BOOK REVIEWS
Literary and Cultural Criticism

Roger Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy*
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

A staple of popular culture, "the mummy's curse" immediately evokes images of messily bandaged, murderous ancient Egyptians chasing flabbergasted Western Egyptologists around country houses. It is a trope that has been deployed in film after film, from the Universal mummy pictures of the 1930s and 1940s, to the Hammer versions of the late 1950s and 1960s, to Universal's successful resurrection of the franchise in the 1999-2008 series (with another planned remake on the cards for 2014). And, as is perhaps less well known, this cinematic treatment was preceded by scores of popular novels and periodical stories which established the conventions of this Gothic subgenre. But how did the cultural association of the sweeping, violent curse with the mortal remains of ancient Egyptians arise? As Roger Luckhurst explains, citing present-day, curse-weary academic Egyptologists, the concept of the curse played only the slightest role in ancient Egyptian culture; hence his study, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy*, sets out to trace the origins of this dark fantasy to their late-nineteenth century roots.

By way of explanation, Luckhurst turns first to the historical practice of Egyptology and the world-famous opening of Tutankhamun's tomb by Howard Carter and the Earl of Carnarvon in the winter of 1922-23. He deconstructs the assumption that the idea of the mummy's curse stemmed from the equally famous series of misfortunes that were attributed to this event, instead tracing its origins to two less well-known preceding accounts of cursed Egyptian artefacts that circulated in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Luckhurst is not the first to observe the connection between the Western archaeological exploitation of Egypt's ancient civilisation and the idea of supernatural retribution – Jasmine Day, for example, has produced an excellent anthropological account of this conjunction in *The Mummy's Curse: Mummymania in the English-Speaking World* (Routledge, 2006), which neatly complements Luckhurst's cultural history. However Luckhurst's study is ground breaking for a number of reasons; firstly, it pursues the curse in the elusive, sub-discursive form of rumour, following the instigation and re-circulation of

unsubstantiated tales concerning the ominous careers of two purportedly lethal mummy-cases from their late-Victorian origins through to the early twentieth century. And, even more importantly, it places these rumours in the crucial and largely overlooked political context of the intensification of British colonial activity in Africa in the late nineteenth century. Reading the curse as a "displaced account" of some of Britain's shocking setbacks in its African campaigns, especially in Sudan, Luckhurst plausibly suggests that "the vengeance of the mummy might have had less to do with powers imputed to the Ancient Egyptians and much more with the contemporary geopolitics of North African resistance to British imperialism" (pp.80-81).

The study does not stop at pursuing the curse in the form of rumour; instead, it widens its scope considerably to explore an impressive array of manifestations of the shadowy presence of Egypt in England, these investigations combining to provide an exceptionally well-rounded account of the cultural phenomenon. For analytical purposes the Egyptianate manifestations are divided into two broad categories: those that had some nominal educative intent, such as the Egyptian displays in the cycle of "empire" exhibitions that proliferated in the late-Victorian period, and in the burgeoning museums; and those that existed explicitly for entertainment or consumer purposes, such as Egyptian-themed panorama and diorama displays and theatrical extravaganzas, and orientalised department stores. Luckhurst argues that the latter category presented no sense of Egypt as a locus of threat, functioning purely as "commercial immersive-exotic spaces" and contributing to the explosion of commodity culture in Britain (pp.118-19). However, in the former, despite the implication of control and power that these official narratives of empire provided, something of the Gothic leaked through in the persistent rumours of mummy curses that stubbornly attached to the displays and defied the denials of official Egyptology.

As no account of the mummy's curse in its earliest guises would be complete without a consideration of its virulent propagation through the medium of popular fiction, Luckhurst necessarily allots this topic considerable space. This is the form that has received most critical attention previously, typically in article-length treatments such as those by Nicholas Daly and Bradley Deane, but here Luckhurst's extended engagement allows a fuller picture of the cultural work performed by the literary curse to emerge. Luckhurst tours the archives of Gothic fiction about Egypt, from those works that employed the mummy as a satirical device to berate

contemporary society, to erotically charged, French-influenced accounts of mummy romance, honing in on the question that thematically ties this textual analysis to the study's wider inquiry into the curse – what caused the fictional mummy to turn vengeful after the 1860s. He demonstrates the impact of the significance of Egypt to the British colonial endeavour after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the consequent British occupation of Egypt in 1882 on the fiction of Gothic Egypt, using four well-chosen, novel-length engagements: Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897), Guy Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* (1899), Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903) and Sax Rohmer's *Tales of Secret Egypt* (1918). What unites these texts is their portrayals of some of the most unequivocally bleak outcomes in this strain of writing, a tendency which Luckhurst aptly links with Stephen Arata's influential critical paradigm of reverse colonisation.

Luckhurst proceeds to contrast these less nuanced depictions of Egyptian menace usefully with the more sustained and complex literary renderings of Egypt to be found in the works of Algernon Blackwood, and more particularly H. Rider Haggard, the latter deservedly receiving a chapter-length treatment. Haggard's engagement with Egypt could be said in ways to epitomise the intensity of the late-Victorian fascination with that country: he was the brief recipient of a restless mummy appropriated from Egypt, two of his brothers fought in the British colonial army there, and he toured Egypt himself several times, obtaining many souvenirs, not least a pharaonic ring which he wore constantly. This formative experience manifested itself in a predilection for Egyptian artefacts which Haggard obsessively collected and displayed in his home, and from which, Luckhurst argues, he produced a plethora of works dealing with Egypt ancient and modern. In these Luckhurst discerns a melancholia concerning the perceived squalid state of modern, occupied Egypt that dallies with curse tropes but more properly reflects a conservative yearning for an unattainable continuity or permanence evoked by the romance of immortality or reincarnation.

