', in *Wired*, 8 September 2010 <www.wired.com/2010/08/alan-moore/> [accessed 25 August 2017].

Moore's ideas about the intrinsically paradoxical and shocking nature of Lovecraft's mythos and developed them, moving the material forward narratively and philosophically by grounding it in a more realistic world. Characters in Moore's tales possess more agency than is often found in Lovecraft's writing, resulting in a complex mélange, rich in detail and Kafkaesque alienation, yet dramatically shot through with existential bloody horror.

Alan Moore's *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon* serve as prequels to *Providence*, and it's impossible to consider *Providence* properly without setting it within this context. In fact, all three works can be read as a unique, prolonged, and meaningful exploration of Lovecraft's work and life. This collection is not for the faint hearted, taking many of Lovecraft's 'unspeakable acts', which lurk in euphemism and shadow in his original texts, and bringing them shockingly, but never glibly, into the light. Moore skilfully erodes the margins between fact and fiction — between his creations and those of Lovecraft, and between fictional and historic or literary figures — and depicts largely forgotten but historically accurate early-twentieth-century events side by side with horrific fiction. He takes events from Lovecraft's copious diaries and letters, and subtly injects them into the world conjured up by Lovecraft's fiction, thereby undermining the demarcation between author and character. Each issue dramatises the dread and abjection at the heart of Lovecraft's work in a way that is realistic and, frequently, genuinely disturbing.

With *Providence*, Moore has used the techniques of blending obscure, but well-researched, historic fact with convincing realistic fiction that were so effective in *From Hell*, and has woven a mesmerising and, at times, psychologically unsettling tale, focusing on the New-England horror writer. *Providence* shows a depth of research which is academically impressive, linking well-crafted fiction with social trends and subcultures, historic events, and literary personages contemporary to Lovecraft, to produce a hypnotising, compelling, and persuasive representation of Lovecraft's life and literature. Moore builds his vision carefully, establishing a vivid world which seems similar to 1920s America, but with some subtle but distinct differences. This vision of the United States has been shaped by Robert W. Chamber's writing (such as his collection *The King in Yellow* (1895)), much in the same way that Chambers influenced Lovecraft. This mixture of familiarity and strangeness draws in and yet unsettles the reader. Into this milieu, Moore places original characters who on the surface seem consistent with Lovecraft characters like Dunwich's Old Whateley, or Herbert West, or Wilcox from 'The Call of Cthulhu' (1928), but who possess sensibilities, attitudes, and behaviours which Lovecraft could never have written since, at that time, they were

considered transgressive. Moore's original characters are very effectively intertwined with characters and events recognisable from Lovecraft stories, such as the visit to the Wheatley farm and encounters with Leticia and Willard Wheatley, who are more realistic versions of Lovecraft's characters Lavinia and Wilbur Whateley from 'The Dunwich Horror' (1929). Moore uses these moments to throw Lovecraft's original ideas into sharp relief, revealing a deep alien quality, a genuine 'weirdness' in Lovecraft's characters and their situations.

The subtle forces coalescing in the narrative find focus in the experiences and 'commonplace' notebook (a kind of early-modern diary-scrapbook hybrid) of an aspiring young writer, Robert Black. Black, like all the characters in *Providence,* is a blend of historic and fictional figures, a hybridisation derived from the life and work of Robert Bloch, but injected with unique qualities, characteristics, and experiences created by Moore. Black desires to make his name as a writer, and to reveal what he suspects might be the hidden 'truth' of humanity; seeking inspiration, Black starts a search for a legendary book so unique that it unbalances the minds of all who read it — that is, Moore's version of Lovecraft's *Necronomicon*. As readers familiar with Lovecraft's work will be unsurprised to hear, in doing so, Black searches out the mysterious secrets behind the façade of everyday America and, to his eventual regret, finds them.

Moore stages his story ingeniously, utilising Lovecraft's 'The Statement of Randolph Carter' (1920), 'Herbert West — Reanimator' (1922), 'Pickman's Model' (1927), 'The Horror at Red Hook' (1927), 'Cool Air' (1928), 'The Dunwich Horror', 'The Dreams in the Witch House' (1933), 'From Beyond' (1934), 'The Shadow Over Innsmouth' (1936), and 'The Thing on the Doorstep' (1937). Each episode takes elements from the core of Lovecraft's fiction and re-presents them as real-world events with cause, effect, and consequence. This re-fictionalisation treats them in the same manner as the obscure but historically accurate events that Moore has interlaced through the work, making them read as if they were also little-known but horrific real-life events on which Lovecraft based his fiction. This technique makes the reader treat the narrative as a cohesive story-world, blending fact and fiction; this shift energises the horror and shocks the reader, intellectually, emotionally, and sometimes even morally.

Lovecraft travelled New England and wrote horror fiction based on the places he visited: Salem, Athol, and Manchester thinly disguised as Arkham, Dunwich, and Innsmouth. Moore inverts this conceit by having Black visit identifiable, historically accurate towns, but in these realistic settings, Black encounters individuals and events recognisable from

Lovecraft's work. Black searches for the 'hidden reality' which he suspects lurks beneath everyday existence, unexpectedly experiencing one horror after another, and, in the second half of each issue, recording them in his commonplace book. This again is a storytelling technique that Moore has made good use of in the past (such as in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, 1999-present), where the first half of each issue has a traditional comics panel layout, but the second half is set with text similar to a novel, diary, or periodical. Each distinct portion of the issue is used to tell a different aspect of the same story and the overall narrative gains depth and resonance as these texts complement and harmonise with one another.

