

BOOK REVIEWS

Christina Morin, *Charles Robert Maturin and the Haunting of Irish Romantic Fiction*
(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011)

Poor old Charles Maturin. Considered possibly insane in his lifetime, he has suffered almost two centuries of relative neglect in critical history. Very few have even heard of him, and those who have don't really care. His master work, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), often deemed the high point and climax of the "first wave" of the Gothic literary revival, is forbiddingly long and structurally complex, and the rest of his novels are obscure to the point of invisibility. Any time I have the courage to place *Melmoth* on any of the courses I teach, it is greeted with incomprehension by students who usually manage to get no further than the first hundred pages. I don't think Maturin is likely to get any more popular – most of his novels are, frankly, terrible (and terribly confused), their rhetorical force far exceeding anything required by the plot (though, as Morin shows here, this can often be for very interesting ideological reasons) – but he is still an important figure in Irish literary history and deserves more attention than he has received. At least, though, we now have a study that can be recommended without hesitation as the best place to start with this most frustrating (and yet, strangely endearing) of writers.

Christina Morin's study of the novels of Maturin is the most comprehensive and persuasive that I have read. The argument of the book is that Maturin's writings are symptomatic of the more general problems faced by Protestant Irish thinkers in their attempts to negotiate personal and social difficulties in the politically hostile environment of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain. Although the contention that the "Anglo-Irish" community had what Julian Moynahan refers to as a "hyphenated" identity is not a new one, and has become a central component of literary and historical analyses of this community, a thorough placing of Maturin in this analysis has not been provided before now. In this context, Morin is particularly good in her use of Jacques Derrida's notion of "hauntology" as a supplement to ontology. She demonstrates convincingly that Maturin himself was a "haunted" writer, haunted by the ghosts of Irish history, particularly the catastrophic and traumatic assaults on the Protestant minority since 1641; and also haunted by literary history, the degraded genre of the Gothic which stubbornly refused to die at the end of the eighteenth century. Morin expands this focus on Maturin to take in Irish Romanticism in much more general terms, suggesting that Maturin's work as a whole should be read as a test case demonstrating that most Irish writers of this period were themselves haunted by literary and political history. Although *Melmoth* itself has been the subject of a great deal of excellent critical work, Morin brilliantly demonstrates how the explicit Gothicism of that novel can be found intruding even in works such as *Women; or pour et contre* (1818), where characters drop like flies, memory has a corrosive effect on the present, and no happy ending for its protagonists is permitted. Morin challenges the conventional division between the national novel and the Gothic, proving that they bled into each other, and that critical attempts to maintain their separation lead only to misinterpretation.

I particularly liked the use Morin makes of ghostly metaphors, linking her own writing to Gothic tropes of return and recovery, and at times becoming almost Gothic herself. For example, Morin shows that, rather than depending parasitically on Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), Maturin's *The Wild Irish Boy* (1808) is an answer to and exorcism of the political and literary baggage bequeathed to Owenson's successors. The book does a very good job of tracing how narratives of romantic unity, and of individual

and national authenticity, are continually disrupted by the invasion of Gothic “moments,” leading to disruption and fragmentation rather than the longed-for security. Such disruption is shown to have social, national and (sometimes) cosmic consequences in the novels at hand. The book scrutinises intensely the discourse of the Union and the “Glorvina solution” to the tensions between England and Ireland, “Anglo-Irish” and “Gaelic” Ireland, which posits a potential source of national and individual wellbeing in a happy “companionate” marriage between the two sides of the binary. According to Morin, to this quasi-pornographic version of national union-as-marriage Maturin brings an alternative configuration of Gothic terror and chaos: rather than end in secure marriages, his novels typically gravitate towards female madness and fragmentation. Turmoil rather than stasis, and a language of nightmare rather than dream, characterise Maturin’s examinations of the national questions. If this existential crisis has its origin in the performative, “unreal” nature of Catholicism and the tyranny of colonisation (especially in *Melmoth the Wanderer*), the solution partly rests in the authenticity of the Protestant faith which is beyond ritual and theatricality.

Moreover, Morin argues that Maturin and his writings are themselves now “ghosts” haunting the Irish literary mind, ignored yet constantly returning in various forms, and that indeed there has been some very conscious “unMaturinising” of Irish literary history by authors, critics and literary historians. This argument is not particularly convincing, mainly because what Morin actually demonstrates is that it is really only Maturin’s best novel, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, which haunts. Although at times, it *is* Maturin who figures in literary history as a ghostly presence to contend with and even exorcise, much more often it is his dark hero whose extraordinary evocative power reaches beyond the 1820s. However, this in itself is an important point, and the slight rhetorical exaggeration that is indulged in throughout the final chapter does not detract from the book.

The book also closely examines Maturin’s paradoxical concerns with the effects of the novel of sensibility and the romance on women’s psychological development and men’s psychological stability. Maturin simultaneously feared that romance emasculated men, and yet wrote novels of intense sensibility and romance, thus directly contributing to the genre. Morin’s study compellingly traces what we might call a “gendered anxiety of influence” in Maturin’s literary development. Although primarily influenced by women – including Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson – Maturin tried to forge a homosocial bond with Sir Walter Scott in whom he recognised a similar pathology (as Scott attempted the “masculinisation” of the novel to rescue it from denigration as a “female form” for female readers). The result is that Maturin’s female characters are placed in an impossible situation in which they have to negotiate the proper balance between emotional frigidity and emotional excess, both being configured as highly damaging to both the nation and to the male characters around them.

One of the best elements of the book is its very convincing rebuttal of charges that Ireland is not really subject matter for most of Maturin’s fiction – a charge most recently made by Richard Haslam. Morin skilfully demonstrates that even in novels set elsewhere (such as *The Fatal Revenge* (1807), set in seventeenth century Italy, and *The Albigenses* (1824), set in thirteenth century France), Ireland is always haunting the textual margins, intruding like a (sometimes very unwelcome) poltergeist throwing the narrative furniture around. She excavates the “spectro-textual” references to Ireland in all the novels, and debunks the notion that allegory is the only method by which Irish politics could be coded into these narratives. This in itself is a major achievement.

I was very glad to see plot summaries included for each novel. These are fictions with some very complex plots and even those of us who have read Maturin’s work need some reminding of the various twists and turns indulged in by a writer addicted to plot pyrotechnics. The book is written in a fluid and

accessible style which will be appealing to undergraduate readers as well as Morin's peers. I was pleased to see a short biographical chapter and a chronology, as both help to orient the reader who is traversing unfamiliar ground (the vast majority of readers in this case). I do feel that the influence of Huguenot theology on Maturin's intellectual development and his view of the world could have been explored further, and also regret that a chapter on Maturin's plays and poetry (the few poems that have survived) was not included. However, given the emphasis on narrative throughout the study, it is appropriate that it is the fiction that gets attention.

This book is the second of two monographs concentrating on Maturin published in the last year. *Jim Kelly's Charles Maturin: Authorship, Authenticity and the Nation* (Four Courts, 2011) complements Morin's work, and together they are the best things ever written about this benighted figure. Morin's study is a very useful addition to a growing body of work on the "Irish Gothic," and also on Irish romanticism and literary unionism, while supporting the work being done by Ian Campbell Ross, Aileen Douglas and Moyra Hasslett on the early Irish novel. For this reason, the study is timely. Perhaps we are witnessing the beginning of a whole new interest in Maturin's writing (a cultural study of *Melmoth* would be very welcome indeed), though I doubt it. Thanks to this book, however, what is now very clear is that he is a much more complex and much less foolish presence in Irish literary history than has often been presumed.

JARLATH KILLEEN

Lisa K. Perdigao, *From Modernist Entombment to Postmodernist Exhumation: Dead Bodies in Twentieth-Century American Fiction*
(Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010)

Dig up a corpse and try to recreate in all its complexity the story of that person's life and death. No doubt, it won't be a simple task, the exhuming or the retelling, and the narrative will necessarily vacillate between two oppositions depending on the teller's representative choices: an attribution to the person's life and remains of some eternally significant symbolic meaning; and a preoccupation with the materiality of the body and its inevitable failure in death. It is exactly this narratological difficulty of providing commemorative closure for the dead that Lisa Perdigao examines in *From Modernist Entombment to Postmodernist Exhumation*.