To confirm his central argument that the curse of the mummy takes shape in the late-Victorian period through multiple vectors, Luckhurst turns in conclusion to a final crucial outlet for the dissemination of curse rumours: the growing contemporary fascination with magic and the occult. By engaging with a field that may at first glance seem tangential, Luckhurst is able to postulate that the media-hyped attempts

of some hermetic societies to rediscover the supposed magical powers of the ancient Egyptians doubtless fed popular superstitions that pharaonic wrath could remain effective across the centuries, even that such powers might be actively wielded by the hermetic adepts of London's disreputable bohemian underworld. Ultimately Luckhurst convincingly ties the paranoid structure of belief in the specific occult concept of the "evil eye" (that it is inherently reversible and may be turned back on the practitioner) to the practice of imperialism. Hence what is looking back at those who ascribe curses and malevolent gazes to Egyptian artefacts is "the malignancy of [their] own desire and the violence [they] are prepared to commit to satisfy that desire", a "colonial gaze" that relentlessly appropriates the objects of its desire (p.236).

The drawing in of the disparate field of the occult is one of the best elements of Luckhurst's study, reinforcing the strength of his interdisciplinary, cultural-historical approach; it could have been improved only, perhaps, by a more extended account of the late-Victorian anthropological interest in the persistence of belief in the evil eye in modern North Africa, which may have contributed to the conflation of modern Egyptian hostility to colonialism with ancient curses. Overall, however, the study is written in an engaging, entertaining style and is likely to become the key text in its field for some time to come. While highly accessible, it is obviously the erudite product of years of ground-breaking archival research, often into alternative and out-of-the-way primary sources – including uncatalogued letters to the British Museum, handwritten minutes of occult societies, and oral family histories. As such, it clearly demonstrates the value of taking a diverse approach to the source material employed in this kind of cultural historical project.

Ailise Bulfin

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Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott, *TV Horror: Investigating the Dark Side of the Small Screen* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013)

On 31 October 1992, 20,000 people rang into the BBC to complain that they had been tricked into watching what they thought was a live broadcast of an investigation into paranormal activity, hosted by Michael Parkinson. The programme turned out to be

the horror mockumentary *Ghostwatch*, directed by Lesley Manning. In the days that followed, the British audience aired their grievances on TV, in letters, and over the phone. As one disgruntled viewer claimed live on the BBC public affairs programme *Bite Back*, which aired on 15 November 1992, the people involved in the mockumentary had "betrayed the trust of its viewers" ("*Bite Back* on *Ghost Watch*", http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgrI5ZRuKdc, accessed 1 July 2013). In transgressing the fragile margin between fact and fiction, the genre of horror had gone too far.

As a collective public, we enjoy being scared, but only within established and therefore comfortable parameters. There is apparently an appropriate place and time for such flirtations with terror. Seeing a horror film on a first date greatly enhances the "thrill experience", and of course fear typically has the effect of narrowing the spatial proximity between a nervous couple, as one party spooks, while the other, just as terrified, nonchalantly provides a hand, shoulder or a hopeful thigh to squeeze. Even within our own home, when we choose to watch a horror film on DVD, Netflix or on any of the vast range of media devices available in 2013, we still are active participants in its selection.

So what happens when television "betrays the trust of its viewers"? Turning over or turning off offensive programming is always a viable option, regardless of genre. However, in many homes, the television takes on a much more powerful role than simply that of a media device. It becomes a babysitter, a mood setter, a companion, a "distractor" and of course an entertainer, a mundane yet omnipresent apparatus that can often render the viewer comparatively passive. Thus it could be argued that DVDs, downloads and so on happen *through us*, whereas television happens *to us*.

The question remains, then, as to whether it is possible to reconcile the marginal genre of horror with the mass medium. In *TV Horror: Investigating the Dark Side of the Small Screen*, Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbot argue that it can and more importantly has been, basing their assertions on the impressive backlog of Gothic and horror programmes which have already been assimilated into mainstream television schedules. Very often there seems to be a predilection towards the notion that horror programming is a relatively contemporary phenomenon. In the 1990s, horror stalked our screens in the guise of *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991), *The X-Files* (1993-

2002), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *American Gothic* (1995-1996). The years post-9/11 saw an explosion of horror-related programming with shows such as *Dexter* (2006-present), *The Walking Dead* (2010-present), *American Horror Story* (2011-present), *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-present), and most recently *Hannibal* (2013-present) and *Bates Motel* (2013-present). However, Abbot and Jowett wish to dispel such narrow notions, and interpret the genre as a long-standing and popular branch of television programming stretching back over sixty years.

Abbot and Jowett's book is posited, not as an introduction to TV horror, but rather as an investigation into the *relationship* between TV and the horror genre. However, in illustrating this relationship, which is often "fraught with tension and potential" (p.xiii), the text provides an excellent and often amusing historical guide to horror shows. Covering a range of series with impressive authority, *TV Horror* organises each television era into one of three distinct categories; "TVI" (1950-1975) which highlights programmes such as *The Quatermass Experiment* (1953), *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964), *The Addams Family* (1964-1966) and *Dark Shadows* (1966-1971); "TVII" (1975-1990s) featuring *Twin Peaks*, *The X-Files*, *Buffy* and *Angel* (1999-2004); and finally "TVIII" (1990s-present) which includes series such as *Dexter*, *The Walking Dead*, *Torchwood* (2006-2012) and *Pushing Daisies* (2007-2009). While the book isn't chronological, it still retains a definite historical focus throughout, as the authors choose instead to discuss a broad range of thematic, sociological and philosophical issues in each chapter, such as adaption of horror texts to TV in Chapter Four; modernising or "Revising the Gothic" in Chapter Six; the "Excess of Horror" in Chapter Seven; and in Chapter Nine, they explore the notion of "TV as Horror".