In addition, Moore carefully blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction by effectively presenting Lovecraft as a recognisable historic figure who also performs as a fictional character. Indeed, Moore's version of Lovecraft is revealed as the messianic focus for the earlier writer's own stories. Black, in his explorations, unwittingly acts as an avatar for Lovecraft, eventually bringing the breadth of his horrific experiences to the New England author, who then uses it as the basis for stories which change the world. Moore uses this cyclic motif as both a horrific and philosophical point. He weaves a complex web of fact, fiction, and meta-fiction. This metatexuality is compounded when Black's narrative world itself becomes altered by Lovecraft's stories, one fiction undermining another, typifying Moore's philosophical approach, which suggests that fiction and reality are perceptual constructs and therefore, interchangeable.[7] While, at times, this may seem somewhat self-indulgent or even solipsistic, it is never used in a facile way, and is employed by Moore to fashion moments of great conceptual horror, such as when Black realises that, far from fleeing the horror, he has been carrying it towards its goal, or when, battered and shocked, he's stunned to see himself passing in a vehicle, glimpsing a younger version of himself on his way to encounter the horror from which he has just escaped. These motifs, like a Moebius strip, signify an inevitability, an inescapable cycle of horror. The alienating, existential circularity ably demonstrates, in narrative form, the 'non-Euclidean' ideas regarding space and the fabric of 'reality' that Lovecraft often mentioned in his fiction.

Moore's writing is fiercely well crafted, carrying an originality and depth that many prose writers would envy. Burrows's drawing is crisp and clear, every frame carefully composed and delineated, filled with significant and foreboding detail, including accurate renditions of buildings from Lovecraft's era, the depiction of the shocking riots during the

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[7] Peter Bebergal, 'Alan Moore [WRITER]: "Hey You Can Just Make Stuff Up"', in *The Believer Magazine*, June 2013 <https://www.believermag.com/issues/201306/?read=interview_moore> [accessed 25 August 2017].

1919 Boston Police Strike, or the glimpse of tiny bottles that just might hold trapped human souls. Juan Rodriguez's colours accentuate and enhance the mood, and Kurt Hathaway's lettering delivers dialogue and Black's musings with varied inflection but without interruption. That said, Moore struggles with the climactic issue, as the closely woven story strands finally converge and reality is rearranged along Lovecraftian lines. The characters horrifically come adrift from their normal lives, roles, and personalities, but this seems to lessen the peril felt rather than heighten it. The cataclysmic changes affect the characters, but rather than resist, they enter a fugue state, as identity, and to some extent their motivating agency, begins to drift away from them. This somewhat dissipates tension, resulting in a conclusion which delivers a more abject apocalypse than is common in popular culture: an alienated whimper rather than any narratively satisfying upheaval. Perhaps Moore's refusal to have the story conform to narrative custom makes the tale all the more representational of a Lovecraftian world that has left humanity behind, one chaotically indifferent to humanity's conventions or even its very existence.

Providence is a considerable and unique narrative achievement, delivering original and genuinely disturbing horror at a time when horror is much more widely consumed than in previous decades, and is more commonplace in the media at large. Jowett and Abbott convincingly argue for recognition of how horror iconography and conventions have permeated popular, mainstream culture, in forms ranging from children's cartoons, through hospital dramas, to forensic crime serials.[8] Yet against this background, Moore, Burrows, Rodriguez, and Hathaway deliver a fresh narrative experience, one that relies on the use of text and image, a story that could only be conveyed through sequential art. They imaginatively and sensitively handle horrific themes and genuinely shocking ideas that, I would argue, simply could not have been executed as meaningfully in any other medium.

Gerard Gibson

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[8] See Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott, *TV Horror: Investigating the Dark Side of the Small Screen* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

Riverdale, Season 1 (CW, 2017) **and**
Frank Tieri and Michael Walsh, *Jughead: The Hunger* (New York: Archie Comic
Publications, 2017)

Since its conception in 1941 by John L. Goldwater and Bob Montana, the *Archie Comic* series has been known for its wholesome and comedic image. The characters are sweet-natured young teenagers who endure high-school tribulations with a lively spirit and a keen eye for zany adventures. The storylines centre on adolescence and are often successfully structured around slapstick humour. In contrast to the original series, however, the recent renditions of this fictional world — specifically both the television series *Riverdale* and the comic *Jughead: The Hunger* — are anything but comedic and wholesome. Long gone is the family-friendly spirit of the mid-twentieth-century comics; now, Archie and his friends are entering the darker and more sinister worlds of the twenty-first-century gothic.

Comic-book fans have been following the exploits of Archie and the gang since they made their first appearance. The original *Archie* cast is comprised of Archie Andrews, the all-American teenager; Betty Cooper, the sweet girl next-door; Veronica Lodge, the wealthy heiress; Jughead Jones, the sensible and witty best friend; and Cheryl Blossom, the attractive yet conniving classmate. At the height of superhero and fantastical comics' popularity, Goldwater created a series with which the adolescent readership of mid-twentieth-century America could identify.[1] Through the years, the comic series has reinvented itself in various spin-off projects, such as the *Americana* comic series, which focuses on a range of different decades; the *Archie Meets* comic series, which centres on meeting various pop-culture artists; the *Life with Archie* comic series, set in alternate universe; the *Weird Mysteries*, a cartoon television series reminiscent of *Scooby Doo*; and many other adaptations that explore a variety of genres but all retain the wholesome light-hearted nature of the original series.