According to her reading, the necessary authorial reliance on metaphor and metonymy to provide narrative closure to novels becomes problematic in twentieth-century American novels featuring burial or exhumation plots. The standard novelistic techniques of conclusion simply fail to give a satisfactory, multifaceted sense of dead characters' lives. Using "discursivity" and "materiality" interchangeably throughout *From Modernist Entombment* for the concepts of metaphor and metonymy, Perdigao effectively underscores the complexity of "writing the body" in both figurative and concrete language. Primarily because both of these linguistic representative strategies fail to give a totality of meaning to a buried or exhumed body, these narratives resist the full closure that readers would expect at a novel's close, which a traditional marriage plot could provide, for example. Considering how the representation of dead bodies throughout the century "shifts from figurations of burial to figurations of exhumation," Perdigao labours through a range of texts and their critical histories (at times in unnecessary detail) to demonstrate her stated goal of examining "why modern and postmodern writers turn to these tropes to negotiate the tension between the materiality of the body and the discursivity of language" (8). *From Modernist Entombment* argues, quite rightly, that these authorial strategies of encryption as acts of "entombment" and inscription indicate that figuration and commemoration of the dead matter significantly reflect changing cultural assumptions about the body in the twentieth century.

The texts around which Perdigao methodically structures her chapters guide the argument that the literary trope of entombment shifts from a totalising metaphoric transaction of disembodied discursivity, which seeks to conceal death in symbolic terms, to a metonymic acceptance and reconfiguration of the body as a material, interpretable text. Needless to say, this argument relies heavily on the poststructuralist body-as-text metaphor, as well as more recent body theory, drawing on, among others, Elizabeth Bronfen's focus on the complications brought about by the "gendered body, the superlatively beautiful, desirable *feminine* corpse," Tim Armstrong's conception of the body in modernity as a "site of crisis" and Carol E. Henderson's book *Scarring the Black Body: Race and Representation in African American Literature* (2002). *From Modernist Entombment's* close readings treat the narratological features and discursive/ metonymic strategies used to represent corpses in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* and *The Great Gatsby*, William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and *Sanctuary*, Willa Cather's *The Professor's House*, Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Jody Shields's *The Fig Eater*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Octavia Butler's *Kindred*, Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides*, Zora Neal Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.

The overarching goal of the readings, of what at first glance appears to be a disparate collection of novels, is to locate and 'mark a shift from a desire to conceal death to a desire to represent materiality, to rescue what is lost to figurative language in the process of memorialisation and transformation' (3). It is

precisely this range of texts that helps this book to show the pervasiveness of this thematic trend, as well as to argue convincingly that this shift occurs somewhere between what are considered modernist and postmodernist texts. To this end, Perdigao invokes Peter Brooks's assertion in *Body Work* that "[t]o know the body by way of a narrative that leads to its specific identity, to give the body specific markings that make it recognisable, and indeed make it a key narrative sign, are large preoccupations of modern narrative" (15). As *From Modernist Entombment*'s succession of examples illustrates, these marks and signs become more troubled and problematic when the bodies in question are gendered, racially other, skeletal, and even spectral.

Perdigao also recurrently employs Peter Brooks's *Reading for the Plot* as a foundation for her arguments, since his book argues that the overall novelistic masterplot treats bodies as objects of desire in narrative, which then narratologically structures the narrative through a progression of metonymies to arrive at a final totalising metaphor. As *From Modernist Entombment* demonstrates quite effectively, Brooks's masterplot does not hold for textual representations of dead bodies in modern and postmodern fiction, primarily because the dead body is a material reminder of loss; writers are therefore forced to choose either to represent the physical death through a chain of metonymies or to transform the death into the symbolic. It is also pertinent that, as Perdigao succinctly sums Brooks's point, "all narrative performs at the intersection between Eros and the death instinct" (65). For Perdigao, the burial trope neatly encompasses both of these requirements, as the death instinct is fulfilled by the spectacle of the corpse at the same time that narrative desire is focused upon re-presenting that body. While this theoretical masterplot provides an excellent point of departure for Perdigao's readings, unfortunately she relies too heavily upon reiterating the Brooksonian masterplot to build her argument.

In the first chapter, *From Modernist Entombment* anchors the initial terms of the modernist burial plot that attempts to finalise (while also problematising) a metaphorical transaction into a symbolic and idealised corpse using *This Side of Paradise*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Sanctuary* and *As I Lay Dying*. In *The Great Gatsby*, for example, Perdigao argues that Nick Carraway retrospectively narrates the events leading to Myrtle Wilson's death, her husband's, and Gatsby's, but the chain of metonyms leading to the final funeral allow Nick to secure a final transformative metaphor because of Gatsby's lack of bodily specificity. When Nick searches Gatsby's mansion for some sign of his life, he only finds a picture of Dan Cody, 'a token of forgotten violence' (34); however, this totality of metaphor is inaccessible to Nick for a description of Myrtle Wilson's dead body as figurative language fails him. Similarly, Addie Bundren in *As I Lay Dying* supplies the teleological drive of the plot as her family drives up to Jefferson to bury her body, but the dead female body troubles traditional male representations. The coffin that Addie is carted in functions at once as a metaphor, which each of the fifteen characters who recount the story piecemeal must invest with their own associations, and as a metonym associated with the mother and bringing the family together around her in united purpose. To further problematise Faulkner's refusal to secure the metonymic chain as a metaphoric closure, Perdigao discusses Addie's prosopopoetic voice — 'the illusion of voice, rather than its presence' (48) — as it enters the text seemingly from beyond the coffin, signalling a lack of finality which is usually indicated by bodily death.

Perdigao's fourth chapter develops especially strongly the idea of textual vacillation between the two poles of metaphor and metonym in postmodern fiction, using *Kindred* and *The Virgin Suicides*. Although the section on the latter text displays a few of the same problems of repetition from which the as a whole book suffers, it is perhaps the most clearly argued of the book, as Perdigao lucidly describes the narrators' struggles to represent the dead Lisbon girls through their adolescent memories. Their descriptions continually alternate between the almost mythical tales of Lux's promiscuity and the hard data of her gynecological report, one of the boys' "most prized possessions." Along with the "titillating numbers" of

the report is a photo of her cervix, which Perdigao successfully points out as one of the most problematic sites of the narrative. What seems to be most perfectly metonymic of Lux's sexuality and the boys' collective desire for her body is described by them as a simile: it is "like an inflamed eye, fixing us with its silent accusation" (119), underlying *From Modernist Entombment's* central argument regarding the circularity and continual tension between figurative and material representation of the body. Additionally, this section draws attention to the fact that the Lisbon girls remain unburied indefinitely because of the cemetery workers' strike, a similar "resistance" to burial as Addie's in *As I Lay Dying*, so that the difficulty of closure that the narrators experience in attempting to piece together a narrative of the five girls from memories and collected ephemera is embodied in the lack of finality that burying the Lisbon girls would have provided.

The final chapter draws on the book's underlying trajectory, which moves from examining texts authored by white, male canonical writers to African-American women writers with marginal reputations. Perdigao spends more space than necessary demonstrating the neglect of Zora Neal Hurston's body of work until the late '70s, though it is a necessary step in terms of showing that the purpose of *From Modernist Entombment's* trajectory is to open the body-as-text and exhumation metaphors, making them available to questions regarding critical literary history and canon formation. *From Modernist Entombment's* argument begins implicitly to shift focus to the problematics of race and class in the second chapter with the discussion of *Native Son*, but this sub-theme of the book is granted full attention with this chapter. Drawing on Alice Walker's critical writings and efforts to locate Hurston's unmarked grave so as to rehabilitate her literary reputation and give her a proper burial place, Perdigao strains the exhumation metaphor to argue that "the 'body' of Hurston literary criticism is inscribed within Walker's text" (140). She does recognise the inevitable failure of closing with this master metaphor of the text-as-body that she had noted was unsuccessful in the modernists' attempts to discursively represent a corpse (145), but here she seems to dig too deeply into the vague implications of her initial definitions to justify and append this chapter to an otherwise coherent group of readings. Shug Avery in *The Color Purple* is read as a re-embodiment of Hurston, and Shug's relationship with Celie is then a fictionalised version of Hurston and Walker's literary relationship.