Although much of the early part of the book is concerned with the process of translating horror onto the small screen, the authors put great emphasis on the sociological ramifications of this process in the 1950s, particularly in relation to programmes such as *The Addams Family* and *The Munsters* (1964-1966). These sitcoms sought to "subvert suburban conformity" (p.23) while other domestic sitcoms such as *Father Knows Best* (1954-1960) served only to promulgate the idealised American family life. Though each of these ghoulish families appeared to others within the fictional worlds they inhabited as strange and "altogether ooky", the point was that they still maintained a strong familial bond which was based on traditional

morals, however fantastic the setting. The authors claim that, during this era, this unusual juxtaposition provided the public with a means literally to *air* certain social issues such as drug abuse and juvenile delinquency. Presented with this juxtaposition between the idealised fiction of *Father Knows Best* which rarely portrayed transgressions of any kind, and fantastic fiction which seemed to revel in these transgressions, the viewing public began to accept horror within mainstream entertainment as harmless fun.

TV Horror develops this theme further, referencing the "seriality" of TV as an aid and not an impediment to the integration of the horror genre into mainstream entertainment. Jowett and Abbott assert that TV horror programmes mimic the typical domestic rudiments of a soap opera, thus providing a recognisable space for viewers to watch horrific images that they may not have had the (dis)pleasure of seeing before. However, due to the fact that "the televisual structure of horror relies more on repetition and cycles than linear narrative" (p.52), the horror text becomes more accessible to non-horror fans, as these conventions (combined with the usual trappings of soap operas such as shorter segments and advertisement breaks) reinforce the "fictionality" of the programme, making for an all-round more customary and therefore unproblematically enjoyable experience.

With this in mind, the necessity for locating programmes such as *Dark Shadows* and *The Addams Family* within the world of the domestic sitcom becomes clear. In Chapter Three, "Shaping Horror: From Single Play to Serial Drama", the authors discuss how, fifty years after these domestic Gothic dramas, the zombie series *The Walking Dead* also seeks, for the same reasons, to replicate the trials and tribulations of a soap opera, with its reliance on sexual tension, affairs and bed-hopping, thus providing a familiar setting to an unfamiliar theme.

A second and equally important attribute of TV seriality, discussed in the same chapter, is that it can "privilege the open ending and dystopian horrors of humanity" (p.40). Thus, unresolved endings, which the horror-film fan would usually expect, such as the hand reaching out of the grave in *Carrie* (Dir. Brian de Palma 1976), lend themselves perfectly to the serial TV format, where the viewers are left guessing for only another week, and not a year, as they would be when waiting for a film sequel.

Taking great pains to examine what is put on the screen, the authors place equal weight upon what is *not* shown on our screens. As witnessed by the mocumentary *Ghostwatch* mentioned earlier, there are limits to what the television-viewing audience will stomach. Though these limits often appear indefinable, and are liable to shift with each new decade, there is a point at which the viewing public will say "Enough!" In Chapter Seven, the authors take on board the complaint that, in trying to please all tastes, TV horror is often bland, a claim championed by Stephen King when he declared that "Television has really asked the impossible of its handful of horror programmes – to terrify without really terrifying, to horrify without really horrifying, to sell audiences a lot of sizzle and no steak" (p.131). In spite of this, *TV Horror* wishes to challenge the assumption "that graphic depictions of gore are intrinsic to horror by asserting instead that the aesthetics of horror are characterized by the spectacle, with visual and aural excess encompassing both terror and horror" (p.132). Moreover, due in part to the ever-changing landscape of television, discussed at length in Chapter Two, they also draw attention to the way in which many horror conventions such as graphic sex and violence are now typical features of non-horror programmes. Therefore, "for TV horror to be provocative, it must do more than simply be gory." TV horror now must offer "fresh perspectives on the genre" and showcase "distinct forms of spectacle through stylistic excess" (p.136), an aesthetic which seems to fit more and more comfortably onto the small screen, as demonstrated by the popularity of "body horrors", such as *Dexter* and *Pushing Daisies* which are continuously "making death palatable" (p.142).

Returning to the initial question as to whether the horror genre is reconcilable with television programming, *TV Horror* certainly succeeds in demonstrating that it is, and offers an excellent account of the affiliations between the horror genre and the television medium. In the process of exploring this relationship, they dispel any "assumptions that TV is the nadir of banality" (p.181) with a widely researched and well-informed account of TV shows from the past six decades.

Additionally, in defending the genre as a credible and worthwhile subject matter for academics and non-academics alike, *TV Horror* displays a wonderful grasp of some of the most complex theories surrounding horror, which the authors weave into the main body of the text in a relaxed and effortless style, in a way that is both enjoyable and insightful. For Jowett and Abbot, TV horror is anything but bland. Its

narratives are continuous, progressive and unrelenting. The only thing that can apparently stop TV horror is bad ratings – or the paranormal musings of one Michael Parkinson.

Sarah Cleary

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Andrew Cusack and Barry Murnane (eds.), *Popular Revenants: The German Gothic and Its International Reception, 1800-2000*
(Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2012)

2009 was a busy year for Irish Germanists Andrew Cusack and Barry Murnane. They convened not one but two international conferences on the German Gothic. The first event, held in the suitably historic German university town of Halle, was *Populäre Erscheinungen* (loosely translated as *Popular Appearances*). It focused on the German *Schauerroman* ("Shudder Novel") in its heyday around 1800. The second was *Popular Revenants*, a two-day symposium in Trinity College, Dublin, convened in September 2009. Billed as a consolidating and amplifying "sequel" to Halle, it sought to explore nothing less than the international "afterlife" of the German Gothic from 1800 to 2000. The fruits of this second conference are to be found within the covers of the present volume.

Fully nine of the twelve contributors to *Popular Revenants* are veterans from the *Populäre Erscheinungen* campaign. In all but two cases – these being well-placed English translations of key expository essays by Jürgen Barkhoff and Silke Arnold-de Simine – they have brought brand-new papers to the table. The lack of widespread duplication is most impressive. It also mercifully spares the reviewer from having to riff away on the "Gothic" relationship of "spectral" source text to its "uncanny" "doppelgänger" target text – a scenario about as thrilling as hearing a Freudian close reader cry "Close, and two cigars!"

