BOOK REVIEWS

"Satan, Thou Art Outdone!"
The Pan Book of Horror Stories, Herbert van Thal (ed.), with a new foreword by Johnny Mains
(London: Pan Books, 2010)

What does it take to truly horrify? What particular qualities do readers look for when they choose a book of horror tales over a book of ghost stories, supernatural thrillers or gothic mysteries? What distinguishes a really horrific story from a tale with the power simply to scare or disturb in a world where one person's fears and phobias are another person's ideas of fun? These were questions that the legendary editor Herbert van Thal and publisher Clarence Paget confronted when, in 1957, they began conspiring to put together their first ever collection of horror stories. The result of their shadowy labours, *The Pan Book of Horror Stories*, was an immediate success and became the premiere volume in a series of collections which were published annually and which appeared, almost without interruption, for the next thirty years.

During its lifetime, *The Pan Book of Horror Stories* became a literary institution as each year, van Thal and Paget did their best to assemble an even more sensational selection of horrifying tales. Many of the most celebrated names in contemporary horror, including Richard Matheson, Robert Bloch and Stephen King, made early appearances between the covers of these anthologies and the cycle proved massively influential on successive waves of horror writers, filmmakers and aficionados. All the same, there are generations of horror fans who have never known the peculiar, queasy pleasure of opening up one of these collections late at night and savouring the creepy imaginings that lie within. To make amends for this, and to mark the important contribution that the publishers' horror-story anthologies made to the culture of the uncanny, Pan has reprinted the original volume in all its gory glory.

It's an indication of the seriousness with which Herbert van Thal and Clarence Paget undertook the compilation of the first *Pan Book of Horror Stories* that, although they decided on the venture two years earlier, it did not appear until the 11th of December 1959. Both men were adamant that the collection should include the very best horror writing from the past and present and they trawled through innumerable books in search of material. Their patience was rewarded, as the list of names they managed to assemble was of the highest literary distinction. L.P. Hartley, Joan Aiken, Muriel Spark, Jack Finney, C.S. Forester, Bram Stoker, Angus Wilson and Nigel Kneale were among the twenty-two authors brought together for the initial collection. With talent like this, it was no mystery why *The Pan Book of Horror Stories* and its follow-ups went on to sell millions of copies and gave rise to numerous imitations.

One thing that was unexpected, however, was Herbert van Thal's sudden elevation to the position of high-priest of horror. A man known for his immaculate dress (which included a bow tie and a monocle) and a deep interest in literary history, it must have bemused him that he should become popularly known as "The Horror Man," the editor whose name on the cover of an anthology was a personal guarantee of the high standard of the ghoulishness within. As the horror author and critic Johnny Mains writes in his new introduction, van Thal became "a trademark, the name you could trust to deliver the scares." That van Thal knew the horror genre inside-out is clear from his own brief introductory note, in which he ponders why we read horror stories; "Is it not the memorable and agelong custom that we like 'being taken out of ourselves?' And is there not a slight feeling of smugness, that while sitting in our (we hope) comfortable armchairs we can safely read of the ingenious and terrifying things men do to men?" he asks. Mains maintains that it was due to van Thal's mostly impeccable judgement that *The Pan Book of Horror*

Stories gained such a following and why, more than fifty years later, it remains "ingrained in the nation's psyche" as "the literary world's dirty little secret."

What kinds of horror story were people reading back in December 1959? The answer is surprisingly nasty ones. Van Thal warns readers that "these authors know their craft, and they have not hesitated to expound it with little thought of sparing you from the horrifying details." If this initially sounds like a little bombastic showmanship, it seems less so the further into this collection one proceeds. For within these pages are tales involving lavish descriptions of torture, mutilation, brutal murder, operations going disastrously wrong, people being crushed, torn to shreds, entombed alive, squashed flat and pierced through by strange devices and falling to bits. Even by twenty-first century levels, the gore quotient is astonishingly high.

The only word which can do justice to the different approaches to horror represented in *The Pan Book Horror Stories* is "random," and the quality of the writing varies wildly. Some stories, like Hazel Heald's "The Horror in the Museum," Noel Langley's "Serenade for Baboons," Hester Holland's "The Library," Flavia Richardson's "Behind the Yellow Door," Peter Fleming's "The Kill," Anthony Vercoe's "Flies," Bram Stoker's "The Squaw" and Seabury Quinn's "The House of Horror," are straightforward exercises in morbid suspense, often ending with a shockingly visceral denouement. Others follow a quieter, more intriguing path, like Fielden Hughes "The Mistake," L.P. Hartley's "W.S.," Nigel Kneale's "Oh, Mirror, Mirror" and Alan Wykes' "Nightmare." Some, like Angus Wilson's "Raspberry Jam," A.L. Barker's "Submerged," Jack Finney's "Contents of the Dead Man's Pockets" and Muriel Spark's "The Portobello Road," contain even less in the way of traditional horror while others, like Chris Massie's extremely odd "A Fragment of Fact" and Hamilton Macallister's surreal "The Lady Who Didn't Waste Words," only fall into the category only because it's hard to imagine where else they could belong. Two of the tales, Joan Aiken's "Jugged Hare" and Oscar Cook's "His Beautiful Hands," are basically sick jokes bloated out to eight pages apiece.

Van Thal and Paget were of the opinion that the collection should include something for everyone, from sedate and intricately structured chillers to full-blooded pulp sensationalism. Only in this book could a story as shamelessly exploitative as George Fielding Eliot's "The Copper Bowl" (proof that sadistic, racist, misogynist trash of the "torture-porn" variety is by no means a new addition to the world of horror) be found alongside Muriel Spark's troubling, elegiac tale. However, dividing these tales into high-brow and low-brow is not necessarily a reliable way of sorting the more successful short stories from the weaker ones. Angus Wilson's tale, about an alienated young boy who realises that the two old ladies he has befriended have gone insane from isolation, is overlong and this dilutes the impact of its sickening ending. Beautifully rendered in sleek, ethereal prose, A.L. Barker's "Submerged" is also a tale about a disturbed young adolescent encountering the cruelty of the adult world but, as with Wilson's story, it loses its way due to its meandering pacing. L.P. Hartley's "W.S." is yet another horror story to feature a sinister double who turns out to be a manifestation of the narrator's splintering personality, and even though Hartley gives the concept a clever meta-fictional twist, the conclusion is predictable. Joan Aiken's tale is also a disappointment as it lacks a sufficient degree of psychological penetration to make it anything more than a classy revenge story.

On the deranged hokum front, *The Pan Book of Horror Stories* fares much better. Noel Langley's "Serenade for Baboons" is a riveting piece set in South Africa, in which a doctor's contempt for local customs leads him into a hellish predicament. Fielden Hughes' "The Mistake," about the vicar of a small parish whose vendetta with a local troublemaker brings on permanent insomnia, bears more than a passing resemblance to "The Tell-Tale Heart" but is a well-composed and disconcerting story. Seabury

Quinn's "The House of Horror," a tale reminiscent of the great Universal horror movies of the 'thirties and 'forties, involves a pair of Hercule Poirot and Captain Hastings-like medical men who seek shelter from a storm in the house of crippled doctor. Trapped inside, they discover that their host is conducting some horrendous experiments and lurking in the dark of the basement are the poor unfortunates who have survived the first of his "operations." Best of all is Hazel Heald's fantastically bizarre "The Horror in the Museum," about the crazed proprietor of a wax museum who claims to have found creatures from other dimensions and whose exhibits are not as lifeless as they first appear.

