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The Gothic - Probing the Boundaries

Edited by

Eoghain Hamilton

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The Gothic - Probing the Boundaries

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Introduction

Eoghain Hamilton

'Listen to them, the children of the night. What music they make!' - Bram Stoker

In May of 2010, a group of scholars with various academic backgrounds from all corners of the world met in Prague to discuss the Gothic, including its sub-genres and expanding definitions. It was the first global conference of its kind and it brought about a number of interesting submissions which have consequently added to the body of knowledge and understanding perceived to be 'Gothic.' Within this eBook you will find a representative sample of the work that was presented then.

Since the 1960's 'the Gothic' has increasingly interested academics. As a genre, it remains difficult to define, since the term is constantly expanding to include areas of film, music, fashion and other factions of popular culture. Both Gothic's history and its current status show the flexibility of applying the term in a variety of media.

Gothic literature developed as a branch of Romanticism in the 18th century, coinciding with both the social dislocations caused by industrial revolution and an increasing emphasis on science and reason that questioned the role of God in the world. This shifting of the ground beneath society led to an ontological questioning that gave rise to a general unease and in doing so, the first defining feature of the Gothic was born, it being that the Gothic arises at times of societal upheaval or threat. Walpole's *Castle of Otranto,* Lewis's *The Monk,* and Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* are early examples of the Gothic novel.

One could say, that from this point onwards, the Gothic crystallised into a form that, at its heart, was an expression of fear or anxiety at man's place in the world. Of course fear can be expressed in many ways; as the Gothic novel grew in popularity, so did many of the ways in which it expressed human fears and anxieties. Very quickly these expressions became common place within Gothic literature and changed into what can be described as recognisable conventions - a brooding atmosphere of fear, female oppression, corrupt aristocrats, family decay, immurement, journeys in weird and exotic locations, old buildings, graveyards, deviant clergy (particularly Catholic clergy) - all of these expressions of anxiety within the human psyche.

Today 'the Gothic' is much more than a set of the late eighteenth-century tropes. It has expanded into all aspects of popular culture, cinema, fashion, music, and even since the 1980s, as the manifestation of the new and at times maligned 'Goth' culture. These essays demonstrate the sheer diversity of subject matter on which the Gothic now touches. In addition to the prerequisite musings on Vampires, Demons and the Supernatural, you will find more exotic examples of the Gothic, which range from the fashion of Gothic Lolitas in Hong Kong, to insightful comments on cult classics like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, to comparisons of Gothic music of the 1980s with classic Gothic literature and film.

Part one of this volume sets the stage for the conference with an exploration of the different features within Gothic literature. Maria Lima examines Gothic aesthetics in their darker forms. Lima's paper argues that Gothic aesthetics may mask more perverse influences which each one of us can, at times, possess. Jean-Baptiste Dussert examines different articulations of the Gothic tradition through the lens of the American Gothic. Starting with the novel *Wieland* (1798) by Charles B. Brown, Dussert traces the transposition of the Gothic aesthetic into the American wilderness. Dussert argues that this transposition is one of the contributing factors to the growth of the transcendentalist movement.

Cornelia Lippert explores Gothic themes such as liminality, moral choice and rites of passage in Stephen King's post-apocalyptic novel, *The Stand* (1978). In particular, Lippert compares King's villain, Randall Flagg, to the traditional Gothic villain of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Eoghain Hamilton explores Gothic features in a Gaelic context in the short story and minor vampire classic 'Ken's Mystery' (1887). Hamilton's paper also examines the Gothic features of 'Ken's Mystery' through a post-colonial lens. In this respect, his paper identifies a new and interesting portrayal of Irish identity that is a refreshing antidote to nineteenth century stereotypical depictions of the Irish. Finally, in part one, Angela Fodale explores the gothic elements in Haendel's opera *Ariodante* (1735). Fodale argues that *Ariodante* written and performed almost 30 years before Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), can be read as an earlier example of gothic novel.

Part two examines representations of the Gothic in cinema. Niall O'Donnell compares representations of North-Western European identity as contrasted with Southern and Eastern European identities (as well as nationalities from further afield) in the Gothic literature of the late 18th century and classic Hollywood horror cinema of the 1930s. His comparison is notable for its interpretation of early 1930s horror cinema including such works as *Dracula* (1931), *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Mummy* (1932). Armando Rotondi looks at the effect of classic Gothic cinema on the highly entertaining and humorous *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975). Rotondi particularly investigates the influence of James Whale's *The Old Dark House* (1932) on the creation of the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

Gord Barentsen explores the shattering tension of adolescent sexuality in William Friedkin's film *The Exorcist* (1973). In his paper, Barentsen focuses his attention on the demon 'Pazuzu' and his role in the character Regan's possession in an attempt to shed light on the shattering nature of demonic sexuality constituting the hermeneutic core of *The Exorcist*.