The present book, as Cusack rather startlingly notes in his short but informative Introduction, is the first in English to be dedicated solely to the German Gothic since Michael Hadley's 1978 *The Undiscovered Genre*. The avowed aim of this new volume is to "introduce new research for students and researchers in German studies and English studies alike" (p.1). It succeeds for the former group triumphantly well. For the latter group, however, the success is perhaps more qualified.

The qualification is just this. Where *Populäre Erscheinungen* gave us Germanists talking to each other in German about German-language texts, *Popular Revenants* gives us, for the most part at least, Germanists talking to each other in English about – German-language texts. One cannot help but be a little disappointed at the relative incuriosity on the parts of the bulk of contributors in point of non-German – and more specifically English-language – Gothic literature.

Not that you would see the problem coming if you started with Cusack's Introduction, where memorable instances of the confusions and cross-pollinations attendant upon the distinctively transgressive operations of Gothic fiction are cited. One particularly amusing example is the zigzag track from Germany via France to England of Heinrich Zschokke's novel, *Abaellino, der große Bandit* (*The Bravo of Venice*, 1794). Matthew Lewis, explains Cusack with evident relish, "wanted to bring his translation to the London stage but was beaten to it by two other versions of *Abaellino*, one of which, masquerading as an original work, was in fact an adaptation of a French stage-adaptation of Zschokke's novel" (p.1). Such convolutions, suggests Cusack, are quite typical of the dissemination of German-language Gothic around this time.

The comparativist game is still very much afoot in the terrific extended introduction to German Gothic by Cusack's co-editor which inaugurates the volume proper. "Haunting (Literary) History" is a veritable masterclass in synoptic cultural history, with Murnane taking in a copious amount of research literature and drawing some vigorously synchronic lines of contour between the *Schauerroman*, the realist novel, twentieth-century modernist fiction and the neo-Gothic productions of post-Wall German writing. Murnane's analysis is especially compelling when he tracks the ways in which classic Gothic tropes managed to insinuate themselves into later realist and naturalist texts. But he also displays keen attentiveness along the way to English-language Gothic literature, with Charles Maturin, Matthew Lewis and Jane Austen getting a more than perfunctory look-in.

What follows must therefore be accounted, in this one respect alone, a bit of a let-down for the non-Germanist reader. The English Studies gauntlet thrown down in the editors' introductory offerings will really only be taken up with gusto by four contributors: Arnold-de Simine, in her meticulous account of English translations of Benedikte Naubert's *Hermann von Unna* (1788/94); Victor Sage, in his splendidly

lively essay on "Scott, Hoffmann, and the Persistence of the Gothic"; Cusack himself, in his nuanced study of Irishman James "Clarence" Mangan's complex relationship to German gothicism and the *Nachtseite* ("night side") of life; and Peter Arnds, in his insistent referencing of Robert Browning's famous poem "The Pied Piper of Hamelin". As a Long Nineteenth-Century man, I would have loved to have seen a detailed Germanist take on striking moments of intercultural transfer in writers like (to take just the obvious examples) Coleridge, Austen (the "Horrid Novels"), the Shelleys, Dickens, Wilde and Jameses M. R. and Henry. And speaking of Henry James, what of the virulent afterlife of the German Gothic in the works of American writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? With the honourable exception of Mario Grizelj's illuminating section on Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym*, you'll find barely a peep here. Was it for this that Leslie A. Fiedler wrote his classic 1960 study *Love and Death in the American Novel*?

Thus the sizeable nit, picked. If the English-speaking student of Gothic literature can get past this problem – and I would urge her or him to do so – then this volume will repay repeat visits. The trick, I suspect, is simply to delve into individual essays without looking immediately for sharp straight lines pointing due west. The adventurous reader will come away with an urge to seek out serviceable English translations of intriguing texts like Immanuel Kant's magnetically nervous *Träume eines Geistersehers* (*Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, 1766), Friedrich Schiller's unfinished paranoid thriller *Der Geisterseher* (*The Spirit-Seer*, 1787-9), Wilhelm Raabe's novella *Die Hämelschen Kinder* (*The Children of Hamelin*, 1868), Theodor Fontane's historical novel *Vor dem Sturm* (*Before the Storm*, 1878) and Paul Leppin's supernatural Prague story *Severins Gang in die Finsternis* (*The Road to Darkness*, 1914).

It would be criminal to close without singling out for express praise Andrew Webber's revisiting of the penultimate scene of E.T.A. Hoffmann's still-unsettling tale "Der Sandmann" ("The Sandman", 1817). These seven-odd pages of close semiotic reading, informed as they are by Webber's convincing linkage of Hoffmann's weird optics and Lavaterian physiognomics, are worth the volume's price of admission alone. And if *Popular Revenants* as a whole is anything to go by, it is Hoffmann more than any other single figure who haunts the psyche of today's student of German Gothic. This is very good news indeed, not least as it leaves the English-

speaking reader with the wholly edifying impression that the richest German resource for today's Gothic devotee is pretty much: Anything By Hoffmann.

Cusack and Murnane have done us all some service.

Daragh Downes

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Tabish Khair, *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2009)

When Jane Eyre encounters the mysterious ghostly figure that haunts Thornfield Hall in the novel which bears her name, she struggles to find a way of describing something that seems so alien, and so fundamentally different, to herself, claiming eventually that it reminded her of "the foul German spectre – the Vampyre" (Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Norton 2001), p.242). Of course, the true identity of this mysterious figure is ultimately revealed to be the first Mrs Rochester, a Creole woman who has made her way from the Caribbean to take up her position as the archetypal madwoman in the attic, and is something infinitely more troubling than Jane's initial impression implies. As colonial/racial other, Bertha is perceived by her husband as the inverse of Jane herself, as he makes clear when he places his two brides directly alongside one another: "look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder – this face with that mask – this form with that bulk" (*Jane Eyre*, p.251). Yet for all her "differences", Bertha Rochester is not entirely "other" to her English counterpart at all; she is a disturbingly familiar monster, an uncivilised and barbaric version of femininity that colonial ideologies insisted could be controlled and improved (but never promoted to a position of equality with the coloniser – or the patriarch, for that matter).