Seeing that *The Pan Book of Horror Stories* is being marketed very much as a museum piece (it's worth buying just for the fabulous vintage cover art inspired by the monstrous cat which stalks the heroes of Bram Stoker's tale) and a nostalgia fix for those old enough to remember the series when it appeared originally, it is perhaps unfair, or even redundant, to say that few of these tales have dated well. However, there is no doubt that the four stories in this collection which have withstood the test of time best are those which eschew excessive literary stylisation and overt goriness and which instead engage directly with the very concept of terror. These are Alan Wykes' "Nightmare," Nigel Kneale's "Oh, Mirror, Mirror," Jack Finney's "The Contents of the Dead Man's Pockets" and C.S. Forester's "The Physiology of Fear."

Wykes' tale, about a man whose paranoid delusions prove infectious, asks whether fear is a necessary component of human nature, while Kneale's deceptively simple story prompts us to consider whether, in the right circumstances, all of us might become monsters. Jack Finney's superb story is perhaps the most gruelling eighteen pages anyone will ever read, and it is a tale that those who suffer from vertigo will be lucky to finish. Towering over all the other contributions is C.S. Forester's supremely ironic tale. It involves a world-weary concentration camp doctor who is brought in to observe his Nazi scientist nephew's barbaric investigations into the physical causes of fear, a project the scientist soon regrets embarking on. All four of these tales do what great horror does better than any other literary genre – they dare to ask what value and meaning there is in human life.

The Pan Book of Horror Stories is a truly mixed assortment and yet another reminder that horror comes in many forms. If anything, it is the print equivalent of one of the Amicus "every-face-a-name" portmanteau horror movies of the 60s and 70s, such as *Dr. Terror's House of Horrors*, *Tales from the Crypt*, *Asylum* and *From Beyond the Grave*. The material has the same pot-luck factor and it is hard not to read these tales without doing one's own mental casting, deciding what characters would have made good roles for Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Britt Ekland, Herbert Lom, Donald Pleasence, Michael Gough and the other actors who invariably wound-up in such films. The world has seen plenty of real horror since Herbert van Thal and Clarence Paget assembled this anthology in 1959 but it's to their credit that even then they considered horror an important genre, if only for the fact that it provides us with a means of escaping the horror of everyday life. They knew what the necessary ingredients for a good horror tale were and they weren't being coy when they warned readers half a century ago that "the stories in this book are such that if your nerves are not of the strongest, then it is wise to read them in the daylight lest you should suffer nightmares."

EDWARD O'HARE

London Gothic: Place, Space and the Gothic Imagination
Lawrence Phillips & Anne Witchard (eds.)
(London: Continuum, 2010)

The sinister qualities of London – a city built as much on blood, greed and exploited labor as on measured political reform and enlightened rule – have solicited abundant critical expression in recent years. Envision, if you will, a snapshot of the current state of the discourse as told by one especially conversant essay from *London Gothic: Place, Space and the Gothic Imagination*.

In Alex Murray's essay in this volume "'This was Pale and Ghostly': Stewart Home, Horror and the Gothic Destruction of London," he voices a critique of the popular version of "London Gothic" implicitly shared by the book's other contributors. As he writes, "The idea of London Gothic is a pathetic fabulation of tourist operators, a deluded illusion of novelist and film-makers, the preserve of capitalism in its most vulgar and insubstantial forms. Its persistence is no doubt testament to the entwined stupidity of consumers and the greed of cultural producers (65)." Murray's chapter proceeds to argue against instantiations of London Gothic that over-privilege Derridean hauntology (a position first advanced by Julian Wolfreys, whose work is also herein represented), the touristic desire for authentic horror, and the specificities of place. Instead, he turns to Stewart Home's *Down and Out in Shoreditch and Hoxton* (2004) as a work that erases the familiar neo-gothic discourse in favor of the categorical boundlessness of the Lovecraftian "weird" tradition that is filtered through Home's confrontational penchant for leftist political critique (78). Murray's point is that the way forward for London Gothic rests not with "heritage" or with cheap and tawdry re-tellings of Jack the Ripper, but rather with a wholesale redefinition of how the term "Gothic" gets deployed by scholars of literature and visual culture. How can we rightly use a moniker like "gothic" to describe everything from the hallucinogenic writing of Thomas de Quincey to some of the scarier bits of *Harry Potter*? There seems to be little consensus as to how the contributors to this volume use "gothic." However, this observation has less to do with any sloppiness or oversight, than it is a marker of the currently lively state of discussions about London's ghostly traces.

It is probably clear by now that Lawrence Phillips and Anne Witchard's *London Gothic: Place, Space and the Gothic Imagination*, a volume that gleefully dives into an on-going conversation about the literary and filmic representation of London, showcases a textual discourse that is both exciting and (by this point, and in this instance) incredibly rarefied. This is, in every sense, a specialist volume dedicated to reformatting the conversation on London's Gothic. T he editors make this clear from the first: "While certain texts such as *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and *Dracula* (1897) have become canonic, Gothic representations of London are to be found across a diverse array of texts, *not only those that correspond with the emergence of the genre in fiction and the industrial era's expansion of the capital*" (1: italics mine). A central concern is positing that aspects of a Gothic sensibility are found outside of that heady period from the mid-eighteenth century through the fin-de-siècle of the nineteenth. Thus, the book contains chapters that range from Jenny Bavidge's ecocritical meditation on the morphological comparisons between the figure of the rat (in the singular, and as a swarm) and monstrous humanity, to Fred Botting's wide-ranging chapter on the zombie re-purposing of London, especially as seen in *28 Days Later* (2002, Danny Boyle) and *28 Weeks Later* (2007, Juan Carlos Fresnadillo). A fine chapter by Lawrence Philips on horror movies set in the London Underground – specifically, *Raw Meat/ Deathline* (1972, Gary Sherman) and *Creep* (2004, Christopher Smith) – ties the history and infrastructure of the nineteenth century to the anxieties of today. In most cases, the goal seems to be to expand productively the remit of the term "Gothic" while at the same time telescoping onto multidisciplinary histories heretofore unrealised.

Thus, one real strength of the volume is its willingness to showcase unlikely methodologies, even when the individual chapters seem to be at odds with one another. Roger Luckhurst's "An Occult Gazetteer of Bloomsbury: An Experiment in Method" grounds itself in Franco Moretti's *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (1998) in that it attempts to situate a localised history of the occult into fixed geographical coordinates, a task that is implicitly critiqued by Alex Murray's argument. Luckhurst offers:

I want to explore whether it is possible to combine these competing methods and attempt to map what is claimed to be unmappable. Can you gazetteer the ghost? Can you map fugitive instances of supernatural phenomena or secret occult rituals, chart the oneric pathways of the London Gothic? Isn't the allure of these modes precisely in their refusal to be converted into positive knowledge? What does mapping do to them? (51)

A fascinating result of this exercise – which encompasses everything from spiritualist organisations to the addresses of prominent mediums – is that it maps the prevalence of irrationalisms in an area noted for its connections to officialised forms of knowledge. During the period in question (mid-to-late nineteenth into the twentieth century), Bloomsbury solidified its reputation as a seat of erudition. The growing student population, its locus as the site of the salons of the "Bloomsbury Group" of maudlin Cambridge intellectuals and artists, combined with the authority of the British Museum and its reading room, meant that it became associated with secular and humanistic study. But Luckhurst's proximal mapping of the hermetic sites in the same area reveals "what I [Luckhurst] have sometimes called the *supplemental occult*, the sense that wherever secular modernity exerts its power, a reserve of supernaturalism emerges with it" (60). This gels with what scholar James Webb's book *The Occult Establishment* (1976) consistently describes as the "flight from reason" that was born alongside the systematic embrace of industrial (rational, instrumentalist) modernity.

