BOOK REVIEWS

Stephen King, *Duma Key*
London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2008

It is perhaps little wonder that creativity is a recurrent theme in Stephen King's novels, given the sheer productivity of the man. It is tempting to think, perhaps, that like the protagonist in his latest offering, *Duma Key*, he is driven to produce work by mysterious dark forces. At almost six hundred pages *Duma Key* provides a tale to settle into for a couple of weeks (or perhaps a long-haul flight to Florida), but is largely focused on one location and a single character, who also fulfils the function of narrator. Regular King readers will be unsurprised to find that this narrator, Edgar Freemantle, bears more than a passing resemblance to King himself. It is not just tempting but irresistible to compare this story of injury and rehabilitation to King's own well-documented accident in 1999. Certainly, Freemantle's recovery is portrayed with almost painful realism, and his character is generally compelling enough to draw the reader along on his journey to a 'second life'.

Although it is unfair to reduce *Duma Key* to a single 'hook' or gimmick, it can be described as an extended horror treatment of phantom limb syndrome. Freemantle is a building contractor whose pickup truck is crushed by a twelve-story crane, leaving him with brain damage, a shattered hip, and the loss of his right arm. The resulting tensions cause a split with his wife, and he becomes increasingly depressed and angry. He is wealthy, however, and on the advice of his therapist, rents a house in the Florida Keys which he calls 'Big Pink' and takes up painting with his good left arm. The island is to become the setting for the entirety of the unfolding narrative, largely based around the conceit that an itch in his missing arm drives him to paint works of remarkable power. The first hint of supernatural happenings comes when a dog (brilliantly named 'Gandalf') is hit by a car and is crushed beyond hope of recovery ('blood and shit oozed sluggishly from between his broken rear legs'). Without realising what he is doing, but wishing to put the creature out of its misery, Edgar strangles it with his missing right hand.

Before long Edgar is settled into life on the key and is enjoying therapeutic walks by day and painting by night. It is during these walks that he spies Wireman, who will become his best friend and confidante on the island. This part of the novel is particularly effective, with the reader willing Edgar onwards as he pushes himself further each day on his ruined leg, one step closer to the friendly figure with a jug of cool green tea and two glasses. The relationship between these two characters becomes the defining one of the novel, their relaxed friendship sketched out effectively by King through subtle moments and casual dialogue, often in half-remembered Spanish phrases. Wireman becomes a kind of anchor for Edgar, and likewise guides us through the mysterious history of the island. Together, their investigations into the strange happenings of the past and present provide an enjoyable mystery narrative.

This somewhat sensitive portrayal of a man 'drawing himself back into the world', however, does not last forever. While the introduction of horror is welcome, and at first chilling, *Duma Key* does at some point descend into supernatural hokum, with no legitimately plausible explanation of the horrors beyond a Lovecraftian 'elder gods from the deep' plot device. Indeed, the hardcore horror elements of this tale rarely move beyond the perfunctory, with lank-haired drowned girls guesting from J-horror and barnacle-crusted undead creatures straight out of *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Far more effective are the early terror Gothic tropes of being alone in a house with a doll that may or may not be alive, and receiving sinister phone calls, albeit here from an old lady with Mafia connections. We also get quintessential King

themes involving the darker side of American history. Racial issues are dealt with via a grotesque 'lawn jockey' that comes to life, as if seeking revenge for being a racist caricature, and a hidden family history involving a heroic housekeeper who embodies the kind of character King himself has admitted to portraying as 'superblack'. While racial elements may not be subtle, the portrayal of Elizabeth Eastlake, the old lady who first painted prophetic pictures on the island, is nicely understated.

'Libbet' as she is know in psychic flashbacks to her childhood, suffered a head injury and began to paint in the same way as Edgar, leading to tragedy. This is, of course, a familiar King trope; that certain people can be sensitive to something stored in a location, referred to elsewhere as a 'psychic battery'. More interesting here is the portrayal of this old woman as a faded society belle. Starting out as a sinister presence, we are drawn into her world as her character is constructed through the mediation of Wireman, whose relationship has changed from being a caretaker to loving Elizabeth as if she were family. Her character veers between comedy and horror as one minute she lights up in an art gallery and generally behaves like an ageing diva, and the next lapses into fits of visionary hallucinations and catatonia. It is fully-rounded characters like Elizabeth who save *Duma Key* from some of the clunky dialogue and unrealistic motivations that King is occasionally guilty of and do crop up here.

Duma Key, though, despite its dramatic evocation of the pain of artistic vision ('Be prepared to see it all. If you want to create – God help you if you do, God help you if you can'), never really feels substantial for all its literary posturing. There is no grand sweep here, but it is nonetheless an effective potboiler, in the most positive sense of the term. Its effective description of a balmy, tropical landscape, with shells scraping under the house and storms threatening is punctuated well with briny corpses, Gothic locales, and a Coleridge-esque vision of Life-in-Death sailing somewhere on the horizon. King paints with a familiar canvas here, but his brush leaves a reassuringly strange impression.

KEVIN CORSTORPHINE

Jonathan Rigby, *English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema*
London: Reynolds and Hearn LTD, 2000

While Jonathan Rigby's *American Gothic* (2007) centred on the relatively neglected field of early twentieth-century American Horror, his study of the *English horror Film, English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema* (2000) takes a much more heavily written-about subject as its focus. Indeed, by choosing to examine the development of the English horror film from its inception right through to its position at the turn of the millennium, Rigby places his work in competition with David Pirie's seminal *A Heritage of Horror* (recently revised and reissued) and the host of books written on the history of Hammer Horror such as Marcus Hearn and Alan Barnes' *The Hammer Story* (2007). Such a broad scope might at first appear somewhat unmanageable, yet it is to Rigby's credit that he manages to discuss over a hundred separate films in some detail and (in the updated edition) provides a comprehensive appendix of British television horror.