But Jane's first impulse on initially encountering Bertha is a compelling one. In that initial moment of contact between the two characters, Bertha exists as an image of what Tabish Khair might term "an alterity which cannot be subsumed simply into negativity or similarity" (pp.145-46). It is an "otherness" for which Jane cannot account. Only by coding the unknown figure in Gothic terms, as vampire, can she find a way in which to narrate the "otherness" that she has registered. In this, she is faced with the same task as so many of the colonial and postcolonial writers

discussed throughout *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness*, in which Khair undertakes "an examination of the ways colonial and post-colonial literatures within or influenced by the Gothic genre negotiate with and narrate (or fail to narrate) Otherness" (p.3).

The book proposes "a re-examination of central (and pertinent) aspects of both [the Gothic and postcolonialism] through a discussion of the problematics of narrating the Other" (p.3) over the course of its two main sections – "The Gothic and Otherness" (which focuses on nineteenth-century manifestations of colonial Gothic) and "Postcolonialism and Otherness" (where the attention turns instead to Gothic-inflected work by postcolonial writers). These sections are bookended by useful introductory and concluding chapters which establish the methodological and philosophical frameworks on which Khair draws throughout his discussion of alterity and subjectivity (in particular, the work of Emmanuel Levinas). His focus, he insists throughout, is on the British Empire and its post-colonies, and in particular (in the section on colonial Gothic), on "how colonial Otherness is encountered in […] Gothicised narrative[s] that [take] place in Britain" (p.72) – though these parameters are not always rigidly maintained. The first main textual analysis in Chapter 1, for example, comes from *The Phantom of the Opera* (1909-1910), while *Moby Dick* (1851) provides a focal point in the conclusion; similarly some of the texts discussed (such as *Heart of Darkness* [1899]) may be narrated *from* the centre of the Empire but the main action largely takes place outside of it (even if Marlow, the novel's main narrator, makes it clear that London itself is a Gothic place, haunted by different kinds of colonial legacies and knowledge). Discussions of the likes of *Dracula* and (somewhat cursorily) *The Moonstone* fit Khair's parameters more directly, as does *Wuthering Heights* (1847), which is prioritised here over *Jane Eyre* (1847) (despite the detailed discussion of Jean Rhys' prequel/rewrite *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) in Section 2). In the process, admittedly, Khair does make some well-intentioned but ultimately somewhat tenuous observations about how Heathcliff's "otherness" might resonate in a contemporary context.

> Imagine an intelligent dark-skinned person, slipping into the country-side of a peaceful European country from somewhere disturbingly "post-colonial", lying dormant for many years and then snaring the families that harboured him in a net of violence, revenge and terror. It might sound like an account of the so-called "sleeper agents" that

organisations like *Al Qaeda* are said to send into the heart of Europe,
but actually it would be one way of describing Heathcliff. (p.64)

There are more persuasive textual readings on display elsewhere, however, and in
Section 2 Khair turns to a discussion of a similarly broad-ranging and diverse
collection of postcolonial writing. These include Erna Brodber's *Myal* (1988), Peter
Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997), Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* (1996), Salman
Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* (2005) and *Midnight's Children* (1980), and
particularly thought-provoking discussions about textual representations of *vodou*,
and what he sees as the limits of magic realism. This breadth of reference is
simultaneously a strength and limitation of the book as a whole, on the one hand
providing ample – and often fertile – ground in which to explore the central thesis, but
also making for a slightly disparate discussion at times.

Throughout the book, Khair emphasises the ways in which the Gothic and the
postcolonial are concerned with the narration of "Otherness". By identifying the
Gothic as a "'writing of Otherness'" he "allude[s] most simplistically to the fact that it
revolves around various versions of the Other, as the Devil or as ghosts, as women,
vampires, Jews, lunatics, murderers, non-European presences etc." (p.6). In the
colonial Gothic, these figures often carried with them connotations of racial otherness
too, contributing to the popular establishment of a colonial/racial binary, in which the
racial Other was coded as less-than-human. The postcolonial writer, then, is faced
with the task of renegotiating this binary, in order to achieve agency, and is enjoined
to "write a different story", as Chinua Achebe once put it (cited in Simon Gikandi,
Reading Chinua Achebe: Language and Ideology in Fiction (Heinemann 1991), p.16).
Khair's interest, then, lies in examining the ways in which colonial and postcolonial
writers employ the Gothic mode as a way of narrating and acknowledging the agency
of the Other *as* Other, and not simply as what he terms the "Self-same".

"For the Other to be Other," Khair writes "there has to be difference – and
space for its acceptance, interplay and recognition" (p.158), and in considering the
space that the Gothic provides for the textual representation of this difference, Khair
raises some interesting possibilities. Of particular note is his assertion that colonial
Gothic texts "dealt with the racial/colonial Other, lacking the language to narrate its
alterity but sometimes managing to register its presence, if negatively, as 'terror',
'fear' and other states of strong emotion" (p.101). For both colonial and postcolonial

writers of the Gothic, it seems, language remains key, and often seems incapable of accounting for moments of "irreducible alterity" (p.101). For Khair, however, it seems that the textual failure to speak on behalf of the "Other" in these instances does not amount to an outright failure to perceive "Otherness" itself – in fact, he insists, "we can still leave space open for the alterity of the Other to be registered – but not explained away or, as literature, narrated 'fully'" (p.172). It is in these moments that "the Other is registered in its full alterity; its agency is recognised as independent from that of the Self and, hence, at least, potentially terrifying" (p.173). He ends by opening up the discussion once more to consider broadly how our encounters with "Otherness" function in terms of contemporary global discourses about "terror" – in theoretical terms, this is an intriguing question, certainly, but ultimately it is one that cannot be contained or resolved within the book itself.