However, in October 2013, the Archie Comics company decided to take the comic series in a rather new and adult-centred direction by collaborating with horror writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa and illustrators Francesco Francavilla and Robert Hack to create the *Afterlife with Archie* (2013) comic series, set in an alternate horror realm, where a now-undead Jughead overruns Riverdale and initiates a zombie epidemic. *Afterlife* explores adult themes including sexuality, incest, and aggression, through the utilisation of gothic tropes such as necromancy, zombies, and demons. It is the first of the *Archie* series to have a mature 'Teen+' rating due to its graphic nature. The success of the *Afterlife* series paved the way for

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[1] See Talia Smart, 'Superhero Popularity in Past and Present America', *PIT Journal*, Cycle 7 (2016) <http://pitjournal.unc.edu/article/superhero-popularity-past-and-present-america> [accessed 9 September 2017].

further horror-comic adaptations, such as *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2014) and *Archie vs Predator* (2015). Also following on the success of *Afterlife*, the CW greenlit the production of a live-action, TV-14-rated television series written by *Afterlife*'s Aguirre-Sacasa, titled *Riverdale*, and following *Riverdale*'s success, a standalone comic horror special titled *Jughead: The Hunger* was created.

Unlike the original comic series, *Riverdale* is dark, suspenseful, brooding, and sexy. The show begins with the mysterious death and murder of Cheryl's (Madelaine Petsch) twin brother, Jason Blossom (Trevor Stines). The town is shaken to its core by this violence, resulting in accusations and tensions among the residents. In keeping with this subject matter, the characters in *Riverdale* are radically re-imagined to fit the mould of contemporary teen soap operas like *Pretty Little Liars* (2010-17). For instance, the charismatic and morality-driven Archie (K. J. Apa) is engaged in an illicit affair with his music teacher; good-natured Betty (Lili Reinhart) now displays erratic and self-destructive behaviour due to her strained relationship with her family; the wealthy and spiteful Veronica (Camila Mendes) is now far more sympathetic as a character, and flees with her mother to Riverdale after her father's financial scandal; and the easy-going and comedic Jughead (Cole Sprouse) is now a sullen teenager with a dark past.

The storyline's enigmatic tone and melodramatic characters create the fundamental structure for a teen gothic drama, while the compelling comic characters remain only vaguely familiar. The majority of the characters maintain a physical semblance to their comic counterparts; however, their characterisations and back-story differ from the original. Furthermore, in comparison to the comics, the narratives are no longer reliant on juvenile comedic antics, but centre instead on disturbing adult themes from statutory rape and undertones of incest to self-harm, all themes which are wholly absent from the original family-friendly comic series of the 1940s. In addition, the marriages between the parents are now portrayed as unhappy and dysfunctional, while the relationships between the teenagers and their parents are, for the most part, markedly strained, in distinct contrast to the harmonious relationships in the original series. Furthermore, the murder-related premise and eerie tone of *Riverdale* is reminiscent of the cult television series *Twin Peaks* (1990-91). Both series centre on the murder of a teenager and the consequent erosion of a community's wholesome façade. In addition, *Riverdale* is filmed in the Pacific Northwest region where *Twin Peaks* was filmed, thus utilising this environment to evoke the sombre and uncanny atmosphere found in David Lynch's work. Aguirre-Sacasa also borrows from the *Afterlife*

comic series by reviving in *Riverdale* the themes of incest, sexual exploration, and murder. Other references to the *Afterlife* series include the appearance of Archie's zombie killing dog, Vegas, and the murdered Jason appearing in Cheryl's nightmare in a zombie-like state. The show also pays homage to its horror predecessors by employing playful episode titles which directly reference classic films about murder, such as 'Anatomy of a Murder'.

Due to its drastic re-imagining of the original *Archie* gang, *Riverdale* has met with praise and some decidedly mixed reviews from fans familiar with the comic series. Some Generation-X and early millennial fans were not pleased with the darker storylines and re-configuring of the comic characters' physical and personal traits.[2] For instance, the series premiere ratings were 'down 58% among adults 18-49' compared to previous offerings.[3] Nonetheless, I would argue that, though the idealistic mid-twentieth-century American values are lost along with the comics' mixture of morality and humour, the adolescent tribulations central to the original are still evident. However, the combination of dark storylines and brooding characters captivated CW's teen target audience, the mid-post millennial generation. Masked as a teen soap, *Riverdale* explores current socio-cultural themes that many teens encounter, from teenage sexuality and diversification, to the generational divide between teenagers and parents, in a gripping narrative that builds suspense and drama.

Due to the popularity of *Riverdale* with teens, and the slow production and distribution of *Afterlife with Archie* issues,[4] a single, stand-alone horror-comic special titled *Jughead: The Hunger* was released on 29 March 2017 to please the masses and revive Jughead as a ravenous monster, in keeping with his last role as a zombie in the *Afterlife* series. *The Hunger* was written by Marvel Comic writer Frank Tieri (*Wolverine*) and illustrated by design artist Michael Walsh (*Secret Avengers*), colourist Dee Cunniffe (*Dregs*), and letterer Jack Morelli (*Peter Parker: Spiderman*). The plot of *The Hunger* centres on Jughead's transition and struggle with lycanthropy.