On the back cover of *English Gothic*, Rigby notes that "The British Horror film is almost as old as cinema itself." Consequently, the book begins by examining the beginnings of horror on British screens in the early nineteenth century, exploring the links between Gothic fiction, theatre and the silent chillers of the 1920s. The first chapter gives an overview of an emergent British horror cinema by detailing a host of previously lost or forgotten films such as *Ultus, the Man from the Dead* (1915) and the Alfred Hitchcock-designed *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog* (1926). As Rigby notes, these silent horror films are usually overlooked by critics and as a result have remained relatively unwritten-about. With the emergence of the "talkies" at the end of the 1920s, Rigby moves on to discuss some of the films from the 1930s and '40s that he considers to possess "an English 'accent'" (p. 20) – that is to say those examples which, in Rigby's estimation, appear English in nature. Though the period undoubtedly witnessed a great deal of cross pollination between America and the United Kingdom, such a loosely defined means of classification allows Rigby to cast his net slightly further than other critics, incorporating films such as *The Old Dark House* (1932) ("The best British horror film ever made in America" (p. 21)) and *The Ghoul* (1933) (shot at Shepherd's Bush). Rigby concludes this part of the book with a discussion of some of detrimental effects that the advent of World War II had on British horror cinema, singling out Thorold Dickinson's *Gaslight* (1940) and Ealing Studio's excellent portmanteau film *Dead of Night* (1945) as two exceptions to the widespread decline in production during the era that was caused by war time cut-backs in spending.

Perhaps justifiably, the largest part of *English Gothic* is devoted to the horror films of the much written-about Hammer Studio. From the very early *Quatermass* movies through to the more well-known "tent pole" pictures; those guaranteed successes such as *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), *Dracula* (1958) and *The Mummy* (1959), Rigby provides a considered account of the studio's output, contextualising its films alongside those of more minor studios such as Amicus and Tigon. To reflect the repertory nature of British horror during this period, Rigby structures his discussion of this "golden age" of production around the careers of the actors Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing, charting their respective fortunes with the aforementioned studios. While this information doesn't cover any new ground, Rigby's writing style still makes it interesting to read about the differing approaches taken by these two actors towards the horror genre and their place within it. While Cushing is content to remain at Hammer playing reiterations of his gentleman-hero Van Helsing role (with occasional dalliances for rival studios), Rigby paints Lee as a more tempestuous figure. Afraid of being typecast as the monster, the actor was continually forced to turn down Hammer's requests for encores of the Dracula role that shot

him to fame and instead driven to work both overseas and for lesser-known directors and studios in order to find a sense of artistic fulfilment.

Much like *American Gothic*, Rigby's *English Gothic* is especially good at giving an account of some of these lesser-known films of the 1960s and '70s, reappraising examples that have acquired a cult following since their original release; Michael Reeves' *Witchfinder General* (1968), Robin Hardy's *The Wicker Man* (1973), and those that seem to be due for such appreciation, yet remain largely unrecognised; Sidney Hayer's *Night of the Eagle* (1962), Cyril Frankel's *The Witches* (1966), and Stephen Weeks' *I, Monster* (1970). By resituating these "hidden gems" alongside their more famous contemporaries, the book successfully creates a fuller picture of the diversity in output during one of the most productive periods in the history of British horror cinema.

Rigby concludes *English Gothic* with a chapter entitled "British Horror in Retreat", in which he details what he perceives as the relative waning of genre product since the late 1970s. Rigby attributes this slump to a combination of factors. Perhaps, most significantly, the increasingly graphic nature of American horror films, such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), meant that the more "restrained" scares of British films started to appear quaint in comparison. In addition to this, Rigby notes how the continuing pomposity of the British film establishment towards horror and its associated reluctance with regards to funding have inevitably contributed to a deterioration of both the number and quality of examples of the genre. Yet, despite this somewhat ominous situation, Rigby's study ends with a potential glimmer of hope, as the author notes a post-millennial resurgence in artistic and critical respectability for horror exemplified by a new wave of films including Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002), Marc Evans' *My Little Eye* (2002) and Edgar Wright's *Shaun of the Dead* (2004).

Special mention must also go to the additional appendix supplied in the revised edition of the book, which examines British televisual horror. While the number of books on British horror cinema is definitely on the increase, studies of horror on the small screen remain few and far between. Indeed, though horror has been a staple of British television almost from its very inception, Rigby is one of the first critics to write on the topic. In "Gothic on Television" he discusses such landmark examples as Nigel Kneale's original six-part version of *The Quatermass Experiment* (1953), the BBC's anthology series *Late Night Horror* (1968), *Ghost Watch* (1992), and *Hammer House of Horror* (1980), comparing and contrasting these examples with Britain's cinematic horror output to provide a comprehensive and contextualised history of the national development of the form. In conclusion, *English Gothic* succeeds in providing an informed and in-depth overview of horror on British screens over the last hundred years, reflecting the important, yet often overlooked part the genre has played in the country's cinematic output.

DAVID SIMMONS

Edith Wharton, *The Triumph of Night and Other Tales*
North Yorkshire: Tartarus Press, 2008

Although the most prodigious activity in the ghost story genre is commonly associated with the latter part of the nineteenth century, the form also flourished throughout the first forty years of the twentieth, and remains popular today. Anthologies of ghost stories from the genre's heyday usually include the work of such well-known male writers as Arthur Machen, M.R. James, L.P. Hartley, Walter de la Mare, and of course, Henry James. Until recently, many anthologies, particularly of American ghost stories, under-represented female authors. Figures such as Alice Brown, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Ellen Glasgow, Mary Elizabeth Counselman, and Gertrude Atherton who were also working in the period were often forgotten by earlier historiographers of the genre. However, one writer, who nearly always made the cut, irrespective of the gender criteria applied, was Edith Wharton.

Tartarus Press of North Yorkshire have recognised the special contribution that Wharton has made to the genre by releasing a limited edition of fifteen of her stories in *The Triumph of Night and Other Tales*. The most helpful part of their compilation is their inclusion of four stories that that other collections often fail to consider. "The Fullness of Life" and "The Duchess at Prayer" are two wonderful ghost stories that poignantly convey, to different degrees, the sense of feeling stuck in an unsuitable marriage. In "A Bottle of Perrier," Wharton raises uneasy questions over the notion of empire as she depicts an American visitor to a haunted palace along the North African coast who wonders at the absence of his British host, and grows to suspect that he too is at risk of not making it out alive. "A Journey" is the exception in the volume in that it is not specifically a ghost story, but rather falls into the broader category of the uncanny.