Although the obscurity of some of the texts discussed in *London Gothic* fits one of the general remits of the spectral Gothic sensibility – to reveal occult knowledge in all of its exceptional forms, if only in flashes – the most potentially off-putting aspect of the book is the *outré* nature of some of the objects of analysis. Since the editors and authors have decidedly moved outside of the canon of Gothic texts set in London, they turn to compelling (if marginalised) works such as Hilary Mantel's *Beyond Black* (2005), the crime novels of Derek Raymond, and Arthur Machen's inexplicably neglected *The Hill of Dreams* (1907). This expanded field of vision ultimately works in the book's favor, but it limits its usefulness for readers with a general interest in the subject or for undergraduates writing research papers. The omission of essays that explicitly reposition the most canonical of London Gothic texts (*Dracula*), or that deal centrally with the current giants of the genre (Iain Sinclair, Peter Ackroyd), strikes as a missed opportunity. That said, this is an exciting collection of essays that productively unpacks a thriving area of academia's own doubts about itself. Our understanding of the term "Gothic" will greatly benefit from such an expansive consideration.

KEVIN M. FLANAGAN

Eaton Stannard Barrett, *The Heroine*, Avril Horner & Sue Zlosnik (eds.)
(Kansas: Valancourt Books, 2011)

Despite the renewed interest in Eaton Stannard Barrett (from, amongst others, Gary Kelly and Jim Shanahan), Barrett's novel *The Heroine* (1813) has not been treated to a modern edition in over eighty years. Prior editions have been somewhat amateurish if enthusiastic. Walter Raleigh's 1909 edition was a plain reprint with a rather weak introduction appended, while Michael Sadleir's 1927 edition lacked the scholarly rigour that this dense text demands. Horner and Zlosnik's edition is therefore, in the main, to be welcomed.

In spite of the fame he obtained during his life, biographical information concerning Barrett is scant. A native of Cork, Barrett went to Trinity College Dublin, graduating (BA) in 1805, two years after Robert Emmet's ill-fated Jacobin insurrection. Securely in the Tory camp, Barrett subsequently removed to London where he was admitted to the Middle Temple. Presumably he did not fulfil his terms as evidence would suggest that he was not called to the bar. In 1807 Barrett secured his first literary success with his poem, *All the Talents*, a satiric swipe at the coalition government then steering Britain rather ineptly through the Continental Wars. As an ideological ally of satirist and statesman George Canning (to whom *The Heroine* is dedicated), Barrett's novel quite clearly emerges from that cultural atmosphere typified by Canning's periodical *The Anti-Jacobin*.

Barrett's *The Heroine* falls into that not insignificant body of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century fiction that nervously interrogates female readership and authorship. Cherry Wilkinson, daughter of a prosperous but self-made farmer, eagerly imbibes the fantasies of the Radcliffean school. Her brain turned by this diet of reading, Cherry begins to believe herself to be Cherubina, an aristocrat kidnapped during infancy. Intent on proving her "real" ancestry, she leaves her father's home for London. Here, she gathers around her an assortment of Jacobin misfits, from a former United Irishman to a poet in the Godwinian mould. After many Quixotic interludes (complete with Reevean backgrounds; crypts, lunatic asylums, subterranean prisons, etc.), she is reclaimed from her delusional state and marries the respectable bourgeois hero, Robert Stuart.

Horner and Zlosnick judiciously choose to reprint the first edition of Barrett's text. They quietly and deftly note the important deletions and additions made by Barrett in his subsequent editions (1814, 1815). Barrett's *The Heroine* is strongly allusive and the editors have, in general, glossed the text thoroughly and accurately (though some inaccuracies have crept in, ascribing the horror novel *Adelaide; Or, The Chateau de St. Pierre* to Maria Edgeworth being the most unfortunate).

Moreover, Horner and Zlosnick's introduction proves somewhat problematic. Over two pages they make some guarded but ill-advised conjectures on Barrett's sudden death in 1820. They argue that "given the financial difficulties Barrett experienced […] it is quite possible (although yet to be proved) that he fled to America in order to escape his debtors." In order to facilitate this escape, Barrett may "have fake[d] his death" (viii-ix). The evidence given for this hypothesis rests upon the fact that in 1823, the Baltimore periodical *The American Farmer* published a poem, signed "Eaton Stannard Barrett," addressed to a father on the birth of his third daughter. The daughter in question, however, is in fact Byron's goddaughter, Olivia Moore (born 1814). This poem, variously attributed by modern scholarship to Joseph Atkinson or Barrett, had been published as far back as 1818 (in the Cork compendium *Harmonica*), and more than likely it debuted earlier. *The American Farmer* most probably lifted the poem out of an English or Irish periodical (in line with common early nineteenth century practices). The indisputable

fact is that Barrett died in Wales on the 20th of March 1820, something never denied either by his contemporaries nor questioned by any available extant evidence.

Beyond this, Horner and Zlosnik question the extent to which *The Heroine* ought to be seen as a reactionary text (as Gary Kelly, amongst others, has described it). They argue that Barrett, by allowing Cherubina the freedom of her peregrinations, both affirms the political economy of bourgeois values while simultaneously questioning the validity of their remit: "*The Heroine* rather cleverly has it both ways: it inscribes the values of the aspiring middle-class (as Kelly argues) but simultaneously exposes the constraints they impose on the imaginative young woman […] Cherry's adventures imprint quite firmly in the reader's mind an imagined alternative world where women are rabble rousers and property owners and in which Frenchmen and Irishmen represent excitement and change rather than threat" (xix, xxiv). While it is true that, in order ultimately to restrain Cherubina, Barrett must let her loose, he at no time validates, or even casually explores, the possibilities of a liberated woman. While the twenty-first century reader may make such a reading, it is not one sanctioned by Barrett; it exists in spite of the author. The subgenre within which Barrett is working (the Quixotic tale as much as the Gothic) demands he allow the heroine freedom, but only as far as such freedom is shown to be perilous to female existence and female sanity. Barrett's frequent vitriolic allusions to the strong independence of Glorvina (of *The Wild Irish Girl*, 1806) quite clearly demonstrate his antipathy towards female autonomy. Likewise, Cherubina's marriage to Robert Stuart (who recommends to her the works of the arch anti-feminist Hannah More) more than crushes the memory of any liberation and draws the reclaimed heroine into the conservative and gendered domestic confines of Pittite Britain (contemporary readers could not but have made the link between Robert Stuart and the ultra-ministerialist Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh). In similar manner, Barrett's 1810 poem, *Woman*, and his 1808 satire, *The Miss-Led General*, deny women any respectable existence beyond wedded home life and child rearing.

Despite these reservations, this new edition would be useful to various audiences: students of Austen, scholars of Irish Toryism and Irish Jacobinism, and those interested in contemporary accounts of the radical underworld of pre-Waterloo London as well as in the Gothic. Needless to say, Romantic Studies will benefit from this new edition. And lest we forget, *The Heroine* is also a rather good read. Horner and Zlosnik's edition is reasonably priced at just under twenty dollars.

NIALL GILLESPIE

***Gothic Shakespeares*, John Drakakis & Dale Townshend (eds.)**
(Routledge, 2008)

No, this book does not argue that Shakespeare is the first "Goth", but it comes close. After reading this book, you will be in no doubt about the wide array of interactions between Shakespeare and the Gothic. You may, however, be left wondering what exactly constitutes a "Gothic" canon.