The comic opens with the violent, gruesome death of the students' teacher, Ms Grundy, at the hands of the unknown Riverdale Ripper, who is in fact the now-lycanthropic Jughead. This opening scene is gripping and disturbing, and sets the tone and pace for the

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[2] Deborah Krieger, '*Riverdale* Has Yet to Justify Its Continued Existence', *popMATTERS*, 31 January 2017 <http://www.popmatters.com/review/riverdale/> [accessed 9 September 2017].
[3] '*Riverdale* Ratings Debut Soft, Scandal Returns Down but ABC Tops Night', *Deadline*, 27 January 2017 <http://deadline.com/2017/01/riverdale-ratings-debut-soft-scandal-down-greys-anatony-tops-night-abc-1201895535/> [accessed 9 September 2017].
[4] Mark Peters, 'Archie Comics Howls at the Moon in *Jughead: The Hunger*', *Paste*, 29 March 2017 <https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/03/archie-comics-howls-at-the-moon-in-jughead-the-hun.html> [accessed 15 September 2017].

narrative. The Riverdale Ripper, who aggressively mutilates his victims, is a transparent reference to Jack the Ripper, the Victorian serial killer. This analogy is used to reinforce the gothic tone of the storyline and break from the wholesome image found in the original *Archie* universe. *Archie* fans are familiar with Jughead's rapacious lust for food, preferably the burgers from Pop Tate's diner. In the *Afterlife* series, Aguirre-Sacasa exploits readers' knowledge of Jughead's hunger and re-situates it as the monstrous trait of a zombie, playfully illustrating Jughead's transition from devouring burgers to the delights of human flesh. By contrast, *The Hunger* borrows storylines found in gothic literary works such as Alexandre Duma's *The Wolf Leader* (1857), Carl Lasson's 'Little Red Riding Hood' (1881), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and Guy Endore's *The Werewolf of Paris* (1933), which pit werewolves against werewolf hunters. Furthermore, Jughead is not the only character whose depiction deviates from the original comic series. In the classic *Archie* universe, Archie is the central hero, but Tieri surprises us by making Betty our unlikely heroine in *The Hunger.* Those familiar with the *Archie* comics know Betty as the epitome of innocence and propriety; in Tieri's world, she is instead a gun-wielding, fist-punching heroine, much more akin to the heroines of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *Teen Wolf* (2011-17).

In keeping with these thematic changes, Walsh and Cunniffe's artwork is atmospheric, evocative, and heavily gothic in tone, not least thanks to the juxtaposition of vibrant reds with dark and diluted blue shades throughout the comic. The colour palette is reminiscent of cinematographic gothic adaptations, such as Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) and Joe Johnston's *The Wolfman* (2010), where similar dark tones of red and blue are utilised to establish an atmosphere of dread and suspense. The depiction of Jughead's werewolf is akin to the werewolves found in John Landis's *An American Werewolf in London* (1981) and BBC's *Being Human* (2008-13). *The Hunger* therefore successfully transitions the wholesome image of Archie and his friends to the gothic comic-book genre, where our characters find themselves in darker storylines and conceal secretive pasts. The comic ends with the gruesome death of fellow classmate, Reggie, possibly at the hands of werewolf Jughead, who has mysteriously left town, thus leaving the series at a cliff-hanger and purposefully open for a sequel. If the *Archie* comics were intended to encourage the readership to identify with the characters, it would seem that readers now seek instead to achieve a cathartic state of stimulation and excitation that they may not receive in everyday

life.[5] Such a trend is certainly suggested by the popularity of works such as Robert Kirkman's comic-book series *The Walking Dead*.

Overall, *Jughead: The Hunger* is a creative and gripping addition to the *Archie* horror universe. In July 2017, as a result of its impressive storyline and dimensional artwork, this outstanding standalone comic was extended into a full comic series. The success of *Riverdale* and *Jughead: The Hunger* demonstrates the versatility of the *Archie Comic* series, allowing them to reach new audiences by tapping into the current fascination with gothic and horror. *The Hunger* comic series will return to stands on 25 October 2017, with a promise of 'more twists and turns', and the integration of undead-related storylines from *Afterlife with Archie* in the second season.[6] As Aguirre-Sacasa has stated, 'anything is possible'.[7] While fans wait for Season 2, Season 1 is currently available on the CW, Netflix, Google Play, and iTunes. Given the popularity of *Riverdale* and *The Hunger*, it is likely that further gothic adaptations or crossovers will soon follow.

Silvia E. Herrera

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[5] Noel Carroll, 'The Nature of Horror', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 46.1 (1987), 51-59.
[6] Aaron Long, 'Archie Unleashes *JUGHEAD: THE HUNGER* Ongoing', *COMICOSITY*, 12 July 2017 <http://www.comicosity.com/archie-unleashes-jughead-the-hunger-ongoing/> [accessed 9 September 2017].
[7] 'Riverdale Executive Producer Teases Tonight's Finale and Season 2', *KSite TV*, 11 May 2017 <http://www.ksitetv.com/riverdale/riverdale-executive-producer-teases-tonights-finale-season-2/151739/> [accessed 23 June 2017].

Ash vs Evil Dead, **Season Two** (Starz, 2016)

Following the disappointment that was the last *Evil Dead* film of 2013, a movie that fans of Ashley Williams (the character played by Bruce Campbell in the original films, released in 1981, 1987, and 1992 respectively) had waited for over twenty years to experience, the prospect of a television series based on the *Evil Dead* films may have raised a few critical eyebrows.[1] However, the success of Season One of *Ash vs Evil Dead*, which premiered on American television network Starz on 31 October 2015, served to remind horror fans that Bruce Campbell, Sam Raimi, and Robert Tapert (who were all involved in the original films) can still deliver when it comes to comedy gore, body horror, and demonology, by transposing their cult-film expertise onto the small screen.