In this way, the book's argument ends with a metatextual expansion that involves the fraught representation of fictional bodies and bodies of fiction. This expansion exposes tensions that become apparent from merging fictional, historical, and critical-biographical narratives into a postmodern novel that "tropes Hurston's tropes as well as troping Hurston criticism" (133). In the end, it is our use of language, both figurative and concrete, that will always fail to some degree in rendering "the body as a system of meaning *and* physical matter" (163, my italics), which is also perhaps part of the reason why this last chapter does not seem wholly successful.

The success of *From Modernist Entombment's* compelling argument and detailed textual evidence is somewhat stifled, however, by overreliance on critical reception histories for its contexts. Since the American modern and postmodern novels used result in such variance of time period, region, class, gender, and race, Perdigao on the one hand is able to demonstrate a widespread engagement with these representative strategies for death, but on the other hand is unable to account in any detail for historical or social specificities to which these texts relate. The book also seems as if it could have used another thorough-going editorial eye, as it was at times quite repetitive and often unclear, due to important plot or character details being unnecessarily withheld for several pages after they would have been most effectively employed for the reader to fully understand the line of argument. Additionally, extensive subsidiary arguments placed in footnotes were at times overwhelming, and rather than supplementing or clarifying the thrust of *From Modernist Entombment's* argument, detracted from the strength of

Perdigao's points. Regardless of these issues with readability, *From Modernist Entombment* does present a good survey of death and the body in these twentieth-century American texts and would make a good starting point for those seeking to further theorise the body and corpse in the American twentieth-century novel.

PHILIP KEEL GEHEBER

Dongshin Yi, *A Genealogy of the Cybergothic: Aesthetics and Ethics in the Age of the Posthuman*
(Surrey, England and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2010)

In literary criticism, “posthumanism” often confines itself to contemporary literature due to self-imposed limitations. Dongshin Yi’s study aims to link posthumanist theory to a selection of texts labelled as “Gothic,” largely through discussions of the cyborg that require a re-examination of the question of what it is to be human. The link used to join these two halves of the study is a reassessment of the role of the “sublime” in terms of Gothic aesthetics. What Yi aims to recover in classic novels such as *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* is an “aesthetics of the beautiful,” a slightly confusing term that Yi later clarifies as an aesthetics “that facilitates an uninterrupted correspondence between sensibility and judgment, or between feeling and reason” (41), which seems to mean a space of hybridity maintained by balancing the polarities of the Burkean beautiful and sublime.

From here, Yi moves on to more contemporary novels (Sinclair Lewis’s *Arrowsmith* and Marge Piercy’s *He, She and It*) to emphasise the role of gender in “scientific” discourse and to introduce the concept of “mothering,” which Yi sees as a key relationship for the development of a posthuman society. Despite its frequently convoluted arguments and its terminological impenetrability, both of which can at times be obstacles to comprehension, Yi’s study is creative in its attempt to explore the possibilities of posthumanism and ambitious in its scope, and the merging of posthumanism and Gothic studies is surely welcome to many.

The introduction, “Beyond ‘The Ruin of Representation,’” begins with two quotations from Foucault about *On the Genealogy of Ethics*. The first concerns the possibility of having an “ethics” that accounts for “the pleasure of the other,” and the second quotation does not seem to relate to the first at all, discussing the necessity of the rehabilitation of subjectivity in art. This is just one of the many confusing trains of thought in Yi’s study. Following the second, lengthier Foucault quotation, Yi argues that “An affirmation of ‘the pleasure of the other’ indeed takes both an aesthetical appreciation of pleasure and an ethical embrace of the other [...]” (1). This relationship between “aesthetics” and “ethics” dominates the introduction and the first two chapters, though the precise definition of either of these terms in Yi’s study never quite appears and this lack of clarity makes for perplexing reading throughout the first two chapters.

Yi’s intentions concerning the posthuman and the cyborg are well articulated, however, if not always well executed. He argues that an aesthetics of the posthuman must be one that turns away from the “sublime” and towards a receptive empathy. “The reason for pursuing an aesthetical ethics is quite simple,” Yi argues, “non-humans don’t speak our language. Incommunicable, they remain unknowable and uncontrollable, inciting our fear and hostility – feelings by which we pretend to know and control them” (1). Yi advocates a “pleasant reciprocity” with the nonhuman, with “the others” (1). This idea of “pleasant reciprocity,” or “sensibility,” is addressed through recourse to the female characters in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *Frankenstein* and, to an extent, *Dracula*, and is contrasted to “sublime” notions of fear and terror. Before the encounter with the non-human “cyborg” can be a productive one, Yi argues, the encounter with the “other” in these classic Gothic texts must be revisited and must be refocused to look towards the beautiful and the sensible instead of the abjectly terrifying.

Building on C. Jodey Castricano’s term “cybergothic” (which the reader only learns in a footnote – a problem that occurs often throughout the book), Yi defines “cybergothic” as a “literary genre that emphasizes the necessity of an imaginary/imaginative approach to posthumanism, the current discourses of which are limited by practicalities of technoscience and dictates of anthropocentrism and therefore,

incapable of envisioning an aesthetical ethics for non-humans” (3). These types of claims throughout Yi’s study are unfortunately rarely supported by examples or by clarifying sentences. Too often, the analysis that should accompany a sentence such as the abovementioned is relegated to a footnote and even then only takes the form of a quotation from another critic (also without any supporting discussion).

The definition of the “Gothic” in this study seems to be of an extrapolated encounter with “the other,” which, for this discussion of posthumanism, is apt, though vague. The sentence that seems to contain Yi’s explication of his use of the gothic convention does little to help the vagueness:

Giving birth to the cyborgothic is ultimately to impregnate the gothic literature whose revival later in the twentieth century in literature and other cultural media epitomizes the century’s persistent and productive (or counterproductive) engagement with the others, with the cyborg that appears in science fiction and claims our attention with its versatile (shape-shifting) utility and subversive potentiality (3).

This “engagement with the others” is what Yi uses to synthesise the two halves of his study. Focusing on gothic and horror fiction specifically due to their “lifting of categorical boundaries between humans and their Others,” as Rosi Braidotti argues (13), Yi makes some convincing points, but does not sufficiently address why *any type* of imaginative literature could not be discussed in a similar fashion. Yi attacks critics of Gothic literature and of “science fiction” (which he also defines, oddly, as “fiction concerned with the question of science and scientists in society”) who once believed the genres “not representative enough” (4), and applauds the twentieth-century attention to these two genres because of their political possibilities. This is an important point, and one that is very relevant, considering the role science fiction and the Gothic have played in recent conceptions of issues such as genetic engineering, climate change and cloning.

Indeed, in terms of its critical situation, Yi’s study does an admirable job providing overviews of posthumanist theory and discourse. In addition to informed discussions of foundational texts (such as N. Katherine Hayles’ *How we Became Posthuman*, Donna Haraway’s *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* and David Porush’s *The Soft Machine: Cybernetic Fiction*), Yi introduces each chapter with a relevant, engaging anecdote from discussions about the category of “human” from sources such as the Japanese roboticist Masahiro Moto (11), debates about a “thinking machine” from a 1949 lecture at the Royal College of Surgeons, England (39), discussions about eugenics (63) and a 2002 report from the President’s [George W. Bush’s] Council on Bioethics (93). This information is valuable for the political implications of posthumanist theory, and is usually presented in a clear and engaging manner.

Moreover, Yi’s analysis of the individual texts under scrutiny (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, Sinclair Lewis’ *Arrowsmith* and Marge Piercy’s *He, She and It*) is typically quite skillful, and some of the strongest sections of this study are his close readings of passages in these texts, especially the more popularised *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. Nevertheless, a focus on the “beautiful” dominates the discussion of both *Udolpho* and *Frankenstein*, and it is often difficult to keep track of the larger argument of the book. Yi’s study also has two distinct halves, and little is done to unite the two. For example, though each chapter opens with the anecdotes about posthumanism in a larger political context mentioned above (which extend into the first couple of pages of each chapter), this material never surfaces again in the chapter, not even as it comes to a close. The superb job Yi does in setting the theoretical approach for his chapters is therefore unfortunately often lost in the turgid, jargon-laden discussions of aesthetics.