Uncanny stories are often ghost stories, but the term also encompasses stories about corpses, disembodied body parts, madness, inanimate objects come to life, and *doppelgängers*, or stories about meeting a version of one's future self or being buried alive. "A Journey" features a woman who is travelling with the corpse of her husband and has a strange, self-fulfilling precognition of her own death. Two other uncanny stories that might perhaps have been included in this collection are "After Holbein," a story about the uncanny dimensions of the ageing process, and "A Moving Finger," where a painted portrait ages with, and has a strange effect on, its owners, *à la* Dorian Gray. Nevertheless, the arrangement Tartarus have assembled is well done. Particularly helpful is their thorough listing of the original dates and magazines in which Wharton's stories first appeared, details that will be very useful to scholars of her work.

Tartarus have also included the Preface to her 1937 collection of ghost stories, a revealing piece of writing for the way it provides Wharton's opinions on the manner in which ghost stories come into being, both for the writer and the reader. In it, she explains that to tell a good ghost story, one needs the ability to be a "ghost feeler," which she defines as having the sensitivity to "invisible currents of being in certain places and at certain hours" (1). This definition is important because it helps readers understand the value of historicising the writer and her work. Wharton saw herself as a writer who was imbricated in her social and historical context and yet detached as a social observer and interpreter of its history and trends. Thus, she felt uniquely receptive to the invisible currents of certain places (America and Europe) at certain times (the first four decades of the twentieth century). This sensitivity was developed from her dedication to reading books about history, culture and science, as well as from her exposure to and participation in intellectual circles; it did not spring from some kind of uncanny power associated with her sex or gender, as some critics of her work have suggested.

Wharton goes on to explain that when she first began to read, and then to write ghost stories, she saw herself as communing with a sense of unease about the trends in her world. She is careful not to reveal too overtly what these "primeval shadows" actually represented, however, and half the fun in reading the stories in this collection is in appreciating the openness of her symbolism. Similar to a definition of the uncanny itself, the source of the haunting in Wharton's stories is never pinned down as referring to any one thing; readers have to bring their own concerns to stories and there the haunting is brought into being. Wharton locates the fear in a tale, not in relation to some exogenous supernatural event, but rather to a vague feeling of unease inside the mind of the teller of the tale, which the reader might share.

Not only in her ghost stories, but throughout her work, Wharton offers unique perspectives on a period that saw immense changes in America, particularly as the country's established ruling class had begun to lose influence in the face of the forces of "democracy," immigration and the rise of a post-industrial, newly wealthy class with empire-building aspirations. Newland Archer's struggle throughout *The Age of Innocence* (1921), for example, is to recognise that there were parts of the old order that were unnecessarily constricting and had persisted beyond their usefulness; but, equally some of the new values which replaced them were to be viewed sceptically, since much about the new was regarded as thin and un-sustaining. Modern critics might say that contemporary America is enjoying a similar "cusp" experience as the country struggles to shape a reasonable policy on immigration, and as members of the power elite face new limitations as the excesses of accepted business practices are laid bare by recent financial meltdowns and banking scandals. Versions of these themes are detectable in stories such as "The Triumph of Night" and "'All Souls.'"

Wharton's work reminds readers not to be in a rush to embrace the expedient methods or the narcissism of the new age. Stories such as "Afterward" provide ominous warnings about the tolerance of "grey areas" in business and white collar crime, and "The Looking Glass" cautions readers against too quickly embracing the advances in cosmetic dermatology and the spiritual short-cuts of psychics. Throughout Wharton's oeuvre, and particularly so in her ghost stories, the tension between old and new organising principles produces a frisson, which either plays itself out as tragic denouement as in so many of her novels, or as a supernatural "twist" as in her ghost stories.

Wharton was disturbed by the way so much of the richness of human experience, and conceptualisations of "character," both in fiction and in the real world, were being reduced to simple explanations and panaceas that elided the struggle and perseverance involved in reconciling incongruous aspects of material existence. She believed that ghost stories helped readers return to a site of calm that she often referred to as the "inner life," where individuals might strengthen their ability to figure things out for themselves. She saw her writing as an effort to preserve the "ghost instinct" in a generation whose imaginative faculties were being made dull by the wireless and cinema. One can only imagine what she would have thought of our own era of video games, channel-surfing, power yoga, and self-help books with "secrets" to reveal. As Wharton believed, ghost stories still have a place in the modern world; they strengthen imaginative faculties and lengthen attention spans by providing a medium for grappling with that which seems anomalous, uneasy or difficult to reconcile about modern living.

The volume assembled by Tartarus affords modern readers this same refuge. As readers return to an age that was not so innocent, perhaps they might recognise something strangely familiar: an America that was wracked by corruption in business and uneasy class relations, disengaged by war, and under threat by the dual forces of immigration and a new brand of nativism. Although Wharton's references to such social and cultural concerns are necessarily oblique, they are there for the attentive reader willing to entertain the

notion that Wharton, as a female writer of uncanny fiction, may indeed be doing far more than relating stories about beleaguered "female experience," or the subtleties of a trendy psychoanalytic theory.

That is not to say, however, that readers of her work cannot find such references. In fact, Wharton's ghost stores are replete with oppressed wives and brutalising husbands. What is more, parallels with the theories of feminist theorists such as Kristeva and Cixous can be found by critics eager to find psychoanalytic resonances in Wharton's observation that a belief in ghosts is located in "the warm darkness of the prenatal fluid far below the conscious reason" (1). Readers persuaded by these reading positions are free to draw such connections in their assessment of the source of the fear in her stories.

One might be wise, however, to remember Wharton's own very ambiguous relationship to the feminism and literary trends of her day. Wharton saw the conflict between the sexes as an age-old theme, and as a subject that already had considerable precedence in literary history. Consequently, one could say she would have resisted the suggestion that her work was doing something new or particularly subversive in relation to gender politics. Furthermore, she regarded the work of some her contemporaries, who structured their work to a theory, whether modernist or feminist, as gimmicky, didactic and simply tiresome. Therefore, one doubts if she would have warmed to the way some of her work has recently been co-opted by certain second-wave literary critics eager to proclaim her as a sister in "the cause." Readers need only recall her letter of 20 October 1928 to Mary Berenson, who asked Wharton to read her daughter Ray Strachey's book *The Cause*; Wharton replied, "To read a book called 'The Cause' (& *that* cause!) will require all my affection for you."