Dagmara Zając continues the examination of Gothic cinema when she investigates the perils of over interpretation of onscreen horrors. Zając argues that the films which primarily should be considered and analysed as Gothic are the early Hollywood horror classics. Accordingly, Zając's paper attempts at identifying the parallels and connections between early Gothic literature and the Gothic cinema of 1930s.

In part three the role of sex and sexuality in Gothic popular culture is examined. Anne Peirson Smith investigates Gothic Lolita culture in Hong Kong. Smith, a professor at the City of Hong Kong University, has spent several years researching Gothic Lolis and their customs. Her paper provides a unique insight into an unusual and at times controversial topic. In her interesting investigation, Smith discovers that the Gothic Lolita is a multi-vocal, contested experience, representing different things to different participants, including the reaffirmation of identity and an escape from reality in an attempt to recapture childhood innocence.

Yvonne Leffler critiques the new, and, it seems, ever-expanding world of the *Twilight* and *True Blood* series in her aptly named paper 'Chick Fang.' Leffler's paper inspires a kind of recognition in the reader that perhaps it is time the term 'Chick Fang' is now adopted as a 'catch all' phrase to describe the world of teenage vampire fiction. Leffler argues that these modern gothic 'Chick Fang' stories reflect important contemporary trends that both confirm and challenge current ideas on the ideal way of life in postmodern society. Shuen Chan investigates the entangled relationship between the Gothic and Queer Studies. In her paper, Chan uses a Queer interpretation of the Hong Kong film *Demi-Haunted* to suggest that Gothic, when applied to sexual taboo, has the power to both superficially enable and disable a taboo from being fully outed. Finally, Dorota Wiśniewska explores some interesting perspectives on the portrayal of sexuality in American horror film and fiction. Her paper provides a unique insight into the ever-changing nature of what we consider monstrous.

Part four explores spectacles of the Gothic. Jonathan Nelson looks at the spectacle of the vampire through a Platonic lens and examines the possibility that the vampire is in its purest form or essence, a destructive force as opposed to a creative one.

Kevin Corstorphine provides an insight into the novels of J.A Lindquist's novels *Let the Right One In* (2004) and *Handling the Undead* (2005). *Let the Right One In* has recently been adapted for the screen in both Swedish and English. Corstorphine argues that interpretations of Lindqvist's work as nihilistic or solipsistic are misinterpretations that fail to take account of the cultural and generational contexts that lend his work the capacity to create meaning in a post-ideological world. Maria Parrino explores the differing roles of food, blood and body in *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. Parrino pays particular attention to Shelley's monster and his experience with, and growing understanding of, food in the novel. She differentiates this relationship with the relationship of food in *Dracula* and explains how these relationships mark the difference between the species portrayed in both novels.

In part five, the role of Death in Gothic literature and popular culture is examined. Jesse Norford traces the development of modern horror in the work of H.P Lovecraft. Norford argues that what is conventionally known as 'Lovecraftian horror' is rooted in late-nineteenth-century cultural fears and desires that arose in

response to a renewed interest in paganism and the occult. Using the theme of death as his starting point, Norford's cites the influence of Margaret Murray's *Witch Cult in Western Europe* on Lovecraft's lesser known works such as 'The Festival.' Anna Milione completes this collection with her exploration of the role of death in Goth music of the early 1980's. Anna's paper traces the early origins of the pop band The Cure and examines the influence of Graveyard poetry on the band's seminal albums *Faith* and *Seventeen Seconds*. Milione suggests that both The Cure and the wider Goth music of the eighties can be regarded as appropriation and reinterpretation of the philosophy of traditional Gothic texts particularly the Graveyard Poetry of the eighteenth century. In the final paper of this eBook, Jacqueline de Giacomo traces the central position of death in prominent narrative structures and millennial gothic fictions. Her paper also evaluates changing visions of death as they emerge beyond the (all too often) sanitised Eros/Thanatos images provided by the contemporary vampire romance or dystopian apocalyptic texts.

What remains constant about the Gothic is that it is an ever-expanding field. The Gothic continues to find new modes of expression in areas of popular culture and even in our daily lives. One thing is certain: as the technological age continues to bring about societal change, so too will the Gothic continue to provide an outlet for expression of humanities deepest fears and wildest fantasies in the face of that change. The Gothic has always been a means of questioning man's place in the world. Like the vampire who continues to return from the grave to walk and feed among the living, the Gothic looks set to continue to do so for some time to come.

As the editor of this eBook, I would like to thank all the conference delegates who contributed to this compilation of essays. I would also like to thank everyone who travelled from far and wide to attend the conference. The field of Gothic studies has benefitted from your contributions. As children of the night you have made the 'sweet music' Stoker speaks of! A special note of gratitude goes to Dr Sorcha Ní Fhlainn, Trinity College Dublin, who provided advice, encouragement, and support to the conference delegates and in particular to the editor. Finally, I would also like to thank Dr Rob Fisher of Inter-Disciplinary.Net for publishing this volume.