In the end, *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness* is ambitious in scope and raises compelling and potentially provocative questions about the ethics of narrating – and acknowledging – "Otherness". If the book ultimately raises more questions than answers in its meditation on this topic, these nevertheless remain questions that bear further investigation, and may provide foundations on which future scholars will continue to build.

Jenny McDonnell

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Gary William Crawford, Jim Rockhill and Brian J. Showers (eds.), ***Reflections in a Glass Darkly: Essays on J. Sheridan Le Fanu*** (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2011)
and
Elizabeth Miller and Dacre Stoker (eds.), ***The Lost Journal of Bram Stoker: The Dublin Years*** (London: The Robson Press, 2012)

When you first behold the superb portrait of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu by the modern Irish artist Robert Ballagh which hangs in Le Fanu's former home at 70 Merrion Square, what you initially see is the writer, lost in thought and bearing a candle, staring out at you from a shadowed window. A closer look reveals another, more bewildering image. Ballagh's Le Fanu is not, as he at first seems, looking directly at you but is being reflected onto the windowpanes. In fact, through a narrow opening in the casement a country house can be seen, dwarfed by a vast and lowering sky.

Ballagh's visual trick is one that Le Fanu, whose Gothic fiction so often deals with the shifting relationship between appearances and reality, would surely have appreciated. The painting is a brilliant illustration of Le Fanu's peculiar predicament as a writer who, for all the enduring popularity of some of his stories, has for a long time only been perceived in the darkest of glasses.

In the realm of Gothic and horror studies, Le Fanu remains that rarest of entities; a pivotal figure in the development of these genres whose life and writings have remained largely untouched by scholars. In this regard, he is the exact opposite of the other great Irish master of Gothic horror and mystery, Bram Stoker, whose life and work have been ceaselessly discussed. And yet, in almost every other respect, Le Fanu and Stoker seem uncannily similar. Each was a well-connected Dublin Protestant, a Trinity student and a newspaper man. Both wore masks of gregarious joviality which belied their inner melancholy. Each was an outward-looking, versatile writer and if, on balance, their fiction is as flawed as many critics have made out, it is no more so than that of the vast majority of Victorian storytellers. Finally, both wrote works which obscured the rest of their output, but while Stoker had the bad luck of penning *Dracula* quite early on in his career, a masterpiece he could never match, Le Fanu was equally unfortunate to die before *In a Glass Darkly* brought him the fame for which he had long waited.

Two recent additions to the field of Irish Gothic studies, *Reflections in a Glass Darkly*, edited by Gary William Crawford, Jim Rockhill and Brian J. Showers, and *The Lost Journal of Bram Stoker*, edited by Elizabeth Miller and Dacre Stoker, offer important new perspectives on these writers. Other than W.J. McCormack's excellent 1980 biography, *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland*, Le Fanu has been the subject of surprisingly few book-length studies. However, what has been published over the years is an intermittent but impressive series of essays covering many aspects of his life and nearly all of his major works. A diverse and distinguished collection of novelists, short-story writers, critics and historians have put their respect for Le Fanu's unique fictions on record. Since the mid-1990s, Gothic literature scholars Gary William Crawford, Jim Rockhill and Brian J. Showers have been working to renew critical attention in Le Fanu. Together they have edited the first critical edition of his complete works, compiled a new Le Fanu bibliography and launched an online journal of Le Fanu studies. In their most recent project, *Reflections in a Glass Darkly*,

they have brought together all the seminal moments in Le Fanu criticism as well as commissioning new essays from some of the foremost names in the study of Gothic literature. It is a volume bursting with good things, a cavern of wonders for anyone who revels in the strange, the mysterious and the weird.

Reflections in a Glass Darkly is divided into five sections. The first of these is given over to biographical sketches of the man himself, penned by those who actually knew him, including Alfred Percival Graves (father of the poet Robert) and the author's brother, W.R. Le Fanu. Here we encounter a witty, genial man, a great conversationalist with an interest in everything and everyone. Le Fanu emerges from these accounts as a man whose passion for hard work was matched only by the strength of his devotion to his chronically ill wife Susanna. And yet Le Fanu's charming, radiant personality concealed a strain of morbidity, a fixation with the odd and unearthly which gave his writing its extraordinary uncanny power, but which took the upper hand in his mind following Susanna's untimely death in 1858. This led to Le Fanu's withdrawal from Irish society and his peculiar transformation into Dublin's legendary "Invisible Prince," a man never seen in daylight, who worked alone at night and who had little human contact for the last fifteen years of his life.

General discussions of Le Fanu's work make up the second selection of essays. These date mostly from the 1920s to the early 1960s and represent the original critical rediscovery of Le Fanu. This section contains some fine pieces by Edna Kenton, V.S. Pritchett and E.F. Benson, although its real pleasure is to be found in the two marvellously droll contributions from the man who launched the Le Fanu revival, M.R. James. Curiosity in Le Fanu seems to have been at an all-time low in the early 1920s until James, then at the height of his own fame as master of the ghost story, edited a collection of Le Fanu's stories in which he made the famous claim that Le Fanu "succeeds in inspiring a mysterious terror better than any other writer" (p.138). Unlike the other authors in this section, who praise the originality of particular qualities in Le Fanu's art, James' case for Le Fanu's supremacy seems to have rested simply on the fact that he thought he was quite good, an argument he took to be sufficient in itself. Who are we to disagree?