It is the view of this reader that the elements of unease which motivate Wharton's uncanny stories can be closely related to the ambivalence she felt toward the social-historical changes she witnessed around her. In working in this serious way, as a writer, Wharton makes her own contribution to the recent re-evaluation of ghost stories as literature and to the appreciation of the work of women writers as art. Readers of her ghost stories today can enjoy Wharton's wry scepticism, and in the process, perhaps have their own creative muscles strengthened to face that which is ghostly about today's world.

ANN L. PATTEN

Tony Magistrale, *Abject Terrors: Surveying the Modern and Postmodern Horror Film*
Oxford: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005

Horror cinema has won an increasingly favourable position in academic film study over the last ten years. Scholars have begun to produce an understandably broad selection of texts for classroom and research use, from the introductory study aimed at undergraduates to the rarefied, theoretically sophisticated monograph aimed at the hardened specialist. *Abject Terrors: Surveying the Modern and Postmodern Horror Film* is significant in that it fills neither of these niches, but rather arrives on the scene as a non-introductory, non-specialist survey concerned more with the boundaries and limitations of the horror genre and less with constructing chronological history. Magistrale's book is about evaluating tendencies in horror cinema (which he construes, via his selections, as a primarily American and residually British practice) across historical epochs, modes of production and individual talents. Taken as a whole, his work shows the reader—albeit somewhat problematically—what types of things the horror film does particularly well.

Magistrale eschews typical approaches of taxonomising horror cinema—strictly by decade, principle actor, or country of origin—in favour of categorising various films by their mode of "terror," groupings which provisionally situate a given movie with kindred spirits and provide the inspiration for each chapter. Magistrale's "terrors" are a mixed bag that sometimes organises films around established subgenres (Chapter Three surveys "Vampiric Terrors") but just as often around vague clusters of meaning (Chapter One focuses on "Stark Terrors," which essentially amounts to *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) through Universal's *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935)). Though Alfred Hitchcock and Stanley Kubrick are lucky enough to earn their own distinctive chapters, films by other praised *auteurs* such as Wes Craven, Tobe Hooper, and John Carpenter are folded into other analytical units. Such organisational choices seem disruptive, but Magistrale's selections actually help unsettle conventional ways of thinking about classic films. *Abject Terrors* therefore urges the reader to think about horror thematically, generically, and in direct relation to other texts.

After initially contextualising the previous study of horror cinema (in the process providing very concise readings of major critical texts by Robin Wood, Noel Carroll, Barbara Creed, Linda Williams, and Carol Clover), Magistrale works his way through his selection of films, subgenres, directors, and theories with an eye toward explaining why these historically marginalised entertainments matter. Magistrale is especially concerned with affirming the cultural value of horror art. In "Stark Terrors," for example, he examines the prescience of using modernist aesthetics to assimilate the conventions of the Gothic novel, showing how the earliest of mature horror films (*Caligari*, *Nosferatu* (1922), *Metropolis* (1927), and the initial Universal monster movies) constructed monstrosity—via figures of "otherness," terrifying machines, and sub-human automatons—and built a visual style of expressive atmosphere. In this reading, early horror films were able to combine the best of high modernist art and popular suspense stories.

To provide one central example, Magistrale continuously engages feminist criticism of horror films through most chapters of *Abject Terrors*. He finds Carol Clover's formulation of the "final girl" particularly useful. In *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (1992), Clover identifies an archetypal character in slasher cinema, a strong and independent woman who comes to embody bravery, morality, and the survivor spirit in the face of the monstrous masculinity of the male killer. Magistrale reads these traits onto such diverse female characters as Buffy from the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* television series (1997-2003), who he refers to as "a kind of superhero without typical

supernatural capabilities," and the parodic Drew from *Scary Movie* (2000, identified as "the ultimate parody of Clover's Final Girl") (52, 187). In *Abject Terrors,* the problematic sexual politics traditionally attributed to horror films are therefore counterbalanced by a seemingly more empowered reading of women in the face of brutality. Magistrale's favourable discussion of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, for example, identifies heroine Nancy as "one of the great Final Girls in the slasher genre" and explains how she "is forced to employ her own resources and ingenuity to outwit the monster" (166). In the case of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, the laudatory comment is well taken, but the fact remains that the film confronts its spectators with a totally voyeuristic (which is to say, externally and physically voyeuristic on the one hand and mentally penetrating on the other) view of a young woman who is granted absolutely no privacy. Though the horror stems from this inability to escape, the positioning of the female protagonist as totally beholden to diegetic gazes and film-spectator gazes engenders an omniscient, paternalistic practice of looking. One of the implied pleasures of the film is watching Nancy's inner and outer torment, usually manifest in Kruger's violent, phallic aggression. Thus, while *A Nightmare on Elm Street* does depict a successful female within the parameters of the Final Girl trope, it does not offer any alternatives to the to-be-looked-at female. Though pointing out critical shortcomings may run counter to Magistrale's larger affirmation of the importance of the horror film, as this example illustrates, many of the films treated in the text can be criticised from within the bounds of the very traditions they seem to support.

At its best, *Abject Terror*s forms keen insights into the workings of horror on screen by throwing seemingly unrelated films together and hence into sharp focus. The chapter "Terrors from Within" assesses *The Tenant* (1976), *Don't Look Now* (1973), *The Fly* (1986), *The Exorcist* (1973), *Fatal Attraction* (1987), and *Panic Room* (2002), riffing on their themes of familial strife, psychological malaise, and anxiety about the body. Magistrale exhaustively shows the sinister, subversive nature of positioning the monstrous "Other" inside the safe spaces (individual, communal, domestic) of our lives. For example, impressionistic memories of his daughter allow *Don't Look Now*'s John Baxter to be finally seduced into murder by an enigmatic and deformed dwarf dressed like a child. Through the language of psychoanalysis, Magistrale interprets this internal conflict as having external ramifications and finds that "he [Baxter] cannot escape his inner psyche; attempts at repression lead to emotion, and then to a place that is out of his ability to negotiate" (107). Haunting memories take Baxter down an obsessive path that weaves all around Venice, a kind of labyrinthine abstraction for his inner conflict that ends up ensnaring him in a single-minded pursuit. No longer a picture-perfect city of dreams, Magistrale skilfully shows that John Baxter's Venice becomes a space of nightmares.