The third chapter, “Van Helsing’s Dilemma: Science and Mill’s Utilitarianism,” is probably the strongest in the book due to a relatively clear connection between the close-readings of *Dracula*, the critical

framework, and the philosophy (primarily Mill, but also Locke) used to discuss the role of the sciences in a modernising society. This chapter examines what Yi refers to as a “scientifically organized” society (66) and contains much valuable analysis about the role of the sciences in Victorian culture (73-75). Yi also makes many thought-provoking points about *Dracula*, scientific discourse, and the culture which produced the two. There are still some questionable claims (“The battle between Burkean sensibility and Kantian judgment – or between the beautiful and the sublime, in the field of aesthetics – was won by the latter, signaling the end of gothic aesthetics and the beginning of modern aesthetics” (71)), but overall, this chapter is a rare moment of clarity in Yi’s study.

Throughout the study, one problem is the way in which Yi uses criticism; as previously indicated, too often, the reader is confronted with quotation after quotation of lengthy, undigested secondary material that further restricts readability of his work. This could not be more glaring in the fourth chapter, where even the very subject matter (Lewis’s book) was taken from another critic (Charles E. Rosenberg’s *No Other Gods: On Science and American Social Thought*) (96). The choice of *Arrowsmith* is odd given the canonical status of the previous texts, and the fact that it is not Yi’s own, makes this choice all the more strange. Like the lack of discussion surrounding much of the earlier criticism and philosophy, the decision to adopt Rosenberg’s idea also seems to point either to a lack of confidence with the material or to laziness. Such scholarly carelessness is also apparent, for example, when one goes to search for the G.K. Chesterton source in the bibliography from which Yi has quoted on page 64, only to find that “Chesterton,” who Yi characterises before the quote as “one of the earliest critics of eugenics” in his introduction to eugenics, is nowhere to be found.

That said, the fourth chapter, “A Humanistic Science in a Pragmatic Society: Re-Reading Sinclair Lewis’s *Arrowsmith*,” is overall a strong one, particularly in terms of its discussions of gender. It also sets the stage for the final chapter, “The Birth of the Cyborgothic,” which expands upon points originally made in the introduction and seemingly dropped for the remainder of the study. In this final chapter, Yi attempts to unite the disparate parts of the book, arguing that “The cyborg will help configure the tripartite partnership of posthumanism, where science, humans, and non-humans interface” (124), and concludes the book with an emphasis on the need for all humans to have “mothering” sentiments towards the cyborg, such as appears in the film *A.I.*, with which Yi’s book closes. While the final line of the book is downright silly (“No one has to be more human, or less human, to be a human in the age of posthumanism – one just needs to be as human as a mother” (144)), most of the arguments in this chapter do result in clarifying some of the intentions Yi seems to have had for the rest of the book. The need to reassess the importance of sensibility and compassion in early Gothic texts is highlighted and put into the context of more contemporary debates concerning the “human” and the posthuman, and eventually leads into a debate about how anything the human “constructs” must be treated with dignity.

Overall, though, while *A Genealogy of the Cyborgothic: Aesthetics and Ethics in the Age of the Posthuman* poses many provocative questions and makes a number of strong arguments, its density, clumsiness and, at times, downright unreadability, stand in the way of making this study successful.

ALISON LACIVITA

John Sears, *Stephen King's Gothic*
(University of Wales Press, 2011)

Having written such influential horror novels as *Carrie* (1974), *'Salem's Lot* (1975), and *The Shining* (1977), Stephen King can be said to have been effectively leavened into the contemporary Gothic tradition. Given his ongoing intertextual references to his predecessors in the tradition (Edgar Allen Poe, H.P. Lovecraft, Shirley Jackson), King is well aware of the Gothic properties of his work, and *Stephen King's Gothic* provides a welcome opportunity for a more sustained analysis of King's work in terms of the genre. John Sears, a Senior Lecturer in English at Manchester Metropolitan University, engages in a series of compelling close readings of King's works, spanning the last forty years.

During that time, there has been no small amount of King criticism, both scholarly and popular, and Sears distinguishes his approach by structuring his readings around the act of writing and what that act produces. These deceptively simple acts generate considerable anxiety throughout King's body of work, perhaps most memorably in novels such as *The Shining*, *Misery* (1987), and *The Dark Half* (1989), and the novella *Secret Window, Secret Garden* (1990). In *Stephen King's Gothic*, Sears engages in a wide-ranging exploration how King has, over the course of his career, made use of the Gothic in his horror fiction, by taking as case studies a number of King's most well-known works.

Sears begins Chapter 1 with questions surrounding what it would mean to re-read an author such as Stephen King; that is to say, an author many have placed (rather dismissively) at the "popular" end of the literary continuum. Sears speculates on the demands made on the reader engaging in the act of rereading King's *oeuvre*, termed by Sears as an "immense and complex textual space." The repetition involved in multiple readings of King is skillfully advanced by Sears as Gothic in itself, revealing what the text and its previous readings may have concealed. Yet this repetition created by re-reading is accompanied by the repetition of revisiting and then rewriting, with King not only drawing influence from earlier writers in the Gothic mode but also publishing revised and expanded versions of previously published novels, including *The Stand* (1978) and *'Salem's Lot*. Sears also considers the crucial nature of writing in King's Gothic, a means of determining social relations also imbued with what Sears refers to as a "spectral authority over death," with the Gothic acts of resurrection and repetition becoming evident in King's work even at the formal level. Sears then surveys Gothic otherness in King's work, with horrific difference turning up in such gendered, racialised, and sexualised forms as the uncanny or monstrous. Suggesting new methods for reading King, Sears provocatively establishes King's relationship to the Gothic tradition, while also pointing out the generic hybridity of King's writing and its reinvention of existing genres, a characteristic shared with the Gothic more generally.

Chapter 2, "*Carrie's Gothic Script*," offers a close reading of King's first published novel, establishing King's Gothic concerns, evident even in this early work. *Carrie*, written in epistolary form, is advanced by Sears as demonstrating a self-reflexive and Gothic-infused emphasis on both reading and writing. Premised upon telepathy as a form of communication, *Carrie* repeatedly depicts the contrast between the mundane, contemporary world of the high school and the small town of Chamberlaine, Maine, and the uncanny domestic space inhabited by Carrie White and her religious-fanatic mother. "Disinterring, Doubling: King and Traditions," the third chapter, further locates King within the Gothic tradition through an analysis of the act of writing in King's *The Dark Half* and *Secret Window, Secret Garden*, from the collection *Four Past Midnight*. Chapter 4, "Genre's Gothic Machinery," reads *The Tommyknockers* (1987) as Gothic science fiction, with the presence of not only Gothic SF but Gothic romance, Gothic crime, and Gothic comedy, indicating again the genre's long-standing tendency (shared with King and his

work) towards generic hybridity . This chapter is particularly provocative in its expansion of critical approaches to King and the Gothic itself.

Sears further explores King's relation to the Gothic, addressing the act of reading in Chapter 5, "*Misery's* Gothic Tropes," where he analyses *Misery*, suggesting the novel's central concern with the horror of mis-reading, through either over- or under-reading (through, for example, a failure to grasp King's textual allusions to Gothic literature, a failure that symbolically links the reader to *Misery's* antagonist, Nurse Annie Wilkes). Meanwhile, Chapter 6, "Gothic Time in *The Langoliers*," subjects *The Langoliers*, a novella from *Four Past Midnight* (1990), to another close reading, this one involving Gothic notions of time, in its past, present, and future incarnations within the ideological context of the U.S. in the late 1980s. Sears deserves applause for advancing *The Langoliers* as his primary text for this kind of analysis, eschewing more familiar novels in favor of a novella. In Chapter 7, "*This Inhuman Place*: King's Gothic Places," Sears examines the importance of place in King's work, particularly the geography of Maine in which so much of his writing is set, and how place both contains and fails to contain the uncanny through a reading of *The Shining*. Finally, Chapter 8, "Facing Gothic Monstrosity," theorises the face of the monster in King's Gothic, where monstrosity is repeatedly gendered as feminine, although this seems familiar ground in the wider context of King criticism generally. The ninth and final chapter, "Conclusion: King's Gothic Endings," briefly considers the impossibility of textual closure within King's Gothic narratives, where the conclusion is marked as both "ending" and "not-ending."