The third section of *Reflections in a Glass Darkly* is a mixed bag of intriguing topics, and includes discussions of the connection between recurrent motifs in Le Fanu's descriptions of city and landscapes, and the work of the later Romantic

painters; Le Fanu's lengthy involvement with the *Dublin University Magazine* and his attempts to get published in Charles Dickens' *All the Year Round*; the use of the 1798 Rebellion as the theme of his verse narrative S*hamus O'Brien*; and a short essay which succeeds in explaining why H.P. Lovecraft held such a low opinion of Le Fanu. Of particular interest in this section are two new essays dealing with Danish film director Carl Theodor Dreyer's use of Le Fanu's *Carmilla* as the basis for his 1932 masterpiece *Vampyr.*

Period reviews of Le Fanu's works, taken from *The Athenaeum*, *The Spectator* and the *Saturday Review*, comprise the fourth section of this collection, but it is the fifth, containing essays concentrating on specific novels and story collections, which will be of lasting value to students. Again the timespan here is wide, moving from Elizabeth Bowen's eloquent introductions, to reprints of Le Fanu from the 1960s, to a number of new pieces appearing for the first time. What makes these essays the most satisfying part of the book is that they look beyond *Uncle Silas* and *In a Glass Darkly* to take in the whole corpus of Le Fanu's fiction, including some of his most obscure texts. Sally C. Harris and Stephen Carver examine the late novels *The Wyvern Mystery* and *All in the Dark*; Victor Sage considers the charmingly entitled *Willing to Die*; while Jarlath Killeen provides the most substantial and enlightening of the newly commissioned essays with his spirited rereading of Le Fanu's famous tale of the *nosferatu*, *Carmilla*. Overall, *Reflections in a Glass Darkly* gives back to Le Fanu some of the standing he possessed in his own time, showing him to be no mere writer of occasional ghost stories but a Victorian novelist equipped with a formidable array of fictional techniques who was both more ambitious and more daring than most critics have hitherto understood.

By contrast, never an author who has wanted for critical attention, Bram Stoker has received biographical treatment at least four times in the last four decades and each of these books (particularly Paul Murray's tremendous *From the Shadow of Dracula: A Life of Bram Stoker* from 2004) has provided a more complete portrait of the man, his life and his working methods. However, the announcement of the publication of a "lost" journal of Stoker's cannot help but have led scholars to think that it might contain information that might allow them to answer conclusively the question that has defied all of Stoker's biographers: how a fifty-year-old theatre manager and former civil servant with little previous success in the art of fiction could

create what is arguably the most powerful and enduring of all modern myths, *Dracula*?

Sadly, the first thing that must be stated about *The Lost Journal of Bram Stoker* is that it offers no eureka moment, no discovery that definitively explains where Stoker got the inspiration for his one and only masterpiece. To be fair, there was no way that it ever could, given that the journal was composed between 1871 and 1882, and ends nearly ten years prior to the publication of Stoker's first mature fiction and long before he began work on *Dracula*. So if not the genesis of *Dracula*, what does *The Lost Journal of Bram Stoker* give us? The accusation which some rather cruel critics have levelled at biographies of Stoker is that, for all the lurid extravagance and wild imagination of his fiction, it is almost impossible to make the man himself a figure of fascination or even sympathy. If anything, as with Le Fanu's public visage, what we do know about Stoker often makes him appear too normal, too dull to sustain interest. Like Le Fanu, the record seems to show that Stoker found his place in the world too easily, enjoyed too comfortable an existence, and this makes it impossible for him be a compelling character in his own right.

The Lost Journal of Bram Stoker does much to illustrate what a misconception this view of Stoker is. Its pages put us inside the head of a man who, for all the ease of his daily routine, was constantly, obsessively watchful for anything he might metamorphose into fiction, *anything* that would allow him to leave behind the dreariness of his position as a Clerk of Petty Sessions. Stoker was twenty-four when he began writing entries in his journal in August 1871, three months before he began penning the unsigned theatre notices which marked his first appearance in print. The sprawling mass of ideas for stories, characters, quotes, anecdotes and observations that he recorded in his journal really do give us the writer-in-the-making, a literary talent searching for something to fasten upon and make its own. It offers a potent and strangely poignant image of someone determined to use literature to set himself free.

Stoker expert Elizabeth Miller and Bram's descendant Dacre Stoker have done a highly competent job of putting this literary grab-bag into an orderly format. Rather than simply printing the entries in chronological order, they have wisely chosen to divide the book into nine sections, each devoted to Stoker's jottings on particular subjects. These range from books he thought he might write and meetings with friends and relatives, to his travel experiences and the scenes he encountered while

walking the streets of Dublin. While unobtrusive notes elucidate many of the references in the journal, there remains, perhaps inevitably after 140 years, a considerable number which leave the reader baffled. Despite this, in sections such as those containing the awkward maxims the young Bram wrote to himself ("Take care always that in acting as you think unselfishly you are not simply trying to rid yourself of responsibility"(p.277) and "Difficulties are like ghosts or wild animals. Look them steadily in the face and advance and they will recede" (p.270)) and his humorous sketches (for which he had no small talent), we are brought into more intimate contact with Stoker than, in many ways, we have ever been before.

Although they belonged to different generations and it is uncertain whether they ever even met, it's impossible to read these two books without considering Le Fanu and Stoker's similarities as men and as authors. What was it about their shared background and its effect on their personalities that led them to create such strange, mesmerising fiction? While these two books are fine commemorations of their talent, one cannot help but wonder what more can be done to mark Le Fanu and Stoker's contribution not only to Gothic literature but to the universe of popular culture which has benefitted richly from their dark imaginations? Surely Dublin, a city that already boasts monuments to so many literary figures, should delay no longer in erecting statues commemorating two men whose masterpieces of Gothic horror have had, and continue to have, a worldwide influence on the literature of the fantastic.

James Moriarty

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Isabella van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*
(Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012)

Sound can be disturbing. Unlike a visual image, a sound has no boundaries; it can be impossible to locate, to control or conceptualise. A sound can evoke a presence that is invisible and thus ghostly. It is this quality of sound that interests Isabella van Elferen: its "ambiguous relation with embodiment" (p.4). Sound is uncanny on various levels. A sound without a definite body can evoke the presence of the ghostly, while it can also bring back half-forgotten memories – haunting the hearer – by keying into long-standing conventions (for example the eerie sounds of children singing in film). Gothic sound/music, argues Elferen, disrupts linear time, or "enables listeners to

experience a time that is off its hinges, and with that a being that might be haunted, infinite, or simply unknowable" (p.10).