Despite the positives, *Abject Terror*s is a somewhat problematic as an academic survey. To begin with, there is no readily apparent or wholly unifying methodological framework or ideological positioning. Though this allows Magistrale to draw on a number of established traditions (gender studies, Marxist analysis, psychoanalysis, and narratology), he seldom connects these threads into anything sustainable. Rather, *Abject Terrors* brings together specially selected approaches to specific films, usually in the service of revealing what representative elements or broader ideas are at work in a particular movie and how these factors contribute to a more expansive understanding of horror art. Thus, rather than write as criticism, Magistrale writes in the affirmative. One of his implicit beliefs is that horror cinema has been unduly marginalised in film studies and in the culture at large. However, he tends to overestimate this marginalisation to the point that he seldom argues against any of the ideologies, practices, techniques, and philosophies espoused by these works. The fact that each title in his representative survey of great horror films does certain things very well (and contributes to a generally positive understanding of how terror operates in cinema, never mind the faults) seems to be enough.

Reservations aside, however, *Abject Terrors* is a useful and provoking text for survey courses in horror cinema. More broadly, it is an important work on the horror film insofar as it urges a reader to think of new ways of ordering, conceiving, and appreciating the genre.

KEVIN M. FLANAGAN

Joe Hill, *Heart-Shaped Box*
London: Gollancz, 2007

Heart-Shaped Box tells the story of Judas Coyne, formerly Justin Cowzynski, an aging heavy-metal star, who finds himself attacked by a ghost. Craddock McDermott, the revenant, former military man, hypnotist, and still alarmingly Charlton Heston-like, was the stepfather of one of Jude's many ex-girlfriends, and seems to be sworn to revenge himself against Jude for his stepdaughter's suicide. Soon Judas has to flee his house with his two dogs and the latest of his goth-chick girlfriends, Marybeth, in tow. Jude realises he has been set up; somebody wanted him to be haunted by Craddock's ghost. Desperate, Jude and Marybeth drive across the country, trying to escape the haunting. Craddock, however, remains implacable, pursuing them not in a phantom rickshaw but rather a phantom pickup, and, as is the way with horror, things get worse…

We read books like *Heart-Shaped Box* to see what happens, to see how things turn out, to go along for the ride. In a way, this isn't the sort of book that even *needs* reviewing. This is no criticism of the novel. It's populist horror fiction, and populist horror fiction won't always reward critical reading because it often makes itself perfectly clear the first time through. Where consciously literary fiction demands the tools of literary criticism, popular horror is rather like a ghost train; we get in, it rattles along and twists about, we scream in all the right places, the ride ends, we laugh, and there is nothing much more to it. It is an experience of a slightly different order to that offered by *literature*.

Heart-Shaped Box is more than just populist – it is actually popular. Plenty of readers have already picked it up. Neil Gaiman says nice things about it on both the front and back covers ("best horror debut since Barker", apparently). The limited edition sold out months before it was released, and the mass-market edition made number eight on the *New York Times* bestseller list. More readers will surely pick it up in the next couple of years, as it is being made into a film by Neil Jordan, director of *Interview with the Vampire* and *The Butcher Boy*, amongst others. It's a book that's doing well, especially for what is essentially an old-fashioned horror, a bit like the ones Stephen King used to write. Perhaps this isn't surprising, as Joe Hill is the *nom-de-plume* of one of King's sons. Ought we to be as excited as Gaiman suggests? Is this the best ghost train we've ridden lately?

Certainly it rattles along nicely enough, although I'm not quite as enthusiastic as Gaiman. It's a quick read, its language King-like. But to describe in a review the details of how a book like this clatters off into the darkness is never particularly welcome, as the pleasure of the text resides so strongly in discovering the development of the narrative for oneself. Instead, it's probably more interesting to discuss the book's predilections.

Taste is a peculiar thing in horror because it is a genre that is frequently and deliberately tasteless; and of course, *Heart-Shaped Box* revels in poor taste. Infections are described in close detail. Fingers come off. Incest and molestation seem to be everywhere. People watch films of other people being killed, and talk about vomiting through their nostrils. It's not interested in the decorousness and sophistication of, say, Henry James, although one of its central conceits – that ghosts are attached to the clothes they once wore – could be lifted from 'The Romance of Certain Old Clothes'. But at the same time as being a little crass, the book is concerned with taste itself; in particular, Judas'.

As Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated in his study *Distinction*, which explores the link between taste and class, taste has a lot to do with our place in the world, and is very similar to what we think of as values. Judas'

taste is peculiar but recognisable. He presents himself carefully, has an iconic beard, wears a long duster when he's out and looks a bit like James Hetfield of Metallica. His taste in collectibles is positively perverse – he owns the confession of a burnt witch, the doodlings of serial killer John Wayne Gacy, a trepanned skull, a used noose, and a genuine snuff film. These are affronts to both respectability and decency, but for Judas, they are curios, commodities. Why does he like these things? The question is key to the book in that Craddock is able to enter Judas' life as a part of this collection. Judas purchases him over the internet, a ghost advertised for sale, an addition to his assortment of curiosities. Craddock and his smart, conservative suit arrive in the heart-shaped box of the title. As Craddock's motives are revealed, we realise that *Heart-Shaped Box* narrates the conflict between the tastes of the conservative American cultural hearth and a darker cultural fringe.

We recognise Jude's weird, gothic tastes as being associated with the various genres of metal as much as it is with fictional figures like Roderick Usher or the unhappy pair of aesthetes in Lovecraft's 'The Hound'. Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin famously owned Aleister Crowley's Boleskine House. Marilyn Manson apparently decorates his house with African masks made of human skin and a chandelier made from the skeleton of a Chinese child. Glen Benton of death-metal band Deicide branded an inverted cross into his forehead when he was a young man. These various phenomena suggest a kind of performativity that accompanies the 'darker' forms of metal, an urge, at least in a limited way, for metal musicians to enact and make concrete the largely macabre and fantastic values suggested by their music; to demonstrate their taste.

Yet as *Heart-Shaped Box* moves towards its resolution, we see Jude shift away from these values and instead emphasising a different set which has always been latent within him. More and more, we find there's something all-American about him. He likes restoring cars and listening to easy-going Southern rockers Lynyrd Skynrd. He's close to being one of King's American everymen, self-made, boxing clever, sometimes troubled but basically decent, unafraid to roll his sleeves up – just dressed a little differently. At the end of the book, Jude is happily drinking homemade lemonade and has just released an acoustic album. Horror is no longer a commodity for him. Following the pop-psychological logic of the narrative, Judas needed to confront the demons of his past to surmount the troubles of his present; and so he walks into the future, a better man, living his life in better taste.