Employing a primarily psychoanalytic framework, Sears nevertheless is able to adopt a surprisingly diverse and innovative series of perspectives regarding Gothic aspects of Stephen King's work (the most effective chapters are those in which Sears reads *The Tommyknockers* as Gothic SF and his analysis of *The Langoliers*). At the same time, the author's continued attention to writing as a "Gothic act" emerges as one of the book's weaker aspects, giving the reader the sense that this critical concern might have been more effectively integrated into the book as a whole. While impressively thorough and critically sound, Sears' close readings at times feel too close, resulting in the over-emphasis of some points (particularly regarding lexical analysis). A pronounced academic tone, while appropriate to the material, will easily overwhelm and put off more general readers through its sheer density, significantly decreasing the potential audience for *Stephen King's Gothic*. Sears is to be commended, however, for producing a full-length study of King and the Gothic that takes its material, both King's "popular" writing and the horror genre itself, as worthy of literary criticism.

DREW BEARD

Bianca Del Villano, *Ghostly Alterities: Spectrality and Contemporary Literatures in English*
(Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2007)

In a 1999 essay called “The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the ‘Spectral Turn,’” Roger Luckhurst coined the term “spectral turn” to describe a then (and perhaps still) current moment in which cultural and critical theory reflects on questions of spectrality, haunting and ghostliness. The spectral turn is conventionally dated to the 1993 publication of Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* (translated into English in 1994) and the inauguration of the notion of “hauntology,” Derrida’s punning neologism that uses ghost imagery to deconstruct being and absence. The Spectral Turn also encompasses works by writers like Jean-Michel Rabaté, Avery F. Gordon, Carla Jodey Castricano, Ashok Kara, Julian Wolfreys, Jeffrey Sconce, Gray Kochlar-Lingren, Gabriele Schwab, Christine Berthin and more. While these works should not be entirely homogenised, they show a remarkable consistency in terms of how the figure of the ghost has a privileged power to represent (among other subjects) the gap between body and spirit wrought by modern technologies of transmission and recording; the persistence of suppressed and traumatic histories within the living present; the vagaries of time; and the ghostlike posture of all those who are unseen and unacknowledged by those in power.

Bianca Del Villano’s *Ghostly Alterities: Spectrality and Contemporary Literatures in English* (2007) represents one of the more readable and insightful contributions to this body of scholarship, and to a scholar with an interest in the spectral turn and its claims, it will prove a vital work. The alterities referred to in the title, according to Del Villano, lead “to the encounter of different worlds, i.e. different mental spaces in different temporalities [...]. I would like to show how the threshold between the two realms can actually dilate, blurring the previous contours and margins, in order to interrogate the reasons why we seem to need these boundaries and what are the historical, psychic, cultural constructions which have produced them” (23).

Drawing especially on Derrida and Avery Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters* (1997), as well as Freud’s familiar essay on “The Uncanny” (1919), *Ghostly Alterities* adds to a branch of the spectral turn that relates ghostliness to issues in postcolonial and racial studies. In fact, I find it unfortunate that the book’s title does not signal its focus on race and postcolonialism; as such it might evade the gaze of the scholars to whom it would be most useful. Broadly defined, the branch of the spectral turn that *Ghostly Alterities* inhabits could also be said to include books by Teresa Goddu, Kathleen Brogan, Renée Bergland, Gerry Turcotte, Tabish Khair, Marisa Parham, Bliss Cua Lim, Glen M. Mimura and Katrin Althans. At a slender 179 pages, Del Villano’s book deals almost entirely with six novels: J.M. Coetzee’s *Foe* (1986), Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* (1991), Pat Barker’s *The Ghost Road* (1995), Patricia Grace’s *Baby No-Eyes* (1998) and Vivienne Cleven’s *My Sister’s Eye* (2002). There are, however, also brief but fascinating treatments of older works like *Hamlet* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*; in her discussions of the latter, Del Villano does a particularly good job of revealing how the slave trade underpins Coleridge’s ghost ship imagery. Del Villano is interested in the ways in which “our time presents itself as a spectral time. The postcolonial awareness of a common (for the West and for the ex-colonies) past of Imperialism and slavery has led to the necessity to re-think the terms of an official history constructed on the marginalization of the weak and the minorities” (5). In contrast to the classical ghost story, where the ghost must be put to rest in order to restore systemic order, Del Villano holds that “[p]ostmodern and postcolonial ghosts [...] aim at [the system’s] destabilization [...] in contrast, it leads the characters and us readers to interrogate the reasons why the time is out of joint” (8).

In addition to the introduction, which provides as straightforward a survey of the existing material on ghosts, postmodernism and postcolonialism as could be hoped for, *Ghostly Alterities* consists of three

long chapters and a brief conclusion. Each chapter deals with a number of the novels mentioned above. The first, “The Eye and I: Visuality, Subjectivity and Textuality” deals with the play of ghosts on the edge of visibility and invisibility, and the relationship of this dynamic to the white gaze and the black body. The second, “Melancholic (G)hospitality,” figures the ghost as a signifier of melancholia, as a signifier of loss that cannot ever be entirely overcome. Del Villano relates the relationship between the haunted and the ghost to the host-guest relationship in Derrida’s works on hospitality. The last chapter, “Uneven Roads: The Courses of History” deals with gaps in history, both personal and official, and how the spectral occupies them. Del Villano’s observations are never less than shrewd, and the book should be praised for its lucidity and its refusal to drape its points in the obscuritarian language that afflicts much of the works allied with the Spectral Turn.

It is worth noting that only a minority of the novels that Del Villano analyses deal with “literal,” supernatural ghosts rather than more conceptual or metaphorical kinds of haunting. In some cases, intellectual gymnastics are necessary to read a given novel as one about the spectral. These are also all works of what is sometimes termed “high literature,” two by Nobel-prize winning novelists; one wonders where Del Villano’s inquiries would have taken her if she had also drawn on, say, Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), Richard Matheson’s *Hell House* (1971), Peter Straub’s *Ghost Story* (1979) and Ramsay Campbell’s *Nazareth Hill* (1997).

Beyond this, one issue that *Ghostly Alterities* skirts almost entirely is language. The title of the book stresses “Literatures in English,” and all the books discussed within are Anglophone, albeit from authors from a variety of countries, including Great Britain, the United States, South Africa, Nigeria and New Zealand. But why should this conceptual field be limited to English-language novels? Is it just a matter of convenience, or is there something about the English language which lends itself to treating spectral matters in a certain way? Del Villano’s early interrogation of the *O.E.D.* definitions of the words “ghosts,” “phantasm,” “spectre” and “phantom” suggests that the latter may be the case, but it remains an undeveloped thread in this book.

Another of the book’s frustrations (one for which the blame lies with its publisher, not its author) is its lack of an index. In my view at least, academic books are not meant simply to be read, but to be consulted, and the lack of an index limits a book’s usefulness in this regard. This would be less of a problem if the book were available in full text on Google Books, but no such luck. If I were king of the world, I would make publishing an academic book without an index a capital offense. And even for those with a high tolerance for postmodern wordplay, “(G)hospitality” may seem to be a bridge too far. I’m not even sure how one would say it out loud.