For audiences who adored the gore-laden, chainsaw-wielding wisecracks of the first season, Season Two of *Ash vs Evil Dead*, first aired by Starz on 2 October 2016, aims to further satisfy fans at the expense of its long-suffering, entrail-encrusted characters (and actors). From the opening episode, 'Home', we are immersed in Ash's hometown of Elk Grove and meet his father Brock, played by the perfectly cast and suitably large-chinned Lee Majors. As Ash wallows in nostalgia, the audience may be surprised to learn that their hero has been cast out by the local community, labelled a multiple axe murderer, and is known as 'Ashy Slashy' for having (unwillingly) killed his possessed girlfriend and closest friends in a cabin in the woods, many years before. When evil entities arrive to inhabit the townspeople and turn them into Deadites (a person who is possessed by an ancient demonic spirit), it falls to Ash once again to save the neighbourhood and carve himself a new reputation.

One of the main problems with director Fede Alvarez's 2013 *Evil Dead* film was its absence of humour. The original franchise revelled in bad-taste jokes, terrible puns, and visual gags, all of which thankfully has been restored in *Ash vs Evil Dead*. In fact, if the Oscars gave an award in the category 'Best Comedic Use of a Cadaver', then the second episode of the second season, entitled 'The Morgue', would surely earn a lifetime-achievement honour. While the entire series is full of witty lines, visual humour, and slapstick (splatterstick?) comedy, the scene where Ash must retrieve the *Necronomicon* (a

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[1] See Cory Everett, 'SXSW Review: *Evil Dead* Is a Grim, Humorless, Ultraviolent Update of a Horror Classic', *Indiewire*, 9 March 2013 <http://www.indiewire.com/2013/03/sxsw-review-evil-dead-is-a-grim-humorless-ultraviolent-update-of-a-horror-classic-100926/> [accessed 7 September 2017]; Doug Roos, '*Evil Dead* 2013 Was OK but Disappointing', *The Sky Has Fallen*, 8 October 2013 <http://theskyhasfallenmovie.blogspot.ie/2013/10/evil-dead-2013-was-ok-but-disappointing.html> [accessed 8 September 2017]; and Richard Roeper, '*Evil Dead*', *Roger Ebert.com*, 2 April 2013 <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/evil-dead-2013> [accessed 7 September 2017].

cursed book, the name of which nods to the work of H. P. Lovecraft, and which summons the Deadites) from a corpse, and falls prey to an errant length of demonic bowel, is impossible to watch without laughing til you gasp for air. Forget about severed arms and exploding heads: the sight of Ash stumbling around the morgue, wearing a dead body like a Halloween accessory, is surely the one image that will stick in viewers' minds for many years to come.

A further strength of *Ash vs Evil Dead* is the fact that it consciously rewards aficionados of the original *Evil Dead* films, incorporating numerous allusions, both subtle and explicit, to the original franchise. In addition to the reprisal of its classic characters, we again encounter some of its more infamous adversaries and set pieces. For example, in an episode in Season Two, 'DUI', Ash's beloved Delta car is stolen by local teenagers, along with the salvaged *Necronomicon*. When one of the tearaway passengers reads from the book, both she and the car become possessed and embark on a killing spree. The infamous cabin in the woods and possessed tree are also revisited, as Ash attempts to travel back in time to the period before he first discovered the cursed tome, in the episode 'Home Again'. Here, fans are also treated to another manifestation of the Kandarian (ancient demonic) witch in the cabin's cellar, this time hosted by Henrietta Knowby (played by Alison Quigan, and by Ted Raimi when in demonic form), wife of Professor Knowby, the first translator of the *Necronomicon*. Whereas the 2013 film appeared to force in elements from the original films to create some kind of plot continuity, *Ash vs Evil Dead* employs these allusions to make the storylines and humour seem even more warped, while satisfying the fervour of the franchise's cult following at the same time.

Another positive element of the series is its development of new supporting characters. Pablo Simon Bolivar (Ray Santiago) and Kelly Maxwell (Dana DeLorenzo), two characters who were first introduced in Season One, are now firmly established as Ash's partners in his quest for Deadite extermination, and their continued development strengthens this season's story arc. Kelly in particular has grown into her role as strong female warrior, with a flair for delivering innovatively expletive-ridden dialogue. Pablo, the innocent moral compass to Ash's self-interested behaviour, undergoes a more physical transformation. Formerly possessed by the demonic human-skin bindings of the *Necronomicon*, in Season Two, he begins to hallucinate and gradually becomes a physical incarnation of the book itself. The character Ruby Knowby, who is hiding a more nefarious identity, also rolls up her sleeves to join the gang in a joint attempt to banish the demon Baal (Joel Tobeck). Played by Lucy Lawless of *Xena Warrior Princess* (1995-2001) fame, Ruby is the first confirmed

LGBTQ+ character in the *Evil Dead* franchise. After displaying a non-platonic interest in policewoman Amanda Fisher (Jill Marie Jones) in Season One, this season features Ruby revealing that she was once married to the male Baal, but she also takes the opportunity to kiss Polly (Shareena Clanton), a female character, who is really Baal in disguise. In an age where gender fluidity is being more widely recognised and expressions of alternative sexuality are becoming more common on film and television screens, horror and sci-fi texts have often failed to reflect this progress. *Ash vs Evil Dead*'s efforts in this respect are therefore welcome, and well overdue.