Essays in this collection range from how Shakespeare himself problematises the term "Goth" in *Titus Andronicus* (by Steven Craig) to Stephanie Meyer's use of *Romeo and Juliet* in her *Twilight* series (by Glennis Byron), with each contributor making a strong case for a real and ongoing engagement between discourses. I say "discourses" because this collection is very much about Shakespeare-as-discourse (as opposed to Shakespeare-the-man) and how that is bound up with Gothic fiction's own discursive identity. The main drawback of the book is that while the links found are hard to dispute, the scholarship that goes with them can be a little fuzzy around the edges – a little more editorial cohesion would have gone a long way.

The idea of Shakespeare as "a legitimizing strategy" for the Gothic project is introduced in the opening paragraph by editor John Drakakis, and this becomes a recurring feature throughout. Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* is taken by Drakakis as a founding moment of Gothicism, and this is of course a text which leans heavily on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. This linkage is then used to argue that Shakespeare is at once the authority Walpole calls on to defend his own use of the supernatural, and a figure in need of defence as England's national poet: "Inextricably bound up in the work of cultural patriotism, Gothic appropriations of Shakespeare are inherently political from the start" (69). This political angle is well brought out in Dale Townshend's essay on the appropriation of *Hamlet* and its fatherly yet disturbing ghost. In an ongoing aesthetic war between France and Britain, Shakespeare becomes the bastion of Britishness, with Voltaire playing the role of France's heavy artillery. However, this initial idea is forgotten as Townshend moves on to discuss the importance of mourning in Gothic fiction more generally using Lacanian techniques. While this is very well argued, it has little to do with appropriation, France, or Shakespeare (whose name appears only once in the last three pages of the essay).

Such lack of focus is unfortunately not limited to Townshend's piece (which is in fact the strongest essay of the entire collection). At least Townshend goes to the trouble of defining what precisely is meant by the term "Gothic" (66). The opening essay by Elisabeth Bronfen is entitled "Shakespeare's Nocturnal World," and while Bronfen makes a good case for the night as a time of transgression and passion in Shakespeare's *oeuvre*, this does not automatically categorise the space of night as Gothic. She claims that lovers flee "into the night, and concomitant with this, into a Gothic state of mind" (23) without ever telling us of what this "Gothic state of mind" consists. Also her choice of *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seems slightly perverse, considering the infinitely more "Gothic" plays on offer like *Titus*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* (a play which never gets more than a passing mention in the book!). On the subject of missed opportunities, it seems a rather serious oversight that neither Bram Stoker's *Dracula* nor Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* receive any extended investigation within the essays in the collection, despite the fact that the Introduction and the Afterword both list them as central texts in the Gothic canon. Indeed, the entire Victorian period and the first half of the twentieth century are passed over in silence.

Instead of *Dracula*, Glennis Byron opts to talk about the arguably more well-known vampire, Edward Cullen. Her piece is on Stephanie Meyer's use of *Romeo and Juliet* as a model for the troubled and

troubling relationship between Bella and Edward, contending that "[i]n bringing the vampire together with the star-crossed lovers of Shakespeare's play, Meyer's 'Twilight' series continues both the simplification and the commodification of these iconic figures" (176). Byron argues well for the worrying dynamics of desire at work in Meyer's fiction, where Edward is never real, always idealised, and Bella's desire for him is the desire for death. She also acknowledges the mania surrounding the release of each of the books, opening with a countdown clock to the appearance of *Eclipse* in 2007. But this also points to the major flaw in the essay, which is that it seeks to theorise a relationship between Meyer's work and Shakespeare's, before knowing how the story of Bella and Edward ends. Writing an essay on the basis of only the first two books out of a series of four cannot hope to stand the test of time, critically speaking. Perhaps the commodification of culture Byron sees in Meyer's work is also apparent in the pages of *Gothic Shakespeare*, which felt the need to show just how up-to-date it was by choosing Team Edward over Team Vlad.

Indeed, this book's strengths lie at either end of the chronological spectrum, with excellent work on the birth of the Gothic and the veneration of the Bard at a time of nation-building in the eighteenth century (for example Sue Chaplin's Derridean interpretation of Gothicism and the law), while Fred Botting and Scott Wilson's post-modern take on "Gothspeare and the Origins of Cultural Studies" is refreshingly experimental in showing how "Shakespeare" continues to be a contested term in the twenty-first century ("If Shakespeare were alive today he'd be the Captain of the Starship Enterprise," 196). Other essays that deserve a special mention include Michael Gamer and Robert Miles' work on the apocryphal *Vortigern*. This play's status as an original Shakespearean forgery is used to demonstrate just how politicised the ground of Shakespeare had become in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Indeed, the process of Bardolatry and Gothicism are shown to be uncomfortable bedfellows in this insightful and well-written piece. Finally, Peter Hutchings's relatively short essay on Shakespeare and the horror film shows a real sense of two-way traffic between discourses, as well as raising questions about cultural legitimacy, high-brow/ low-brow binaries, and where exactly "Shakespeare" belongs in today's entertainment industry.

On the whole, this book gives an unmistakable sense that, in Dale Townshend's words, "[t]he Gothic revival and the renewal of interest in Shakespeare are two manifestations of the same cultural impulse" (72). This collection attests to a Gothicism with much in common with Shakespeare's own knack for problematising cultural ideologies. It also shows how the Gothic can be seen to question the cultural hegemony of the Bard himself, as it "venerates *and* dismantles its intertexts at the same time" (14). Overall, this book does a good job of examining Shakespeare-as-cultural-capital and how this can be linked with incarnations of the Gothic, but more close textual engagement (with both Shakespeare and the Gothic texts discussed) is needed. It is surprising such a book has not been available before, and I have no doubt that it will spawn more in due course, as there are gaps here that are begging to be filled.

DEREK DUNNE

Sara Wasson, *Dark London: Urban Gothic of the Second World War*
(London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

London is an iconic space in Gothic studies, in particular the dark imperial metropolis of nineteenth-century *fin-de-siècle* fantasies and the post-war, post-imperial urban decay of late twentieth-century dystopias. Sara Wasson's ground-breaking page-turner *Dark London: Urban Gothic of the Second World War* fills the critical lacuna between these older and newer manifestations of Gothic London. Wasson turns to another iconic configuration of London, "The Blitz," which has been largely over-looked in Gothic criticism.

Dark London re-reads Blitz London in the historical and literary contexts of Gothic studies, drawing analogies between the fertile period of *fin de siècle* Gothic and World-War II Gothic. It necessarily extends the recent turn in Gothic criticism. Instead of reading Gothic as a genre focusing on vampires, demons and castles, new scholarship reads Gothic as a mode with two core characteristics: "a particular emotional colouring of the narrative filter, and a preoccupation with certain relationships to space." In keeping with this critical trend, Wasson persuasively argues for the significance of Blitz London in the continuum of British Gothic and the return of the past that it articulates. As Fred Botting and Chris Baldick assert, the claustrophobic settings of eighteenth-century Gothic, castles, monasteries, convents or forests, become in the nineteenth century the gloomy, labyrinthine, streets of London and its asylums. The city, with its underbelly of crime and prostitution, reflected anxieties around class, capital, gender and madness. Wasson introduces Blitz London as British Gothic's "*phantasmogenetic centre*" (Wasson uses Luckhurst's phrase for *fin-de-siècle* London) for locating the fractures in narratives of English history, national pride and sense of community. Dark London, which focuses on the twentieth century, brings home the horror and disorientating terror of a city and a people under siege.