The problem here is that Judas' taste, his interest in horror, is revealed as pathological; there was something wrong with him, which is why he liked all those horrible things. Now that he is better, he can leave all that behind. While this is a happy thing for him, I'm not sure how to understand this as a reader. I can't imagine anything much more revolting than snuff films, but on the other hand, I purchased *Heart-Shaped Box* because it promised me the pleasures of horror. For all of Hill's readers, horror is a commodity, a taste to be indulged. Is there something wrong with us for wanting to enjoy horrible things? Isn't enjoying these things the point of popular horror?

I'm not suggesting that the book is a clever device where the reader is pushed to a point of self-reflexive examination where he may be forced to reject what drew him to it in the first place. It's not that sort of a book. Rather, the conclusion is a strange and unintentional insult – and it would be silly to take offence when none is meant. And in any case, I suspect that most of Hill's readers will ride the ghost train, scream in the right places, and there will be nothing much more to it.

TIMOTHY JONES

Walter de la Mare, *Strangers and Pilgrims*
Tartarus Press, 2007

Best known as a poet and a writer of children's fiction, Walter de la Mare can also deservedly take his place amongst the ranks of early twentieth-century writers of supernatural fiction. Edited by Mark Valentine and published by Tartarus Press, *Strangers and Pilgrims* brings together thirty-one of his short stories, drawing on nearly sixty years of the prolific writer's career, and demonstrating that his reputation need not rest exclusively on the much-anthologised classic "Seaton's Aunt."

Taken as a whole, Walter de la Mare's province is that of psychological horror, one that need not find its form of expression in any overtly "horrific" manner. His characters occupy a world which is almost entirely coloured by the belief expressed by the narrator of "Winter" that:

> Any event in this world—any human being for that matter—that seems to wear even the faintest cast or warp of strangeness, is apt to leave a disproportionately sharp impression on one's sense. So at least it appears to me. The experience lives on secretly in the memory, and you can never tell what trivial reminder may not at some pregnant moment bring it back—bring it back as fresh and living and green as ever. ("Winter," p. 175)

Nonetheless, his is a fundamentally ghostly landscape, in which each of his characters is undeniably haunted – sometimes by spectral manifestations, but more often than not by the powers of the imagination and of the human mind itself. So, for example, "Seaton's Aunt" – probably de la Mare's most famous story – relates a series of visits paid by the narrator (both as a child and an adult) to the home of his school-friend Arthur Seaton, who lives in extreme terror of his mysterious aunt. Seaton claims the old woman is "in league with the Devil", and views her as a vampire of sorts that drains the life right out of him, but the story itself refuses to ascertain the veracity of his fears, and leaves the narrator unable to draw any concrete conclusions. Seaton's "tormentor" may well be a supernatural agent, or she may simply be an inadequate substitute mother for the orphaned child, whose *imaginings* about "the old she-wolf" ultimately drive him into an early grave. Similarly, in the intriguing and unsettling "Out of the Deep," the protagonist (Jimmie) inherits the childhood home in which he once lived with an uncle whom he hated, only to endure a series of nocturnal encounters with a ghostly waiting staff which may well be conjured out of his own sub-conscious rather than any obviously paranormal realm.

In many ways, the protagonists of "Seaton's Aunt" and "Out of the Deep" confront (and succumb to) psychological horrors that have their roots in their own childhood experiences; and many of the most memorable stories in the collection draw on childhood fears of archetypal bogeymen ("The Giant"; "The Guardian") or employ an adult narrator's memories of mystical encounters with a fairy-world ("Miss Jemima"; "The Scarecrow"). De la Mare's child-protagonists are more open to the imaginative realm that his adult-protagonists merely sense; and many of the children's tales included in the collection rate amongst the most obviously fantastical. So, for example, in "The Riddle," a family of seven children disappear one by one into an oak chest, from which they never return; and in "Alice's Godmother," the title character pays a visit to her 350-year old godmother, who offers her the secret of eternal life, but only if she is willing to give up her happy home and come live with the ancient recluse. Alice's godmother's outlines the implications of her offer as follows:

> It means an immeasurable sea, infinite space, an endless vista—of time. It means freedom from the cares and anxieties and follies that are the lot of the poor creatures in the world

> beyond—living out their days in brutish stupidity. […] It means, my child, postponing a visit to a certain old friend of ours—whose name is Death ("Alice's Godmother," p. 258)

In this, she articulates her ability to offset the existential questions that haunts practically all of de la Mare's protagonists, both adult and child – the inevitable passing of time, and the isolation of the individual within modern "progressive" society. The former provides the premise of another of his most haunting vignettes, "The House," the protagonist of which (Mr Asprey) takes his leave of his house, cataloguing chances missed and promises unfulfilled as he wanders through the empty rooms. The latter is evident in a series of tales which feature protagonists who seek to escape the hustle and bustle of city life, encountering mysterious, reclusive figures in distant and wild landscapes ("The Creatures"; "Mr Kempe"), and in the recurring employment of train carriages and stations for both the action and the narration of his stories, indicating that many of his characters are quite literally in flux.

Stylistically, it is evident that de la Mare's intention throughout is usually to draw the reader's attention away from the "shocks" of the supernatural in favour of considering the existential concerns which recur throughout the stories. So, he frequently uses the device of the tale-within-the-tale, using first-person narrators either to tell their own stories ("The Vats"; "All Hallows"), or to frame or recount the tale of another narrator ("Promise at Dusk"); a high proportion of the stories are in fact "twice told," employing narrators who recount stories that others have told them. In "Promise at Dusk," for example, the frame narrator re-tells (word for word) a story which has been told to him by a friend of his. In this instance, the story effectively employs two first-person narrators, destabilising its narrative authority and leaving it up to the reader to decipher the significance of an obliquely-presented "promise." When de la Mare does employ a third-person narrator, more often than not the omniscient narrator will interject with comments that serve to debunk any suspense that might otherwise have built up. Moreover, many of the stories resist textual closure, and even their narrators frequently offer apologies about these meandering narratives – "The Bird of Travel," for example, is presented as "a rather pointless story" – and refuse to adhere to the stipulations set up by the narrator of "The Scarecrow" that:

> a story ought really to be like a piece of music. It should have a beginning and a middle and an end, though you could hardly say which is which when it all comes out together. It ought to be like a whiting with its tail in its mouth—but a live whiting of course. This one, you see, this one I am telling you, begins—and then goes off into nothing. ("The Scarecrow," p. 232)

These appeals to the audiences *within* the stories seem to be predicated on the need to establish that there is someone listening – as in de la Mare's most famous poem "The Listeners," these narrators seem repeatedly to ask "Is there anybody there?" Such concerns about audience are further evident in the recurring theme of the afterlife of the literary work and the written word which is found in some of the most interesting stories in the volume. In "The Green Room," Alan, a habitual browser at Mr Elliot's book shop, uncovers the unpublished manuscripts of the mysterious female figure by whom he is "haunted," which he promptly seeks to publish (with catastrophic results). Similarly, in "A Revenant," a professor gives a lecture on the writings of Edgar Allen Poe, which is seemingly attended by the (none-too-impressed) ghost of the author himself.

De la Mare's self-conscious musings on the afterlife of literary works and their authors seem to reflect an underlying theme of authorial anxiety that recurs throughout the volume, not only that his words will be read and the stories heard, but that they will continue to exist after the author's demise. It is a concern that this handsome new edition of his supernatural fiction serves admirably to offset, as Tartarus Press

continues its commitment to uncovering the work of forgotten practitioners of the genre. Commendable as it is to reconstruct de la Mare's *oeuvre* in this way, though, at times it does serve to expose his tendency to repeat motifs and narrative structures; and so these tales are perhaps best consumed individually rather than wolfed down in a single sitting, in order to savour them to the full. All in all, though, this is a fine collection and an admirable addition to Tartarus' ever-expanding catalogue of worthy reprints.

JENNY McDONNELL

Stephen D. Youngkin, *The Lost One: A Life of Peter Lorre*
University Press of Kentucky, 2005

In perhaps the most famous image from Fritz Lang's *M*, Peter Lorre, as the child killer Hans Beckert, looks into a shop-front mirror and sees the title letter imprinted in chalk on his coat – "M" for "Murderer". For Beckert, literally a marked man, it is the beginning of the end. For Lorre himself, the image, in addition to visually capturing the duality that lay at the heart of his screen persona, can be said to have marked both the beginning and the end: from 1931, the year of *M*'s release, till his death in 1964, the actor, like so many of Lang's fictional protagonists, was hounded by a malignant Fate, in the shape of his own creation, which he could never escape. Wherever he went, it seems, from Germany to Britain and then to America, Peter Lorre would always find the letter "M" indelibly stamped on his shoulder.

Stephen D. Youngkin's interest in Lorre stretches back at least as far as 1982, when he co-wrote *The Films of Peter Lorre*, and it is self-evident that his monumental, 613-page biography, entitled *The Lost One: A Life of Peter Lorre*, is the culmination of a lifetime's devotion to his subject. Containing a quite staggering array of interviews with Lorre's family and colleagues, many now deceased, and an impressive amount of research, particularly from contemporary German sources, it is equally clear that his book will be considered the last word on the actor best-remembered by the general public as Dr. Gogol in *Mad Love* (1935), Mr. Moto in the eponymous series of the late 1930s, and, of course, the malignant but strangely appealing Joel Cairo in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941).

Born László Loewenstein in Hungary in 1904, Lorre was the son of a Jewish accountant and reserve officer in the Austro-Hungarian army. Following what seems to have been a relatively happy, if somewhat unsettled, childhood, in 1923 Lorre abandoned his position in a Viennese bank in favour of the stage, and was eventually accepted into an experimental company known as the Theatre of Spontaneity, whose director bestowed upon him the name which he would retain for the rest of his life (the actor's talent for mimicry apparently inspiring his surname – "Lorre" being the German for "parrot"). During this period, Lorre underwent a botched abdominal operation which not only led to a series of related health problems but also a subsequent addiction to morphine.

With his highly distinctive looks, Lorre soon caught the attention of theatre critics in a series of performances often combining the comic and grotesque, before landing a small role in Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* in 1928. The following year, Lorre moved to Berlin and was cast in Brecht's production of *Pioniere in Ingolstadt*, receiving rave reviews for his portrayal of a local half-wit. More importantly, it marked the beginning of a collaboration with Brecht in which the playwright came to see Lorre as the embodiment of the radical, stripped-down, emotionally realistic style of theatre he (misleadingly) termed "epic", while Lorre himself became one of the most celebrated actors of Weimar Germany. In 1929, Lorre was approached (due to the efforts of his future wife, the actress Celia Lovsky) by Fritz Lang, the country's greatest film director, who immediately promised the apparently nonplussed Lorre that his next film, whatever it might be, would be written specifically for him.

When Lang duly reappeared, two years later, with the script of *M*, Lorre was in rehearsals for Brecht's *Mann ist Mann*, which would prove to be their last project together before being forced to flee Germany soon after the Nazis came to power in 1932. Lang, true to his sadistic reputation, reduced Lorre to a physical wreck during the shooting of *M*, on one occasion insisting on at least a dozen retakes of a minor close-up in which Beckert is kicked on the shin with a hob-nailed boot. The resultant film, however, was

a masterpiece, one which would act as the refugee Lorre's calling card to the world while at the same time fixing his screen image forever as either a pervert or a killer.

Exiled in Paris in 1934, Lorre was on the brink of penury when Alfred Hitchcock offered him the part of the sinister Abbott in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Lorre's casting, and the film's success, soon reached the ear of Columbia boss, Harry Cohn, who proceeded to invite Lorre to Hollywood. Having signed up the latest available Continental "sensation", however, it soon became clear that Cohn had no idea what to do with him, and Lorre, viewed as "difficult to cast", was forced to remain idle. After almost a year, Cohn received an approach from MGM, which wanted Lorre to star as the demented protagonist of *Mad Love*. Wary of being typecast, Lorre resisted the offer, having set his sights on an adaptation of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. He then proposed a *quid pro quo*, whereby Cohn agreed to back the latter project (the producer apparently thought it was a straightforward suspense yarn) in return for the loan-out. It was to prove the only occasion on which Lorre was able to use the prestige of his European reputation to make a film which reflected his own wide-ranging literary and intellectual interests. Despite Lorre's striking appearance as the bald-as-an-egg Gogol, *Mad Love* was received with indifference, and that, combined with the artistic and financial failure of *Crime and Punishment* (both films were released in 1935), effectively ended whatever chance Lorre may have had of becoming a top-billed character star.