Another way in which the series has been brought up to date is in the arena of special effects. The *Evil Dead* films were always known for their outrageous splatter, and with horror series such as AMC's *The Walking Dead* (2010-present) increasing the on-screen gore, *Ash vs Evil Dead* has become even grislier. Sam Raimi and chief special-effects master Greg Nicotero (who is also responsible for the special effects in *The Walking Dead*) have revealed on fan websites the incredible volumes of fake blood they employed for the films, including dropping a full fifty-five gallon drum full of the stuff onto Bruce Campbell's head for a scene in *Evil Dead 2*.[2] The TV series continues in the same (bloody) vein, and ramps up the splatter factor even further with the introduction of the character Baal, generateing some of the most disturbing and goriest scenes in *Ash vs Evil Dead*. Using his powers of mental manipulation, Baal tries to convince Ash that he has become insane, and poses as Professor Peacock in order to ensnare Ash inside a nightmarish asylum. This setting grants the writers a license to indulge in ever-escalating levels of bloodletting and head-smashing, at one point coating the entire cast in what is quite possibly hundreds of gallons of indescribably gruesome gore.

However, while the splatter factor is of course central to the *Evil Dead* universe, there can be no discussion of the *Evil Dead* franchise without Bruce Campbell reprising his role as Ash, the slow-witted yet fast-shooting ladies' man who feminism forgot. In Alvarez's *Evil Dead* film, Ash was entirely absent, save for a final extremely brief, unrelated catchphrase-quoting appearance in a post-credit sting that left many fans feeling cheated. Playing the rash and anti-heroic underdog, Ash represents an everyman figure for fans who have followed him through the death of his girlfriend and best friends, and even through time to a nightmarish version of Medieval England in *Army of Darkness*, the third instalment of the films. What is more, with the previous legal problems surrounding the film *Army of Darkness* now resolved, fans can look forward to relishing more medieval time travel and visits to the 'S-Mart'

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[2] 'Special Effects', *Book of the Dead: The Definitive Evil Dead Website*
<http://www.bookofthedead.ws/website/evil_dead_2_special_fx.html> [accessed 8 September 2017].

hardware store, which is one of the most memorable settings from the film, as it is the place where Ash discovers his famous shotgun or 'boomstick'.[3] Due to licensing issues, any material relating to *Army of Darkness* had to be side-stepped in Seasons One and Two of *Ash vs Evil Dead*, including changing the name of the shop to 'Value Stop'. Nevertheless, with Ash restored as the central character in *Ash vs Evil Dead*, and with the full canon of storylines now available, Campbell enthusiasts can rejoice once more.

In Season Two, viewers are also treated to several versions of Ash, including a psychotic 'Ashy Slashy' hand puppet, which nods to Joss Whedon's *Angel* episode 'Smile Time' (2004), in which the titular vampire is transformed into a felt puppet. Thanks to time-travel, Ash also gains the opportunity to forgo his prosthetic hand (famously self-amputated in the second *Evil Dead* film, within the same frame as Ernest Hemingway's novel *A Farewell to Arms*, providing the most infamous visual gag of the franchise), as his real hand re-materialises in a newly emerging alternative timeline. Perhaps, now that the aforementioned legal difficulties have been overcome, the next series will feature yet another branch in the time continuum, resurrecting an *Army of Darkness*-influenced narrative with Deadite skeletons, another possessed girlfriend, and a haunted windmill.

With Season Three of *Ash vs Evil Dead* already confirmed by Starz, we can expect more Ash-related adventures soon, but there may be (potentially less positive) changes afoot. Craig DiGregorio, showrunner for the first two seasons, has left, with Mark Verheiden (of *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-10) and Netflix's *Daredevil* (2014-present)) taking over. DiGregorio reportedly faced serious creative differences with producer Robert Tapert, especially surrounding the Season-Two finale. With Tapert possibly pushing for less humour-driven and scarier future seasons, viewers must wait and see if *Ash vs Evil Dead* will encourage fans to 'hail to the king, baby' (as Ash would say) or reach for their boomstick in disgust.

Noelle Mann

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[3] Brad Miska, '*Ash vs Evil Dead*: Why Doesn't Ask Work at S-Mart?', *Bloody Disgusting*, 14 August 2015 <http://bloody-disgusting.com/news/3357283/doesnt-ash-work-s-mart-ash-vs-evil-dead/> [accessed 8 September 2017].

Hannibal, Seasons 1-3 (NBC, 2012-15)

The TV series *Hannibal* was developed by Bryan Fuller and aired on NBC from April 2013 to August 2015. Unfortunately, the series was cancelled after Season 3 due to falling ratings, although it is now available on DVD and Netflix (and there are rumours that the show may be resurrected in the near future).[1] *Hannibal* focuses on the character that first made his fictional debut in Thomas Harris's *Red Dragon* (1981) and went on to appear in the novels *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988), *Hannibal* (1999), and *Hannibal Rising* (2006). Dr Hannibal Lecter then attained even wider fame via the novels' five cinematic adaptations. Lecter (played here by Mads Mikkelsen) is a brilliant, elegant, and refined psychiatrist and an exceptional cook, with a gorgeous office and a polished, almost sterile house in Baltimore.

The series functions as a prequel to the books and four of the films: Hannibal collaborates with the FBI in order to help capture serial killers, but he is himself a manipulative and sadistic murderer who cannibalises his victims' organs. Hannibal is therefore a therapist who can dissect not only the minds of his patients and adversaries, but also the tissues of their very bodies.[2] Each of the titles of almost every episode is the name of a dish, such as 'Amuse Bouche', 'Mukozuke', and 'Antipasto' (respectively in French, Japanese, and Italian). During the first two seasons, each episode largely consists of an investigation into the murders committed by a specific killer, although there are also a number of overarching storylines that span each season and portray the evolving relationships between the main characters. Season 3 departs from this formula, initially focusing on Hannibal's time on the run in Europe (which gives the show the opportunity to showcase the gorgeous settings of Paris and Florence), whereas the story of Francis Dolarhyde, the so-called 'Red Dragon', only develops over the course of the final six episodes.