Wasson argues for the first time that Gothic tropes and forms subvert mythologies of the wartime home, city and fellowship, in particular the "Blitz Myth" of British emotional resilience, which is still influential today. One of the many strengths of this book is that each chapter provides a historical and cultural context as well as unearthing instances of the Gothic in familiar and overlooked British writers during this period. The authors and painters she selects, who are admittedly all upper-middle-class, share a haunted and fractured relationship with London. Henry Green, Roy Fuller, Anna Kavan, Graham Greene, Inez Holden, Anne Ridler, Diane Murray Hill, Elizabeth Bowen, John Piper, Graham Sutherland and Mervyn Peake all recast the home front as a claustrophobic domestic arena veined with xenophobia, propaganda, psychic and bodily suffering. Hallucinatory and surreal moments become the norm, repeating the class and gender prejudices and divisions of earlier Gothic.

The first chapter introduces the reader to the urban Gothic of the home front, and the direction Wasson takes with her arguments – novices will find clear and concise definitions of the Gothic and the Uncanny, and how Gothic literature and criticism has undergone continual transformation since its inception, with discussion of the latest critical debates. In particular, Wasson intelligently revisits the important themes and modes of *fin-de-siècle* Gothic, including H. G. Wells, Max Nordau and degeneration, fear of incarceration and fear of invasion. She shows how the Gothic recurs in her chosen writers, or in fact never went away. Reality took on the characteristics of fiction, and the War government called on H. G. Wells for guidance. Significantly for Gothic studies, while Wasson stresses continuity, she also shows that wartime occupies a different time continuum to peace: she makes the important distinction that World-War-I Gothic is located in the trenches (which uncannily were named after London streets) while

World-War-II Gothic locates its horror in London, and reactivates the urban preoccupations of the *fin de siècle*.

Those more familiar with the Gothic will find fresh perspectives and social contexts for Gothic modes and instances, and for questions about gender, class and national identity. Wasson engages with Marxian theorists of modernity, such as Walter Benjamin, Ernest Renan, Perry Anderson and Homi Bhahba, alongside archival research and eye-witness accounts. Clearly divided into six inter-linked chapters, *Dark London* juxtaposes six inter-connected hallucinatory and incarcerating spaces characterising Blitz London. It is a space marked by the disintegration of capitalism, British imperialism and the sanctity of the home, at a particular historical moment. In vivid language (another strength), Wasson shows that Blitz London saw Gothic tropes become literal – where people were buried alive in their own homes; the night streets of the "Black Out" were turned into hallucinatory dreamscapes; "banshee" sirens wailed; death howled down from above; people took shelter in open coffins while underground tube shelters became coffins themselves. My favourite image is "ice cream vans commandeered to carry human blood."

Chapter 2 links Blitz London with the Parisian arcades and the figure of Baudelaire's *flâneur* of the previous century's urban spectacle, but Blitz London becomes the dark double of this spectacle. Exploring fiction by Henry Green and poetry by Roy Fuller, Wasson reveals the shadow side of *flânerie* with its Gothic shades, which current criticism that focuses on a gendered binary ignores. Instead, Wasson examines these texts for fractures in capitalism's grand narratives of consumption, in the context of the connections that Walter Benjamin makes between the *flâneur* and the commodity. By co-opting Benjamin, Wasson unearths a vampiric *flâneur/ flâneuse* who is also vulnerable to what she or he sees, to the spectacle of "Bright, dead dolls" and psychological disintegration, where working-class fire fighters commit suicide and the docks are bombed as "imperial goods," becoming deadly debris as the yoke of empire slips.

Chapter 3 moves from the "Blacked-out" streets and commercial disarray, to Anna Kavan and Graham Greene's dark vision of a carceral city viewed from the helpless subject positions of immigrants, refugees, and psychiatric patients. It revisits two traditional Gothic tropes: imprisonment and the struggle to decipher elusive signs. Wasson gives a clear definition of Michel Foucault's "heterotopia" which she applies to the asylums and internment camps, and reveals the home front as a labyrinth of surveillance, prohibitions and control. She relates Greene's *The Ministry of Fear* (1943) and its fifth columnists to Lew Lander's film, *Return of the Vampire* (1944). Anna Kavan's real life has the characteristics of her Gothic fiction *I am Lazurus* (1945) and *Sleep Has His Hous*e (1948). She changes her name and identity as a writer after her release from a mental asylum, following the end of her marriage.

Wasson's next two chapters explore two inter-connected threads of gender and class, which have been central to Gothic since its inception. Chapter 4 explores mechanised ghosts in wartime factories. Instead of being spaces of sisterhood and liberty, as promulgated in government propaganda, these factories isolate and dehumanise the women working there. Repeating the conditions of the nineteenth century, they become Gothic spaces. However, the disintegrating narratives of Inez Holden, Anne Ridler and Diana Murray Hill (all upper-class women) change the classic female Gothic persecution narrative to comment on war-time modernity. The diabolic villain is now faceless state authority. Chapter 5 moves from the factory to the domestic and the Anglo-Irish writer Elizabeth Bowen's uncanny homes. Bowen gets a chapter to herself, because on top of Gothic tropes Bowen also uses Gothic modes of writing: febrile narrative voices and presences, with linear time and imperialism challenged. This is most fully illustrated in Bowen's magnificent short story "Mysterious Kôr", which Bowen based on Rider Haggard's

She. Wasson argues that Bowen's London homes are continually in dialogue with the eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish "big house," with its dark colonial inheritance and sense of loss and decay, and thereby draw attention to the complex ways gender, class and national affiliations are mutually constituted and unravelled.

The final chapter fittingly disinters the nation's Gothic abject "The Rubbish Pile and the Grave" in the haunting paintings and poetry of John Piper, Graham Sutherland and Mervyn Peake. Wasson critically opens up the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Westminster, revealing how the war dead underpin all nations' narratives of themselves. However, if there is a slight weakness in this book, it is that Wasson makes a riveting leap from the Unknown Soldier to international reportage of concentration camps and Londoners' xenophobic slowness in accepting the holocaust's mass corpses, which she does not fully explain in the context of *Dark London*'s argument. But perhaps this is the start of another book.

Overall, *Dark London: Urban Gothic of the Second World War* is a must read for anyone interested in twentieth-century Gothic, urban Gothic, and the after-life of *fin-de-siècle* Gothic. It is also relevant for anyone interested in modernity, modernism, World War II and the literature of the home front, and post-imperial English decline. It is a scholarly and engaging work with enlightening historical research and literary analysis of Gothic modes. Wasson accomplishes what she sets out to do for Gothic studies, showing that "the texts of wartime London are a rich resource for critical exploration" and show that their Gothic tropes "speak to specific forms of fraught subjectivity" generated by the material conditions of London under siege.

EDWINA KEOWN

Sara Stephen T. Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears*
(Oxford University Press, 2009)

On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears presents itself as a comprehensive analysis of the cultural and symbolic value of the monster throughout recorded history. The epigraphs to the book are well chosen. Of these, particularly poignant is Montaigne's "I have never seen a greater monster or miracle than myself." This introduces the human dimension of Asma's evolutionary approach to the monster figure, and places the study in relation to that difficult binary that society and culture has always been ready to enforce between human and "other."

From the outset, the perspective of the work is nuanced and acutely directed, although not original, in approaching the term and concept of the monster as "a prototype category." Asma takes a somewhat structuralist approach in claiming that "we may even draw up a general taxonomy of types […] crawlers, slitherers, collosals, hybrids" and so on. The author also claims that the functions of these categories is in "helping us to navigate the dangers of our environment" and to provide a simulation for potentially real dangers (282). Consequently, "the specific face of the monster will vary from culture to culture but the universal dimension seems undeniable" (284). And so the study is founded on the idea that the monster, in some way, transcends cultural differences in its intricate relationship to basic human fears.