In 1936, on his return from filming Hitchcock's *Secret Agent* in Britain, Lorre was released from his Columbia contract and moved to 20th Century-Fox, where he embarked on the eight-film series of spy stories featuring the inscrutable and rather sinister police agent, Mr. Moto. Enjoyable enough in an unambitious way, the films proved popular but made few demands on Lorre's acting ability. Physically, however, the movies exacted a toll on the accident-prone actor and it was not long before he tired of the character. More seriously, however, the pain incurred through stunt-related injuries only increased Lorre's ongoing dependence on drugs, and it was a relief to him when, in 1939, the series was cancelled in reaction to Japan's increasingly brutal policy of expansionism.

Opting to work as a freelance, Lorre then made what is now considered the first true *film noir*, *Stranger on the Third Floor* (1940), for RKO, and, in the following year, gave an impressive performance in Columbia's *The Face Behind the Mask* before finally finding a home at Warner Bros. following his remarkable portrayal of Joel Cairo in *The Maltese Falcon*, a film which Lorre would later cite as his best. Brilliantly directed by John Huston, *The Maltese Falcon* not only introduced Lorre to Humphrey Bogart, who became a lifelong friend, but also paired him for the first time with the mountainous Sydney Greenstreet, with whom he would form a memorable double-act in a further eight films, including *Casablanca* (1942) and *The Mask of Dimitrios* (1944), leading to them being unofficially dubbed "the Laurel and Hardy of Crime".

But while Lorre had entered a period of professional stability, if not contentment (Celia described his demeanour at Warner Bros. as "happily unhappy"), by 1947, his life away from the studio was in disarray. Having parted amicably from Celia in 1940 and married Karen Verne the following year, Lorre found himself constantly short of money, mainly due to his own spendthrift habits. Furthermore, his drug dependency had brought him to the notice of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics which forced him to undergo a cure of dubious efficacy at a sanitarium in Texas. But perhaps the most unsettling factor in Lorre's life at this point was the reappearance of Bertolt Brecht, who had arrived in America in 1941 and who took it upon himself to act as Lorre's artistic conscience, urging him to return to the theatre and fuelling the actor's own considerable doubts about the value and quality of his film work. In a more sinister vein, Lorre's friendship with Brecht (who, though never a member of the Communist Party, was

definitely of the Left) had led to him being labelled a "fellow-traveller" by the FBI, a stigma which led to his departure from Warner Bros. shortly thereafter.

In 1949, Lorre suffered the ignominy of being forced to declare bankruptcy. Later that year, he returned to Germany, where he managed to ignore overtures from Brecht to join him in East Berlin, and to set up his only outing as a director. *Der Verlorene* (*The Lost One*, 1951), in which Lorre also starred, sounds like a worthy, if predictably grim, attempt to examine the political pathology of Nazi Germany through the character of a research scientist who, having killed his fiancée for betraying his work to the Allies, is then protected by the Nazis, who are more concerned that he continue his work than in seeing justice done. Haunted by his crime, the scientist disintegrates morally and commits further outrages before finally finding freedom through suicide. Artistically, *Der Verlorene* seems to have reflected the influences of both Brecht and Lang, combining a naturalistic acting style and overall neo-realist look with occasional expressionist set-pieces deliberating reminiscent of *M*. Almost inevitably, the film proved to be a rather unwieldy clash of styles, and failed to find an audience.

Bitterly disappointed, Lorre returned to the States, relying on work in television in the lulls between film work. In 1962, two years after the embarrassment of appearing in *Scent of Mystery* (the first film in Smell-O-Vision), Lorre found amusement, if not contentment, in making two films based – extremely loosely – on the works of one of his favourite authors, Edgar Allan Poe. In both *Tales of Terror* (1962) and *The Raven* (1963), Lorre was encouraged by director Roger Corman to improvise his own lines, thereby contributing greatly to their eventual success. In March, 1964, the day after a joint visit from his third wife (from whom he was separated) and his two ex-wives, Lorre died of a brain haemorrhage. When his estate was assessed, he was found to have been insolvent.

In 1939, Lorre ruefully remarked that, "Ever since I came to this country I've been trying to live down my past. That picture 'M' has haunted me everywhere I've gone." At other times, perhaps aware that he would never again be offered work of similar stature, Lorre would speak more fondly of the film. On the whole, Youngkin tends to side with his subject on the double-edged nature of *M*'s effect on Lorre's subsequent career, and clearly feels that the actor was shamefully misused by Hollywood. While that may well be true, there is an implication throughout the book that Lorre's case was in some way exceptional – which, unfortunately, it was not. An obvious parallel can be drawn between Lorre and his compatriot, Bela Lugosi. Both men made their mark in the same year, 1931, in films (*M* and *Dracula* respectively) which permanently defined their screen personas; both expected better opportunities in Hollywood than they received; and both ended their careers addicted to morphine and playing grotesque parodies of their earlier selves.

Although *The Lost One* undoubtedly succeeds in being the last word on its subject (and is also a beautifully produced book), there are occasional omissions that may strike the reader as puzzling. For instance, it is hard to believe that Lorre's relationship with director and fellow countryman, Michael Curtiz, did not extend beyond the sort of pranks inflicted on that long-suffering perfectionist by Errol Flynn and David Niven, and there is no mention of Lorre's wonderful assessment of Curtiz as a man who "ate films and excreted them". It is also somewhat irritating to find, on page 432, an anecdote concerning Lorre's willingness to help less confident colleagues which could just as easily have been included on page 227, in which the same actress relays a similar story concerning the same film. And lastly, while Youngkin lists in the epilogue the many posthumous reincarnations of Peter Lorre in various media, including music, he has shamefully neglected to include the celebrated opening lyrics of Al Stewart's 1976 hit, *Year of the Cat*, which, of course, went like this: "On a morning from a Bogart movie/ In a

country where they turn back time/ You go strolling through the crowd like Peter Lorre/ Contemplating a crime." Such minor flaws, however, are few and far between, and should do nothing to deter readers from parting with the not-insubstantial asking price for what is an exceptional study of an exceptional actor.

JOHN EXSHAW