MURRAY LEEDER

Darryl Jones, Elizabeth McCarthy and Bernice M. Murphy (eds.), *It Came From the 1950s!: Popular Culture, Popular Anxieties*

(Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan)

When we think of the 1950s, our imaginations fill with a curious collection of contradictory images. At first we have a vision of a time of peace and stability, an idyllic era following on from the most destructive war in human history. We also, at least in the case of America, have an image of plenty, a superabundance of jobs, money, homes and food, of flashy saloon cars, domestic gadgets and countless more luxury items created to satiate a crazed new desire to consume. The 1950s also strikes one as an age of overweening confidence, when the interests of politicians and the people were apparently one and the same, and grand projects like the construction of highways in the USA and the development of the National Health System in the UK could be accomplished. Indeed, the vision which instantly ricochets through the mind when one thinks of the 50s is still that of the neatly dressed, wide-eyed and perpetually smiling nuclear family, the carefree inheritors of a shiny brave new world.

Leaking through this pretty picture is an image of the other 1950s, the *real* 1950s. This was a time of relentless fear and uncertainty, of rampant paranoia and conservatism generated by a new breed of conflict, the Cold War. Barely concealed by a mask of material wealth and wholesome values was a realm of psychological trauma, of doubt, of deep existential despair and mass-tranquilisation. The happy nuclear family was a unit constantly in danger of being split apart by the frustration of parents and the alienation of the young. This was a world in which everything lay in the shadow of the Atomic Bomb's mushroom cloud and the human race awoke each morning not knowing if this would be the day which saw the world reduced to ashes.

It is therefore highly appropriate that the introduction to this brilliant and screwball collection of essays should, borrowing a title which Leonard Bernstein borrowed from W.H. Auden, classify the 50s as an *Age of Anxiety*. A multifarious study of 50s' culture has long been needed because, like the Victorian era, it was a fascinatingly schizoid age in which one world and its mirror image seemed to co-exist, and in which a surface of progress and revolutionisation hid from view a violent, regressive reality. This volume presents the 1950s in all their confusing glory, and three smart editorial decisions have contributed to making it such a complete survey of its subject. Firstly, while the book confirms that the 1950s was "the first authentically American decade," it holds that the different and yet sometimes strangely similar experiences of Britons form an equally valid story. For this reason the book's cultural analyses are neatly divided between those devoted to American subjects and British ones.

Secondly, this book considers every variety of cultural phenomena – fiction, poetry, cinema and television – in order to reveal the multitude of ways in which the anxieties of the 50s manifested. After all, this age of anxiety was one whose fears "operated across traditional aesthetic hierarchies and genre boundaries" and reached "an enormous audience made up of highly disparate interpretive communities." Thirdly, this volume regards the 1950s not as a tightly defined time period but rather as a nebulous phase of massive cultural upheaval and diversification. The first signs of this change appeared before the 1950s even began and its effects persisted well into the next decade. Therefore, to assess the significance of this shift, *It Came from the 1950s!* looks at the extended cultural epoch known as the "long 1950s."

The eleven essays in this collection cover a startlingly wide selection of topics. From bomb shelters to bullet bras, from domesticity to demons, from Frankenstein to food advertising, from masculinity to mutants, not a single important feature of 50s' cultural landscape has escaped these authors. A fine job has been done to balance the different subjects, so that every cultural form gets its share of attention. It's

also astonishing how each one provides a distinct perspective on the 50s, so that as a totality the book offers a remarkably detailed and vivid portrait of the era. Moreover, the roll-call of contributors is incredibly impressive. Distinguished scholars and noted experts like David J. Skal, Christopher Frayling and Kim Newman are just some of the names on a list bursting with luminaries.

While the 1950s was a decade characterised by many different tensions, a strong argument can be made that these were all symptoms of the same disease, as all were related to the disaster of World War II. Just as the First World War had followed survivors home from the trenches, so the horrors of World War II drastically overshadowed the societies that emerged after it. The destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had demonstrated that an almighty new weapon existed which could at any moment exterminate all life on Earth. Living with the daily awareness that, if war broke out again, mankind would be annihilated in a heartbeat is something contemporary readers cannot begin to comprehend, and it's no surprise that an obsession with the Bomb, and a newfound distrust of science, crept into 1950s culture in many ways.

This makes David J. Skal's essay "A-Bombs, B-Pictures, and C-Cups" an excellent starting point. Skal writes that the A-Bomb's detonation was the nail in the coffin for hopes of a scientific utopia and "gave startling new life to ancient ideas" about man's interference with nature. Myths and legends from Prometheus and Pandora's Box to Faust, Frankenstein and the Fall of Man were refurbished in a series of films dealing with scientific doomsdays. Whether the threat came from outer space, from underground or beneath the sea, Skal argues that all of these movies betray a preoccupation with guilt and sin. He also notes that in many of them the monster is man. The 1950s saw the rise of the figure of the "Mad Scientist" as uncertainty grew about "the scientific, technological and military juggernaut that was engulfing the world."

Kim Newman's essay, "Mutants and Monsters," continues in this nuclear vein. Newman challenges the view that the seemingly infinite number of monster movies made in the 50's were all variations on the "nature takes revenge" theme, instead arguing that they present a surprisingly complex range of reactions to the rise of nuclear power and atomic testing. Ever the man prepared to venture excitedly into shadowy regions of cinematic obscurity most of us leave alone, Newman compares the merits of films like *Attack of the Crab Monsters* and *The Monster That Challenged the World* to prove his case. He also shows how several bleak British and Japanese movies gave a sceptical and even despairing response to America's development into the Atomic superpower.

Mark Jancovich and Derek Johnson's essay focuses on many of the same movies as Skal's and Newman's, such as *Them!*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *The Thing from Another World* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, and it too offers a new interpretation of these classics. Unlike sci-fi novels and television series, where the author was regarded as the creative imagination responsible for the work, the sci-fi movie was primarily seen as a showcase for the talents of the special effects artist. In Jancovich and Johnson's view, a wizard like Ray Harryhausen was the real "star" of these films not because his creations were convincingly lifelike but rather because of his "capacity to create spectacular and off-beat fantasies."

If the cinema provided the most graphic projections of 50s' neuroses, the printed page remained a powerful witness to the more insidious insecurities of the time. In her fascinating essay, Lorna Piatti-Farnell examines how Sylvia Plath's writing attests both to "the formation of a contemporary consumer identity in American society" and to Plath's "desire to create a 'perfect' domestic space." By decoding the semiotics of 50s' food advertising and the iconography of the 50s' kitchen as these appear in *The Bell Jar*, Piatti-Farnell gives an powerful reading of Plath's work as preoccupied with the image of

the consuming woman trapped within a frightening Gothic space in which she is viewed as an object to be consumed and where her body is something to be feasted upon like meat.

Robert Bloch, a writer whose quirky short-stories are criminally underestimated, is the subject of a fine essay by Kevin Corstorphine. Although they originally appeared in gore-splattered and sensational horror and sci-fi magazines, Corstorphine believes that Bloch's 1950s' tales cunningly subverted the exploitative, misogynist attitudes of these publications. Corstorphine argues that they are studies of the two anxieties which troubled men most deeply in the 1950s, their anguish at their inability to find an identity in the Post-War world and the incestuous nature of their creativity, embodied in their need to cannibalise the work of father-figures as a crude way of compensating for their inability to create *ex-nihilo* like women. As a writer "self-reflexively aware of his own anxieties and those of his readers," Bloch was, according to Corstorphine, extremely innovative in his use of the "narrative of psychology to construct plot," a skill Bloch would demonstrate best in *Psycho*.

Another writer particularly attune to the unease of her age was Shirley Jackson, the subject of a superb essay by Dara Downey. Downey focuses on the hitherto overlooked connection between Jackson's fiction and the "Myth and Ritual" school of American anthropology which, by the mid-50s, had become the last word in literary interpretation. Downey argues that even though Jackson's writing makes "explicit use of the archetypes and quasi-mythical plots" that this school of anthropology sought to identify, her deployment of these motifs and ideas stemmed from a desire to "complicate, rather than create a coherent, unified mythology around, the relationships between women, houses and wider social structures of belonging." By looking at two of Jackson's most famous novels, *The Haunting of Hill House* and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, Downey's incisive essay illustrates how Jackson's fictions occupy "a realm other than that of absolute reality." Her belief that they must be *read* rather than *explained* proves once again that Jackson is a figure whose works are vital to any discussion of modern Gothic literature.