So, with this approach stated, the introduction begins with Asma's *raison d'etre* for the study: to trace the evolution and anatomy of the various metaphorical archetypes presented by Western monsters. In doing this, one can certainly say that the book achieves its goal. Significantly, it carefully offers, here at the beginning, a valid excuse for avoiding the monsters of Eastern traditions. This avoidance is based in the author's anxiety that such a project – to include and compare Eastern and Western monsters – would be too big to allow for in-depth analysis. This I can certainly agree with, but I did read on with a little disappointment as Asma suggested that this project, should someone undertake it, would no doubt make a highly valuable and exciting research project. Nonetheless, Asma writes that he has chosen only a slightly less daunting endeavour (15) and I came to agree with this also toward the end of the book as the difficulties of his chosen task were revealed.

On Monsters is divided into five sections, outlining the histories of ancient monsters, medieval monsters, scientific monsters, psychological monsters and contemporary monsters, in that order. Throughout, Asma insists on an ironic use of the term "monster," since it is no longer employed in a literal sense and so his individual case studies follow the introduction with a distinctive humorous tone. Much of the first half of the book deals with how the "three literatures of monsters and beasts – poetry, travel tales and natural history – continued to feed each other all the way down to the seventeenth century" (27), after which the study moves on to scientific and psychoanalytic readings of monsters in culture, and so the five sections are divided between the medieval/ mythical, and the modern/ scientific.

Without doubt, each individual section and chapter offers, in its own right, a fascinating and highly informative study of its designated topic, whether it be hermaphrodites, man-headed oxen, monstrous mother figures, headless children or disembodied minds, and Asma's breadth of knowledge is impressive. He often branches out of history and into philosophy, theology, sociology, evolutionary theory, psychoanalysis, literature, and film studies, to name quite a few. However, this sometimes leads to a superficial engagement with the given disciplines and Asma's reference to and use of particular ideas can at times be cursory. His haphazard use of Darwinian theories is a notable case in point. While summarising the ideas of many scientists and critics in relation to Darwin, he concludes that "applying

this Darwinian notion to our perception of monsters, it seems useful for humans to see a creature as more dangerous than it really is" (23). These kind of overstated and, arguably, unsubstantiated claims are common in the book and sometimes do not, in any real way, contribute to a straightforward argument made by the author. The issue seems to be that Asma has included such a vast amount of citation and referencing (interesting as they may be) that the book becomes encyclopaedic and lacking in definitive conclusions.

But this does not really take away from the value of the book. I would argue that it is part of a solid attempt at offering a comprehensive study of an extremely versatile topic where comprehensiveness is quite possibly an unachievable goal. Where *On Monsters* succeeds then (and one does get the feeling that Asma is aware of this) is in its *reportage* style which engages the reader in an absorbing report of teratology covering a period from the Old Testament, right through to modern seafaring tales of monsters from the deep, and our responses to contemporary serial killers and terrorists. Asma's individual and trans-historical studies are accompanied by a collection of historical photographs and intriguing illustrations often hand-drawn by the author himself. It is an academic study with a difference: a reference work that is quite humorous in its approach and driven by enthusiasm and personal fascination. At the close of his introduction, he even goes so far as disclaiming: "no disrespect intended by the author to any particular monsters, living or dead" (15).

One way of considering this book would be to compare it to a study such as Richard Kearney's *Strangers, Gods and Monsters*, or David Gilmore's *Monsters*:*Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors*, both from 2003. While it is a very different kind of study to Kearney's, it shares the same interest as its impetus. It does not, however, seek to achieve the depth of philosophical and theoretical insight that can be found in Kearney's wide-ranging book. On the other hand, it is quite a similar study to that undertaken by David Gilmore. Following the same chronological approach, it shares a similar perspective in terms of arguing, as Gilmore does, that "the mind needs monsters" (Gilmore 2003, 1). However, while Gilmore claims that monsters serve to embody all that is horrible in the human imagination, functioning as a sort of projection and catharsis of our fears, Asma seems to lean more toward the opinions of evolutionary theory in viewing our fear of monsters as derivative of primal fears. Although he doesn't argue for this in the study, from this perspective, he presents a chronicle of mankind's greatest imaginary creations and how they have evolved and developed right up until today.

The most interesting part of the study, in my opinion, is the section on biblical monsters, which outlines how the many free monsters of early civilisations were reined in by the institutionalism of monotheistic religion. Asma points out that when monotheism became "the dominant premise of religious culture, monsters had to be brought under the omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God" (62). They came to be explained within the framework of the ideas surrounding a universal creator and subsequently became "God's Lackeys." What Asma refers to here is the biblical ambivalence in relation to the monstrous, which includes creatures who are often demonised as evil but who also are orchestrators of divine will, sometimes serving as a narrative foil to God's righteous and superior power. I n this section, Asma offers an intriguing account of the various religious representations of the figure of St. Christopher. Originally presented as a dog-head or *Cynocephalus*, St. Christopher transforms over time in the records from being an alleged cannibal and monster to a Christian convert and Catholic Saint. This example illustrates the idea that, around this time, the monster gained a soul in religious discourse, and this was to have a significant impact on all future representations, literary and artistic or otherwise, of "the monster."

Without revealing too much about the book, at this point I should conclude by saying that although the book could certainly be improved upon, I definitely recommend it to anyone who is interested in the idea

of the monster and its evolution throughout modern civilisation. As a testament to my recommendation, my own copy now appears more than a little tatty, and notes and page-markings sprawl over every section. While the book doesn't offer any definitive theories or arguments about our relationship to the monster or the monstrous, in its excessive and far-reaching content, it will most probably tell you everything you always wanted to know about monsters. More than that, it is an uncanny and enjoyable read that finds its way into at least one if not more of the sources of each reader's worst and most terrifying fears.

MARIA BEVILLE

Stephenie Meyer, *The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner: An Eclipse Novella*
(London: Atom, 2010)

Vampires are back in Forks: Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* novels have not concluded! And this time the author of the four-book bestselling saga introduces the reader to the evil side of vampirism in her 2010 novella *The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner*, which focuses on a secondary character who has a marginal role near the end of her novel *Eclipse*. Bree is a young teenager who is transformed into a vampire to be part of the army created by Victoria with the intention of wreaking revenge on the Cullen family and Bella Swan, the protagonists of the *Twilight* series. This captivating narrative on vampires is well-written and definitely of the same quality as the previous books. As in the *Twilight* novels proper, not all the elements of the story are properly Gothic: the narrative is more about the personality of a young girl than about typical Gothic environments, props and conventions. On the other hand, Gothic elements are exemplified by the behaviour of the newborn vampires, by the revenge plot unknown to the protagonist and by the tragic conclusion of the narrative.

The novella is narrated by Bree herself, in a plain and simple style. As happens in the *Twilight* novels, the reader is guided throughout the story from the point of view of a teenager, who is naïve about the supernatural world and questions its mechanics. Nevertheless, as specified by Meyer in the Introduction to the novella, for the first time in the saga the perspective is that of a "'real' vampire – a hunter, a monster." On the one hand, this would seem to contradict the primacy given to "vegetarian" vampires in the four previous novels and their representation as alternative human(e) beings who care for the welfare of the human community and follow its ethical rules and behavioural norms. On the other hand, the choice of Bree as the narrator of the story finally allows the reader access to a supernatural creature's perspective on humans, who are seen in this novella as weak, "unlucky" and "oblivious" cattle by the newborn vampires. Bree is effectively a god in comparison with them, "stronger, faster and *better*" than her prey, but she never assumes an attitude of superiority or feels derisive contempt for them (as in the case of Anne Rice's novel *Queen of the Damned* and its 2002 cinematographic adaptation by Michael Rymer, for example). She therefore appears nicer than the other newborn vampires, probably because she hunts humans with the mere intention of sedating the thirst for blood rather than with a sadistic glee.