Elferen traces how sound and music operate across different Gothic media, ranging impressively from literature to film, and through television, game and Goth music. The virtual sounds of literature become actual in cinema, and invade the home through television and video games, while Goth music immerses its hearers in a culture. In framing the question of what makes music Gothic, Elferen emphasises the "functional" quality of music, rather than its "stylistic essence". She brilliantly interrogates how sound and music function across a range of Gothic texts, including how they produce certain effects such as contributing to a novel's ability to haunt its readers.

The first chapter is well grounded in Gothic literature, with a focus on ghost stories. Elferen considers how a novel's soundscapes contribute to its eerie mood, and how commonalities can be identified across such literary soundscapes. In particular, she considers sounds and music that typically lack a source, such as a rustling, a breathing, a creaking floorboard, sounds which in Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas* seem for a moment to have "no physical origin," to "be made by bodiless beings" (p.21).

In its attention to soundscapes, *Gothic Music* is in some ways reminiscent of John Picker's *Victorian Soundscapes* (OUP, 2003), one of the many books published in the past decade or so in the flourishing field of sound studies. Picker considers how sound operates in Victorian fiction, but where he engages throughout with how sounds are situated in their historical context (especially the scientific and technological developments of the time), Elferen's attention to sounds is primarily focused on the texts themselves. What this allows her to do is not only to reach beyond the single medium of literature but also to make connections between texts from different periods. Elferen moves in one paragraph from Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) to Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000), for example, novels which allow her to consider how silences as well as sounds can contribute to the eerie atmosphere of haunted houses. In her attention to the phenomenology of sound, Elferen considers, among other things, Don Ihde's argument that "silence is the basis of sound" (*Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (State University of New York

Press, 2007)). Sound emerges out of silence and returns to it, a phenomenon that is amplified in the suspenseful silences of Gothic literature: "Rusty hinges, growling corridors and nocturnal singing represent invisible entities waiting in silence, a silence that may hide invisible, bodiless beings" (p.25).

Sound's relation to the visible is an ongoing concern in *Gothic Music*. Film actualises both sounds and sights which literature can only describe and make imaginable. In its ability to make feared objects visible, to display the violence of mutilated limbs, or the cold corpse, film can create "horror" in a way that literary texts cannot, but Elferen is interested in "terror". Where horror generally involves a direct and visible encounter with the feared object, terror involves a degree of invisibility, of darkness or shadows, what Edmund Burke called "obscurity" (in his 1757 *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*). "To make any thing very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary," wrote Burke: "When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes. Every one will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread [...]". Elferen doesn't mention Burke, but his account resonates with her use of "terror" to refer to that which isn't visible. Gothic produces terror by "leaving the object of fear implicit, just outside perception," and it does so through sound (p.36). What is terrifying is an audible but unseen presence, located beyond the screen.

Elferen frames these discussions of the gothicised version of sound severed from its origins with deconstructionist ideas about the non-referentiality of language, and the foregrounding of mediation. She considers how the medium of literature itself contributes to its eerie effects, as by its very nature, it embodies the absence of the signified. The virtuality of sounds in literature adds to their ghostliness, much as the sound technologies used in film, by separating sound from its physical origin, transmitting voices without bodies, contribute to their capacity to haunt. Other media similarly enhance the Gothic effects they depict. Television and games add to the sense of the uncanny by "multiplying the spectres seen in the cinema and bringing them into viewers' own homes via the little box in the living room"; the homely thus becomes unhomely (p.73). This effect is enhanced by the "extra-diegetic level" of television and game music: "the musically created space *outside* the television set in the viewer's living room," whereby the sound of the television overlaps with the

domestic soundscape (p.77). Computer games invade the home in a more terrifying way as the player – or her/his projected doppelgänger – can not only see and hear but can interact with the spectres. Further, these spectres are digital in origin, which in contrast to analogue recordings of sounds originally existing in the world, need not refer to anything beyond themselves: "video game spectres are phantoms born from the algorithms of a lifeless machine" (p.100).

Elferen not only provides thorough and convincing theoretical frameworks for understanding the workings of sound and music in Gothic texts, but also illustrates her points through a series of rich, detailed examples, including the soundtracks of film and TV adaptations of Gothic novels, Hammer Horror films, the TV series *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991) and *Lost* (2004-2010), and the game *Ju-On: The Grudge* (2009) (based on the Japanese horror film and its Hollywood remake). The latter, for example, makes sparse use of sound, mainly consisting of the avatar's own sounds (her echoing footsteps, heartbeat, and breathing) and the surrounding soundscape (such as howling wind), while "the almost-silence" is periodically interrupted by "disembodied noises", including a death rattle indicating that the ghost is approaching. These sounds help to immerse the player through a kind of "Gothic Positioning System," suddenly breaking through the silence to "provide 3-D indications for gaming navigation" (p.120).

The final chapter on Goth music considers how the body itself becomes a medium: the Goth "becomes the *lived and embodied* destabilised Self that other Gothic media can only produce as a result of reading, viewing or gaming" (p.131). Elferen argues that through clothing, drinking, and dance in particular, the Goth performs and partakes in an alternative and ritualistic space that is Goth nightlife. Through music, participants are immersed in club life more completely than readers, viewers or gamers are immersed in novels, films or games, in part because music is a key part of sub-cultural identity (requiring knowledge and specific dance styles), and because "club music can be felt as well as heard." Drums and bass sounds contribute to the tactility of music, helping to "ensure a deep corporeal immersion in the temporary reality of a club night", along with clothing (wearing a tightly laced corset), drinking (absinthe) and other sensory experiences (smelling incense) (p.135).

Gothic music crosses various boundaries, but most importantly, it seems, those between pasts, presents and futures, through a mixture of haunting nostalgia (for