The show's other main protagonist is Will Graham (Hugh Dancy), a brilliant and empathic young FBI consultant who can assume the perspective of a serial killer in order to precisely reconstruct the events leading to the crime scene and the thoughts, emotions, and intentions of the perpetrators of horrific murders. Will is a disturbed and unstable individual, prone to unsociable behaviour and nightmares, and his condition deteriorates over the course of Season 1 (he sleepwalks, doubts his own sanity, and even comes to fear that he may

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[1] See David Nemet, '*Hannibal* Update: Bryan Fuller Says Revival 'Conversations' Are Underway', 13 August 2017 <http://tvline.com/2017/08/13/hannibal-season-4-bryan-fuller-revival/> [accessed 7 September 2017].
[2] See also Antonio Sanna, 'A Villainous Appetite: Erôs, Madness, and the Food Analogy in *Hannibal* and *Legend*', in *The Culture and Philosophy of Ridley Scott*, ed. by Adam Barkman, Ashley Barkman, and Nancy Kang (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), pp. 145-55 (p. 149).

himself have been involved in some of the crimes he investigates). Hannibal uses Will's vulnerability to his own advantage, playing with Will's mind and frustrating his attempts to discover the real culprit of the murders that Hannibal has himself committed. He also misdirects Will and his FBI boss, Jack Crawford, by falsifying evidence and suggesting solutions which he knows to be false. Over the course of the three seasons, the two characters build up a morbidly co-dependent relationship, one built on affection and betrayal. Indeed, although they attempt repeatedly to kill each other and then forget each other (in a continuous alternation of *eros* and *thanatos*, we could say), Hannibal and Will become inseparable, and their relationship assumes a strong homoerotic component, which is made explicit in Season 3, when Hannibal admits his intimate affection for the profiler.

Mikkelsen and Dancy are the undoubted two stars of the show; their acting is impeccable. The former depicts Hannibal perfectly, effectively dramatising all of the character's nuances, from his imperturbability in the face of death to his courtesy and acumen. Mikkelsen's impenetrable expressions serve admirably to obscure the character's true motives from those around him, even as we watch him close in on his victims from behind or chat amiably with them over dinner before finishing them off for good (for instance, one of the most disturbing scenes of the entire series occurs in 'Futamono', the sixth episode of Season 2, when Hannibal serves his still-conscious victim a clay-roasted thigh and canoe-cut marrowbone made from the latter's own leg). Dancy's portrayal of Graham pays particular attention to the character's constant emotional torment. The expression of suffering in his eyes is convincing, as it his obvious difficulty in relating to his fellow human beings, which lays the groundwork for the extreme consequences of this detachment from the world around him later in the series. Will's distress is also visually rendered through the visionary depictions of his increasingly vivid nightmares and hallucinations, which include an enormous black stag that later comes to resemble Lecter (called by the showrunner and fans 'Stagman', or the 'Wendigo').[3] These digitally created (and quite effective) special effects eloquently dramatise Will's disturbed psyche.

In addition to the two central characters, the series features many of the primary and secondary characters from Harris's novels, with the sole major exception being FBI trainee agent Clarice Starling, whose presence would certainly have enriched the programme further, but was not permissible for copyright reasons. Other major characters include the Head of FBI's Behavioural Science, Jack Crawford (Lawrence Fishburne), who is Will's demanding

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[3] '*Hannibal*: The Wiki' <http://hannibal.wikia.com/wiki/The_Stag_(TV)> [accessed 7 September 2017].

but loyal boss, and who also gradually becomes Hannibal's friend. Secondary characters include Crawford's wife Bella (Gina Torres), who is diagnosed with cancer early in the series; Dr Alana Bloom (Caroline Dhavernas), a psychologist who works alongside (and is attracted to) Will but has then an affair with Hannibal; and Freddie Lounds (Lara Jean Chorostecki), a tabloid journalist who uses people unscrupulously to write sensationalist articles. The most notable original characters are Abigail Hobbs (Kacey Rohl), the traumatised daughter of a serial killer shot dead by Will in the pilot, who Hannibal and Will then take under their wing, and Dr Bedelia du Maurier (the extraordinary Gillian Anderson), Hannibal's therapist, whose complex relationship with the title character constitutes one of the most suspenseful and exciting storylines in the show.

The plots of the all three seasons are also broadly based on events that occur in Harris's novels, with the exception of Season 1, which focuses for the most part on the FBI's hunt for the Chesapeake Ripper (Hannibal himself). Nevertheless, one of the most fascinating aspects of *Hannibal* is its reworking of and additions to the source texts. Those who are familiar with Harris's novels and/or with their cinematic adaptations will be struck by the many changes, evolutions, and inversions applied to the original narrative. Indeed, Season 1, which is partly based on the events preceding *Red Dragon*, in which Lecter had already been captured by Graham, ends instead with the shocking arrest of the innocent profiler, who Lecter has carefully framed for his own crimes. Similarly, Season 2 includes many plotlines taken from Harris's third novel *Hannibal*, but significantly changes the timing, development, and resolution of these events. This is most notably the case in relation to the arc that involves Lecter's would-be nemesis Mason Verger (Michael Pitt) and his sister Margot (Katharine Isabelle). In both Harris' novel and the TV show, Verger is a child molester who abuses his own sister repeatedly until Hannibal convinces her to kill him (although in the series she is a more glamorous and sympathetic figure than the steroid-taking body builder represented in the novel). In Ridley Scott's 2001 film *Hannibal*, Margot is not even mentioned and the film focuses instead on Mason's revenge against the doctor for the mutilations he suffered years earlier. In the TV series, the tumultuous relationships between the Verger siblings is significantly intertwined with the lives of several of the show's most important characters (both Vergers are patients of Lecter, and Margot has a sexual relationship, first with Will, and later Alana). Margot therefore has more narrative agency and character development than in the novel. Although some 'purist' readers and viewers may not appreciate the less-than-faithful adaptation of the source narrative, the series' clever