In this way, the novella apparently does not create a Gothic atmosphere: the reader does not follow the characters through the dark tunnels or castles usually associated with vampires. There is no enactment of extreme behaviours or the derangement of human subjectivity on the part of the protagonist. Meyer does not focus on the range of excesses and transgressions that, according to Fred Botting, characterises Gothic works (*Gothic*, 180) and that could be found in the majority of literary and cinematographic adaptations on the figure of the vampire from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to recent films such as Patrick Lussier's *Dracula 2001*, Stephen Sommers's 2004 *Van Helsing* and the *Blade* trilogy (1998-2004). The main suspense experienced by the reader is that created by our concern for Bree's continued existence, although we already know from *Eclipse* as well as from the book's Introduction that she is condemned to a premature destruction as a vampire. On the other hand, what is definitely Gothic is the fact that Bree is a young girl who is dragged too early in a cruel world of life and death, and who comprehends only too late that she has been lied and deceived in favour of a larger game of power, revenge and laws (those of the Volturi) that she ignores.

The story begins at night, as the newborn vampires are hunting: this immediately introduces the reader to the savage rage of the uncontrollable creatures and their exclusive focus on the sensory (especially olfactory) aspect of the hunt. The vampires' thirst for blood is specifically described as burning and

painful, which seems to reprise Anne Rice's depiction of the vampire's blood-lust in *The Vampire Chronicles*. Bree has become a vampire three months earlier and remembers very few details of her previous life as a human being. She even defines it as "unimportant." We discover only that she had been a troubled fifteen-year-old teenager, had left her home and a father who used to ill-treat her, and was starving on the road when Riley approached and Victoria then transformed her. She subsequently finds herself in the middle of the violent and deadly battles of the newborns against each other, where she is in constant dread of injury and mutilation.

Bree creates a bond with Diego, the only newborn who is not convinced of Riley's orders and rules. The two characters simultaneously develop a mutual attraction and an urge to know more about both their condition as vampires and the reason for their creation. Much like the pitiable monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Bree and Diego have been abandoned and neglected by Victoria, who never assumes any responsibility for their education and whom they mainly refer to as their "creator." After Diego demands some explanations from Riley, he does not return to the newborns' subterranean shelter. Bree thus becomes all the more vulnerable and we begin to suspect that it is already too late for her.

The battle against the Cullens rapidly approaches: we already know of its outcome and are aware of the forthcoming massacre, but eagerly consume the remaining pages of the book with inquisitorial curiosity. This is due to the fact that the novella is so well-plotted that we finally care about Bree, perhaps because we already know the conclusion of the story. In spite of this knowledge, we wonder: what happened to Diego? Shall we see the action on the battle field? Is Riley conscious of Victoria's lies? Has Meyer changed the ending and finally saved Bree? The latter hopes to meet Diego again and begin a new life with him, but by the time that she realises the truth about Diego (which I do not want to spoil for the reader) she is already in the middle of the fight, caught between the curling smoke of the burning corpses and the horrible noises of the final struggles.

Bree is captured by the Cullens, whose names we discover again one by one, slowly recognising their traits and identifying them from another character's point of view – a real treat for *Twilight* fans, but slightly confusing for a reader unfamiliar with the series. It is from the Cullens that, for the first time, we explicitly hear Bree being called "a child" and we are further reminded of how young she is, how unfulfilled her aspirations and possibilities are, particularly if we consider that the few remaining pages of the book mark the irremediable end of the novella *and* the end of her existence as a vampire too. When Bree herself says "I could feel that my time had run out," we have almost accepted her fate, the end of both the young girl and the story.

For a reader who has never read the other books in the series, this could be a rather shocking ending, abruptly destroying any hope for a positive resolution. For an avid reader of the *Twilight* saga, however, the novella satisfactorily completes some obscure parts of the narrative of *Eclipse* (such as the development of Victoria's plan and the Volturi's passive involvement in and approval of it). The story rapidly runs to the unavoidable end: it is a foretold tragedy that cannot be avoided and leaves a bitter taste for the injustice of Bree's murder. This novella will probably conquer the attention and affection of readers who are "newborn" to Meyer's fictional universe: I would definitely suggest it as a good introduction to the saga at large, especially if we consider its brevity (180 pages). Needless to say, *The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner* will definitely fill with enthusiasm and involvement the fans of the *Twilight* series, satisfying their curiosity about many actions and characters unseen by Bella but gravitating around her.

ANTONIO SANNA

"The Evolution of the Vampire"
***Dracula's Guest: A Connoisseur's Collection of Victorian Vampire Stories*, Michael Sims, (ed.)**
(London: Bloomsbury, 2010)

The vampire has been a figure of terror in world culture for well over three hundred years. Tales of the un-dead can be found in the folk traditions of Romania, France, Russia and Greece and some scholars speculate that the vampire myth could even date back as far as the Middle Ages. Vampires have been appearing in print since the early eighteenth century and have proven one of the most potent and durable modern metaphors. However, the author and anthologist Michael Sims believes that the Victorian era was decisive in the development of vampires as we know them today. Long before Bram Stoker set to work on *Dracula*, other Victorian writers had begun to see the potential of the vampire. By adding to the vampire's symbolic power, increasing their psychological complexity and generally refining their mythos, these authors helped turn them into the ultimate horror icon.

Sim's aim in editing *Dracula's Guest* is therefore to illustrate the evolution of the vampire and to show readers how rich and diverse the body of vampire literature is. This anthology of twenty-two pieces of fiction and non-fiction contains passages from travel memoirs and histories of the supernatural as well as many complete short stories by authors both famous and obscure. Sims explains that he chose *Dracula's Guest* as the title for this anthology not just because Bram Stoker's short story (originally thought to be an excised episode from *Dracula* but now considered to be part of an early draft of the novel) is included but because the seductive power of the vampire, "the betrayal of innocence" that occurs when we allow them into our lives, is an over-arching theme which spans the whole of vampire literary history.

In his well-informed and passionate introduction, "The Cost of Living," Sims explains his fascination with vampire tales. He then traces the vampire's origins back to the ancient cultural taboo on the consumption of blood, something forbidden by the Talmud, the Koran and the Bible. He agrees with the view that the vampire's habit of drinking blood is a distorted version of transubstantiation and a corruption of Christianity's central message – "the magical value of blood sacrifice." Sims also links the vampire's state of living death and its association with plague and pestilence with the Christian view that the bodies of the excommunicated do not decompose but defy natural laws and pollute the earth.

Sims observes that, as "its own species of supernatural fiction," the vampire story has "certain taxonomic peculiarities the reader learns to expect," but as a genre its form is not as rigid as might be assumed. One of the most intriguing features of this anthology is that it reveals vampire lore to be wildly inconsistent and shows that the vampire legend has been reinterpreted in countless ways. The shape a vampire may take; the role they may play in a narrative; the degree to which they can be sympathetic: all of these vary from author to author.