Elizabeth McCarthy's snappily titled "Fast Cars and Bullet Bras" is an equally revealing piece of scholarship. McCarthy hilariously explains how Rock 'n Roll was diagnosed as a "communicable disease" by so-called medical experts whose views were popularised by a media keen to disguise the fact that juvenile delinquency was mainly a consequence of poverty. Unlike her male counterpart, the female juvenile delinquent was handed over not to the police but to psychoanalysts to be cured of her moral sickness. This "lawless female" was a subversive figure whose supposedly voracious sexual appetite meant that she posed a deadly threat to clean-cut American youths of both genders, and McCarthy illustrates how this figure's sexual aggression even saw her transformed, in the fevered imaginations of artists, into a bizarre human-car hybrid and a living weapon!

If there was plenty to be afraid of in 50's America, over in Blighty a new generation of fear-makers were going into production and the three articles on British horror in *It Came From the 1950s!* are among its highlights. Wayne Kinsey's essay on the early days of Hammer, "Don't Dare See It Alone!," shows how the studio turned the X-certificate into a source of box-office gold, and its history of the battle of wits between movie producers and the British Board of Film Censors (told through a series of juicy extracts from their correspondences) is extremely amusing. If ever there was someone in a position to explain the cultural significance of Hammer's resurrection of Dracula in the form of Christopher Lee, it is Christopher Frayling and his essay is, as one would expect, a *tour de force* of scholarship, humour and perspicacity. What both of these contributions manage to do is to recapture the shocking impact these original Hammer films had on their 50s' audience, to remind de-sensitised modern readers of what made them so controversial and so successful.

Released in 1957, the same year as Hammer's revolting first foray into the Gothic, *The Curse of Frankenstein*, Jacques Tourneur's *Night of the Demon* could not have been a more different kind of beast. Darryl Jones's expert dissection of this classic explores the subtle interplay of forces and themes that make this a more intriguing and haunting horror film than Hammer could ever have dreamed of. Tracing the film's development from its origins in M.R. James's tale "Casting the Runes" to its troubled post-production, Jones reads *Night of the Demon* as a clash of civilisations in which Dana Andrews' rationalist psychologist, the smarmy embodiment of American materialist arrogance, is taught that the powers of darkness are all too real by Niall MacGinnis's genteel, trickstering warlock. Jones also elucidates the film's unsettling depiction of Britain as a twilit bastion of ancient beliefs and shadowy Old-World practices, precisely the quality that still makes *Night of the Demon* such a nightmarish experience, and it's to this volume's credit that it should devote proper space to the horror film increasingly acknowledged as the greatest ever made in the British Isles.

The relentless nostalgification of the 1950s and its frequent depiction as a cosy, complacent age is something many contemporary filmmakers have deconstructed, and the era's curious cinematic afterlife is examined by Bernice Murphy in her essay, "Re-Imagining the Fifties." By considering two well-chosen "50s" movies, Todd Haynes's melodrama *Far from Heaven* (2002) and Andrew Currie's zombie comedy *Fido* (2006), Murphy takes a penetrating look at how these films exploit the "slippage" "between the way in which the decade is mediated to us through the television and movies of the decade itself and how it actually was." With Neo-Conservatives constantly trying to convince us that the 50s was the time when life in America came closest to perfection, Murphy rightly observes that we must not forget that their version of the decade, like many movie-world versions, is a fantasy "in which the era's institutionalized racism and sexism, are glossed over, and apparently minor historical details such as the threat of nuclear annihilation and the near-fascistic excesses of the McCarthy era go conspicuously unmentioned." The value of these deconstructions, Murphy believes, lies in the fact that they remind us that the 50s was the time "when many of the most troubling – as well as the most admirable – aspects of modern American life were established."

It Came From the 1950s! fills in one go a substantial gap in popular culture studies. Unlike so many academic collections, not one essay in this volume seems lightweight or unoriginal, and there is a pleasing sense of cohesion about the whole enterprise. Furthermore, the writing on display is unusually witty (the best joke of all being the book's subtitle: "Popular Culture, Popular Anxieties") and the volume bounces along so effortlessly that you wish it were twice as long. However, what really makes *It Came From the 1950s!* a success is the obvious affection the contributors have for their subject and it's rare to see enthusiasm shine from the pages of an academic work as clearly as it does here. A bold start for the considered appreciation of 50's popular culture, *It Came From the 1950s!* is sure to stimulate plenty more debate and discussion.

EDWARD O'HARE

Ed Cameron, *The Psychopathology of the Gothic Romance: Perversion, Neuroses and Psychosis in the Early Works of the Genre*

(Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2010)

The first thing that must be said about Ed Cameron's intriguing new book, *The Psychopathology of the Gothic Romance*, is that it's surprising that it was not written years ago. After all, the foundational Gothic texts have been the subject of every other kind of interpretation imaginable, from Marxist critiques to New Historical analysis, so why not a psychopathological one? Indeed it has always been assumed that there is an affinity between these texts and psychoanalysis, that Gothic fictions contain in however crude a form some kind of comment or statement about the nature and functioning of human mental life. Isolated aspects of key Gothic texts have already been interpreted in Freudian, Jungian and Lacanian terms, often with spectacular results, but what Cameron argues here is that there has been an abundance of "armchair psychology" floating about in Gothic criticism and a notable failure to subject Gothic literature to a real "psychoanalytic investigation."

Too often, Cameron argues, have critics labelled Gothic villains "psychopathic" or Gothic heroines "hysterical" without paying proper attention to "the underlying structure of these distinct pathologies." In fact, he sees Gothic texts as offering up entire worlds of perversion, neurosis and psychosis which have yet to be looked at from an actual psychoanalytic perspective. Therefore, what Cameron proposes in this book is to put the Gothic "on the couch," to undertake "a close examination and literary analysis of the underside of the Gothic with detailed attention to and a focused knowledge of the clinical categories of psychoanalysis." As Cameron reminds us, Freud believed that it was storytellers who first brought the unconscious to light through their powers of symbolic representation. For this reason he too is convinced that psychoanalysis can be said to remain "latent within [a] literary text." Cameron contends that an assessment of how Gothic fiction, the branch of literature most concerned with "revealing what is darkly seen," makes manifest the workings of the unconscious is something that could be of great value both for literary critics and psychoanalysts.

This is a Lacanian study and in that respect it is not without precedent. Cameron acknowledges that other recent volumes, by Dale Townshend and Fred Botting, have moved along similar lines but he argues that they were either confused in their use of Lacan's famously slippery concepts or misrepresented them in order to further their arguments. For this reason he declares that this is the first true dialogue between these three phenomena – clinical psychoanalysis, early Gothic fiction and psychopathology. Cameron also claims that this approach to Gothic criticism is the only one which can truly get to the heart of the anxieties that underly these works. Following Slavoj Žižek, he believes that allegorical "realist" readings of early Gothic novels cannot comprehend their most vital quality, which is their "essential sublime uncanniness." Lacanian psychoanalysis alone, with its notion of *jouissance* as the emergence of reality within symbolisation, can adequately deal with the Gothic novel's excessive, overflowing, uncanny sublimity.

Cameron insists that the early Gothic texts he analyses are "Romances" rather than just novels and this distinction is crucial. Romances, which privilege "the pleasures of the imagination over moral instruction," are a literary form whose uncanniness represents an attempt to figure "that which makes all realistic interpretation falter." As novels obsessed with the intrusion of the past into the present, romances tap into a "pre-symbolic mode of significance," a pleasure which is "an aesthetic approximation of the psychoanalytic concept of *jouissance*." The uncanny is, for Cameron, a reminder of our original lost object, the negative representation of that which can only be represented but which has no inherent

meaning. It is the enjoyment of that which lies beyond the pleasure principle; it is the sublime pleasure born of the imagination.