reinterpretation of earlier storylines and development of the relationships between the various characters increases suspense and plays skilfully with pre-existing expectations.

Equally successful is the depiction of the secondary villains who feature throughout the series. With the exception of Hannibal and the Red Dragon (and Garret Hobbes, who is briefly mentioned in *Red Dragon*), all of them have been specifically created by Bryan Fuller and his writing staff, and have not been extracted from the novels or the films. A number of the murderers capture the viewer's interest because of the inventiveness of their misdeeds, such as is the case with a serial killer who half-buries comatose diabetics in order to grow mushrooms out of their bodies (in 'Amouse-Bouche', the second episode of Season 1). It is the presence of the killers and their actions that qualify *Hannibal* as proper horror TV, which, according to Helen Wheatley, is characterised by 'a proclivity towards the structures and images of the uncanny [...], is visually dark, with a *mise-en-scène* dominated by drab and dismal colours, shadows and close-in spaces [...] [and is] inclined towards camerawork and sound recording taken from a subjective perspective'.[4] *Hannibal*'s status as horror TV in Wheatley's sense is made evident primarily in those sequences that linger irreverently on the mutilated corpses of the victims, as the camera effectively merges the investigative gaze of the FBI agents as much as with the voyeuristic pleasure of the assassins. Close-ups, often accompanied by the show's beautifully ominous electronic soundtrack (considered by critics such as Libby Hill to be TV's scariest soundtrack[5]), frequently show the viewer the devastation caused by human evil, the wounds left by weapons, percolating blood and, most of all, the glistening organs of Hannibal's many victims, which we repeatedly see being meticulously prepared for consumption. Indeed, the series consistently transforms the kitchen into a locus of horror. However, this visual cruelty is relieved somewhat by a heavy dose of irony, and even morbid black comedy, often courtesy of Hannibal's macabre comments and deadpan observations (such as the line '[n]ext time bring your wife. I'd like to have you both for dinner' in the episode 'Apéritif').

By the end of Season 2, although Hannibal's crimes have been exposed, he has escaped the trap set by Jack and Will, and so his misdeeds throughout the first half of the last season are instead enacted in European cities such as Paris, Florence, and Palermo. We even have a return to the character's own decidedly gothic Eastern-European roots, as Will eventually searches for his nemesis in the Lecters' abandoned castle in Lithuania, where the

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[4] Helen Wheatley, *Gothic Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 3.
[5] See Libby Hill, '*Hannibal*: 3 Steps to TV's Scariest Soundtrack', 12 June 2015
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/14/arts/television/hannibal-3-steps-to-tvs-scariest-soundtrack.html?mcubz=3> [accessed 28 August 2017].

origins of his evil are explored. At the same time, during the first half of Season 3, the narrative assumes a non-linear arc that gradually explains to the viewer how the various characters have survived the catastrophic events that occurred at the end of Season 2, and how they have been changed (and in one important instance, literally haunted) by their horrific experiences.

In Season 3, as in the rest of the series, 'taste' in all of its manifestations is an essential component: viewers will may find their mouths watering each time Hannibal serves a beautifully presented meal to his guests, despite what we know of his often-unsavoury ingredients. Our seduction is also auditory; the series is wonderfully sound-tracked by electronic composer Brian Reitzell, who alternates the atmospheric use of natural sounds (such as drops of water) with strident and cacophonous notes made by violins, and the frightening and often abrupt use of percussion. Echoing *The Silence of the Lambs*, here the soundtrack also frequently deploys classical music in sequences depicting Hannibal at work and play. These include Lecter's own 'theme' (the 'Aria da Capo' from Bach's *Goldberg Variations*), Beethoven's 'Piano Concert No. 1 in C Major', Bach's 'Dona Nobis Pacem', and parts of Verdi's *Macbeth* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

Hannibal is due the appreciation and respect of both readers and viewers already familiar with the original literary and cinematic texts, and those who are encountering the main character for the first time. As all of this suggests, one of the most troubling and intriguing aspects of the show is the fact that, despite what we know of Lecter's sadistic actions, many viewers may well be hoping that he gets away with it in the end: the character's penetrating insight, appreciation of high culture, impeccable manners and elegance, combined with an immensely charismatic turn from Mikkelsen, all make him a fascinating anti-hero. On the other hand, those who want the title character to be punished for his heinous crimes will be tormented by his continuous escapes and will cheer for the dogged FBI agents who are trying to bring him to justice. *Hannibal* can rightly be considered a worthy successor of the five cinematic adaptations of the novel and a compelling alternative to them, and should appeal equally to readers and viewers already familiar with the original literary and cinematic texts, and those who are encountering the main character for the first time. So, please, sit down, and bon appétit!

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