Dracula's Guest is made up of three sections: pieces written prior to the Victorian era, those written during it and those written just after it. Section one opens with two pieces of non-fiction, the philosopher Jean-Baptiste de Boyer's account of "A Scene of Vampirism" from his 1738 work *Jewish Letters* and a description of "Dead Persons in Hungary" by the monk Antoine Augustin Calmet from his 1746 compendium of supernatural phenomena *The Phantom World*. The vampires in these pieces are a far cry from Bela Lugosi, Christopher Lee, effeminate young men wearing too much glitter and most of the other images that are unearthed when we think of the un-dead. These vampires from Silesia, Moravia and Poland are boisterous, rampaging cadavers, liable to burst in on a convivial scene demanding to be fed or foretelling somebody's doom. An interesting characteristic that distinguishes these eastern-European

vampires from the usual Hollywood portrayal of them is that they prey upon their own families, who then have to undertake the grisly task of making sure they stay in the grave.

The first offering of fiction comes from the quill of none other than George Gordon, Lord Byron. "The End of My Journey" was Byron's entry for the ghost-story writing competition held at the Villa Diodati, which famously gave rise to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. It involves a traveller who journeys to Smyrna in the company of the enigmatic Darvell. There, amid the ruins of ancient temples, Darvell is revealed to be a vampire who has grown tired of endlessly wandering the Earth and now wishes to die. This story is followed by John Polidori's *The Vampyre*, an extension and elaboration of Byron's tale. When the two are placed side by side, it's ironic that Byron's rather anaemic and flaccid story is easily eclipsed by Polidori's fantastically overblown, barely comprehensible and outrageously homoerotic tale, especially since it was clearly inspired by his adventures with Byron. Lord Ruthven, Polidori's vampiric version of Byron, is also the first recognisable forerunner of Count Dracula.

Even more decadent and morbid is "Wake Not the Dead," an 1823 work by the German Romantic novelist Johann Ludwig Tieck. Written in a tortuous, quasi-poetic style, it records the awful miseries that result when anguished lover Walther unwisely asks a sorcerer to bring his deceased beloved Brunhilda back to life. Following on from this interminable tale is another story to feature a deadly, if slightly less horrific, femme fatale. "The Deathly Lover" (1843), by the French author and aesthete Theophile Gautier, is the amusing recollection of an elderly priest who looks back on the day of his ordination, when his roving eye fell upon a woman whose exquisite beauty hid a dark secret.

The second section sees mythology and folklore left behind as the vampire becomes a fully fledged literary archetype. Starting it off is the 1839 story "The Family of Vourdalak," by Aleksei Tolstoy, a cousin of Leo. This is another tale with an engaging narrator, the wily old Marquis d'Urfe, who tells his listeners of the time when, as a young diplomat, he was sent to Moldavia and found himself living in the house of a family who came under attack from vampires. Genuinely creepy, intelligent and smouldering with sexual tension, this fine tale, translated here by Christopher Frayling, is one of the star attractions of this anthology. From the sublime we duly move to the ridiculous. *Varney the Vampire*, by Victorian super-hack James Malcolm Rymer, must always have seemed laughable, even to the readers of 1845. The brief, delirious extract included here, packed with howling storms, heaving bosoms, glowing eyes and glistening fangs, is written in such a breathless, eager-to-please style that it's hard not to feel some affection for it. The next tale is a true oddity. "What Was It?" (1859) is by the Irish-American poet and short-story writer Fitz-James O'Brien, a figure whose peculiar life and innovative work are owed some new critical attention. "What Was It?" tells of a group of opium-addled drop-outs who elect to spend a night in a haunted boarding house and find themselves menaced by an invisible monstrosity intent on feasting on their blood. Although the tale's narrative thrust is clogged by too much exposition, and loses direction altogether once O'Brien has unveiled his vampire, the slowly mounting horror and sheer strangeness of "What Was It?" means that it will not be easily forgotten.

Although its author has never been identified "The Mysterious Stranger" (1860) is a story whose influence on Bram Stoker seems undeniable. Set in the Carpathian Mountains, it contains many elements later to appear in *Dracula*, such as a pathetic hero and two feisty, powerful young women who are preyed upon by an aristocratic vampire who lives in a castle. It also makes mention of the vampire's need to be invited freely into the company of the living and to rest in a coffin filled with his native soil during the hours of daylight. Still more nascent aspects of the modern vampire mythos are found in Anne Crawford's "A Mystery of the Campagna" (1886), the first vampire story to use multiple narrators in a

similar fashion to *Dracula* and which features a vampiress who has waited for her revenge since the days of the Roman Empire.

Emily Gerard's 1888 travel memoir *The Land Beyond the Forest* is a book which Stoker is known to have consulted. What is fascinating about this extract is not so much finding the material that Stoker did use but that which he didn't. For example, he overlooked the more curious parts of the Romanian folk tradition which state that a vampire is the illegitimate offspring of two illegitimate people; and that it can be kept in the grave if a person shoots a pistol into its coffin, lays a thorny branch of a rose-bush across it, walks around it while smoking or rubs the un-dead corpse with the fat of a pig killed on the Feast of St. Ignatius. What a different reputation Stoker might have today if he decided to incorporate some of these rites into the plot of *Dracula*.

After this come two uneasy attempts to make the vampire a comic figure, "Let Loose" (1890) by Mary Cholmondeley and "A True Story of a Vampire" (1894) by the Swedish Count Eric Stenbock. "Let Loose" involves an architect whose determination to see some frescoes in a locked crypt in the tiny Yorkshire village of Wet Waste-on-the-Wolds has awful consequences. Stenbock (who was described by W.B. Yeats as a "Scholar, connoisseur, drunkard, poet, pervert, most charming of men") makes a slightly better fist of finding comedy in the vampire legend and his blonde, talkative, piano-playing bloodsucker is an unusual creation.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon's late work "Good Lady Ducayne" (1896) is an original tale which must represent the first attempt to meld the myth of the vampire with science fiction. Augustus Hare's "And the Creature Came In" (1896), about a trio of siblings sharing a house that is invaded by a Max-Schreck type vampire, has been included in numberless anthologies but is still a good, spine-chilling read. "The Tomb of Sarah" (1897), by the little-known author F.G. Loring is a very accomplished and atmospheric British horror story about an architect wise in supernatural knowledge who must vanquish a vampiress who has been woken by the restoration of the West Country church in which her tomb lies. Rounding off this section is Scottish novelist James Hume Nisbet's "The Vampire Maid" (1900), a lurid tale of an artist who seeks peace at a holiday cottage only to fall victim to his landlady's vampire daughter.The third section comprises four tales, all told with the utmost restraint and subtlety. Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's "Luella Miller" (1902) is easily the most haunting tale in the collection and features an all-too-human vampire who may be the subject of a curse or of a terrible chain of coincidences and who ultimately suffers more than anyone else. "Count Magnus", among the most terrifying tales that M.R. James ever wrote, is rightfully included, as is one of the adventures of Alice and Claude Askew's Aylmer Vance, in which the supernatural investigator is pitted against a vampire. Finally, there is Stoker's embryonic version of *Dracula* itself.

Dracula's Guest is an outstanding anthology which really does serve a higher purpose. Not only does it allow the reader to observe the development of two distinct kinds of vampire story, those in which the vampire is a mostly unseen force terrorising the community and those in which the vampire passes unnoticed in ordinary society and is revealed only in the tale's closing pages; it also reveals how quickly writers of all nationalities were to recognise the value of the vampire in the mid to late nineteenth century, and to turn it into a symbol for everything from the fading away of the old aristocratic order to homosexuality. Above all, *Dracula's Guest* is a testament to the genius of Bram Stoker, the first, and so far only, writer to incarnate almost all vampire lore in a single character and whose strange masterpiece still retains a unique hold on our collective imagination.

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