The Psychopathology of the Gothic Romance is divided into six chapters, three devoted to comparisons of the Gothic and psychoanalytic theory and three to psychoanalytic readings of individual Gothic texts. The three romances in question are Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Ann Radcliffe's *The Sicilian Romance* and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, while the book concludes with a brief look at James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Unlike numerous other studies, which can often be impenetrable, Cameron's utilisation of Lacanian concepts in *The Psychopathology of the Gothic Romance* is admirably clear and this is an accessible volume for Lacan novices and an insightful illustration of his ideas for those whose studies have reached a more advanced level. Cameron's discussions of the four romances are notably lucid even if his writing style is achingly humourless and his conclusions are not always as convincing as he would like.

The Castle of Otranto receives most of the attention in this book not only because of its status as the inaugural Gothic Romance but because it provides the most complete model or blueprint of a Gothic fiction. Cameron devotes the first chapter to the preface to the book's second edition, which he calls a "Gothic manifesto." In this, Walpole triumphantly announced the unleashing of what Cameron calls "the two-headed gothic monster," a literary hybrid which saw the uncanny erupt out of eighteenth-century realist literature. Cameron sees Walpole's romance as representing a battleground between two forces, the "allegorical trend to tame the uncanny" and the "psychoanalytic attempt to recognize the truly uncanny nature of the Gothic." *The Castle of Otranto's* combination of ancient improbability and modern realism leads Cameron to deem the book "an early literary attempt to point out the uncanny dimension pertaining to the very project of modernity, not in order to make it disappear, but in order to maintain it, to hold it open." It was a work whose entire *raison d'être* was to make obvious "the Enlightenment's own internal limit, its own inherent inconsistency."

As Cameron describes it, *The Castle of Otranto* is "the one Gothic narrative that possesses all the gadgets and machinery that sustained the genre for the following 60 years." Walpole's romance had all the right parts but, to use a contemporary vulgarism, it didn't necessarily know what to do with them. Despite being underdeveloped and chaotic, the book is alive with a relentless sense of enjoyment which is, as Cameron observes, the rampant, insatiable enjoyment of a perverse subject. Indeed, "polymorphous perversity" is the only term that for Cameron encapsulates the insufficient level of maturity which renders *The Castle of Otranto* incapable of providing an accurate and coherent representation of reality. In its depiction of Manfred's ruthless campaign to maintain his power in face of a prophecy of doom, what the text really articulates, according to Cameron, is Walpole's refusal to move beyond his obsessive enjoyment of "a too proximate relation to the mother as a figure of the lost past." The "immature jumble" of meaningless symbols displayed in *The Castle of Otranto's* regressive and confusing supernatural imagery is a testament to Walpole's inability to give up writing purely for enjoyment and enter the modern age. How appropriate that the first Gothic nightmare, the book from which all other Gothic romances sprang, should itself be the product of an infantile fantasy?

Cameron believes that the maturation process of the Gothic romance was marked by a split between terror and horror. The difference between the two (which Cameron claims was simultaneously formulated by the mysterious writer Miss Aiken in her essay *On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror* and Anne Radcliffe in the posthumously published essay *On the Supernatural in Poetry*) is that between narratives which rely on "a positive object of fear" and those which "create only an anxiety-producing atmosphere where uncertainty and suspense rule." The mature Gothic Romance is one in which terror ultimately

leads to horror because the uncertainty and apprehension produced by an atmosphere of obscure and indefinite menace was something from which the reader needed to escape. The way to achieve this catharsis was to produce a horrifying object which, though shocking, would relieve the tension caused by the unknown.

The Gothic romance's experimentation with terror is something Cameron sees as connected to the wider project of Enlightenment aesthetics, but he challenges the traditional interpretation of this connection. Instead of being concerned with conjuring up terrors that rely upon sensory objects he considers Gothic romances as being concerned with the demarcation of the boundaries of sense experience and representation. In this way, he sees a direct link between the terror of Gothic texts and Immanuel Kant's notion of the Sublime as that which "provokes the mind to abandon sensibility and employ itself upon ideas of a higher faculty."

Kant believed that because of the antimonies of pure reason there were two modalities of the Sublime, the mathematical Sublime (which occurs when we compare our ability to apprehend the notion of something of infinite magnitude with our inability to comprehend the countless individual parts which actually make it up) and the dynamic Sublime (which stems from the mind's ability to recognise the limit of sense experience not as the boundary of all knowledge but as the gateway to a higher order of understanding). Since both of Kant's varieties of the Sublime result in a pleasure which paradoxically derives from that feeling of displeasure which arises "from reaching the ultimate limit of the greatest faculty of sense," Cameron sees them as identical to Lacan's view that the sublime is that feeling which is produced by the failure to inscribe sexual difference within language. Therefore, Cameron holds that Gothic Romances, like Kant's *Third Critique*, hinge upon the difference between the male and female Sublime, between that Sublime which "locates the real beyond reality" and that Sublime which identifies the real as "nothing other than reality's own stumbling block."

To illustrate what is the central argument of his book Cameron uses a somewhat lesser-known text, Anne Radcliffe's 1790 work *A Sicilian Romance*. Like so many others, this Gothic romance is what he calls a "neurotic quest for a lost ideal family." The heroine, Julia de Mazzini, has been abandoned and her narrative read as being in actuality a staging of her fantasies, or what Cameron calls "a displaced psychic reality," in which she articulates her sense of not belonging. In this way, the book offers what Cameron describes as "a textual trauma as a displacement of a sexual trauma – the trauma of finding an adequate erotic love." By reading Radcliffe's novel in light of Freud's case study *Dora*, Cameron presents *A Sicilian Romance* as an examination of hysteria produced by a libidinalised absence, a powerful statement about the impossibility of representing female sexuality.

If Cameron sees restraint as the chief virtue of *A Sicilian Romance* then the questionable merit of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* is its crazed excess. He believes that the 19 year-old Lewis's dissatisfaction at what he saw as Radcliffe's cheating of the reader out of the genuine supernatural element her novels seemed to promise, and his ambition to write the ultimate Gothic romance, were typical examples of obsessive neurotic behaviour. Whereas Radcliffe's feminine Gothic aesthetic rested on creating terror without a definite cause, the masculine Gothic aesthetic deployed by Lewis leaves the reader in no doubt that the supernatural is at work and instead allows him or her to relish the gory details and wallow in the decadent degeneracy of his story. For Cameron, the abundance of physical suffering and sexual torture in *The Monk* makes it a perfect example of an attempt to "represent libido outside the body," to overcompensate for everything not present in Radcliffe's novels.

The Monk, a book featuring every configuration of moral and sexual deviance, is in Cameron's opinion a "sublime apparatus" intended to astonish the reader by the sheer extent of its depravity. Its entire value, he argues, lies not in the quality of its writing but in the audience's reaction to its lurid content and this, he believes, allows us to comprehend Lewis's real motivation. By referring to Freud's *Rat Man*, he reads Lewis's novel as the product of his encounter with what he found lacking, unrepresentable female sexuality, in Radcliffe's novels. Cameron sees Lewis's inability to sublimate this lack as responsible for him writing a Gothic romance packed with so much visceral nastiness that no-one would notice that anything was missing. *The Monk*'s scenes of grotesque horror and sexual sadism must, he argues, "be seen as emerging out of a deeper anxiety, as an escape from something much more terrifying-the fact that there is nothing instead of something." *The Monk* creates "an external sublime object of horror to cover a terror that has no external cause."

As the subtlety of these readings illustrates *The Psychopathology of the Gothic Romance* is a significant achievement and a noteworthy addition to the study of the literature of the uncanny. Cameron's book undoubtedly proves that subjecting these Gothic romances to psychoanalytic analysis is a fruitful and long overdue exercise and there's little doubt that more criticism of this kind will follow. It also makes a cogent case for explaining the curious dynamic underlying these romances, the gradual removal of which (something exemplified, Cameron contends, in the main character's self-haunting and eventual descent into psychosis in James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, the last book to qualify as a true Gothic romance) saw the Gothic transform into a very different beast. However, Cameron's bold assertion that his psychoanalytic perspective must completely revolutionise the study of these texts remains inconclusive. Revealing though it is, it is unclear why this approach should take priority over all other forms of interpretation and why it cannot just be used in tandem with them. After all, if Gothic novels truly are the many-headed monsters Cameron claims, then the very last thing we want to do is put a limit on the ways in which we can look at them.

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