Part 1

Gothic Sets the Stage

The Paradox of Horror: The Dark Side of Gothic Aesthetics

Maria Antónia Lima

Abstract
One of the most interesting aspects of the Gothic is its permanent epistemological and moral ambiguity, which results from its attention to the contradictory nature of a complex reality, where nothing is what it seems. This play of appearances has given many writers and artists the opportunity for exploring what Tom Gunning called 'the aesthetics of astonishment,' that describes many attractions and illusions of wondrous worlds, created to inspire curiosity, shock and fascination. Revealing the contradictions and ambivalences of many forms of lives and feelings, the Gothic could not escape the strong effect of the paradoxes provoked by the objects of its own creation, a fact that Noël Carroll explained in *The Philosophy of Horror or the Paradoxes of the Heart*. Dealing with the dark side of human experience and with its obscure duplicities, where the boundaries between good and evil blur, the Gothic possesses a double nature, which does not allow it to avoid the ambivalent effect of its aesthetics. Consequently, many expressions of horror are often self-referential, as Poe's 'Oval Portrait,' King's *Misery* or Ellis' *Lunar Park*, where both writers and protagonists are haunted by their creations. It seems that like its readers, characters and creators, Gothic cannot escape its original and innate perversity. As Richard Benton says in 'The Problems of Literary Gothicism,' we should ask if we are not all rebels and Satanists underneath the skin and if our fascination with dark characters does not reveal our perverse impulses and 'the tigers we ride on within the unconscious depths of our inner selves.' Does Gothic aesthetics help to tame those tigers or does it make them even more violent? Is Gothic an expression of our contemporary fears, or does it create our own nightmares? Robert Bloch said 'horror is the removal of masks,' but Gothic, itself, has masks, that also need to be removed.

Key Words: Gothic, paradox, terror, horror, dark side, aesthetics, duplicity.

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In the chapter 'The Whiteness of the Whale' from *Moby-Dick*, the narrator Ishmael thinks about the possibility that the White Whale could be at the same time good and evil; beautiful and terrible. In *The Philosophy of Horror* (1990), Noël Carroll comments:

> … with special reference to the paradox of horror, monsters, the objects of art-horror, are themselves sources of ambivalent responses, for as violations of standing cultural categories, they

> are disturbing and disgusting, but, at the same time, they are also objects of fascination.[1]

This permanent duality in the characters or objects of horror translates the duplicity inherent to the Gothic itself, exposing its double nature and its capacity to provoke effects of horror mixed with those associated with pleasure and beauty. The ambiguity and contradiction of its origin explains its inevitable association with the Sublime, the most ambiguous aesthetic category which Burke had defined in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), where he considered that everything that originates mental images of danger, agony or fear can be transformed into a powerful source of terror and sublime, concluding that: 'Whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to sight, is sublime too.'[2] The concept of 'delightful horror' presented by Burke demonstrated that the Sublime could be built on terror, which transgressed certain conventional aesthetic principles. In *The Romantic Agony* (1933), Mario Praz[3] referred to a 'new kind of thrill' originated from a new sense of beauty in combination with pleasure and pain, which could be represented by the image of the awful and fascinating Medusa. When aesthetically felt, pain can cause pleasure and this negative pleasure was also analysed by Samuel Monk in *The Sublime* (1960), where he concludes that 'the gothic novel exists almost purely for the sake of evoking pleasant terror.'[4] Jean-François Lyotard also observed that the sublime sentiment is a strong and equivocal emotion, carrying with it both pleasure and pain. In *L'inhumain* (1988), Lyotard opposed the Sublime to the didactic of *tecknè rhétorikè*, because he considered it was provoked by the threat that nothing may occur, a white page being a possible source of terror for many authors and creators, whose art could be a witness of the inexpressible.[5] Vijay Mishra called our attention to the paradox of representation in *The Gothic Sublime* (1993),[6] where he evoked Schiller, Hegel and Schopenhauer to explain the difference between the romantic and the gothic sublime, which is nowadays more interested in the condition of the unrepresentability than in the representation of a transcendental presence, because the negativity that governs the sublime is created by the fact that the idea of death is beyond all representation. Terror comes from this recognition and the Sublime from the tension created between the attraction and the repulsion for the ineffable. Whenever an object of thought resists representation, we experience a certain sublimity caused by an epistemological conflict between the idea and its representation that also translates the conflict between life and death, the Freudian conflict between the instincts of preservation (Eros) and the instincts of death (Thanatos), which are always present in those situations when there is a rational will to maintain the control of the reason, but at the same time an irrational desire of losing it. In the 'Imp of Perverse,' Poe dealt with the paradoxical nature of our most irrational impulses being very aware of what he called, in 'The Fall of the House of Usher,' 'the paradoxical law of all sentiments having terror as a basis.'[7]

In *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Baudelaire had already demonstrated that it was possible to associate the opposite feelings of voluptuousness and sadness in order to create the roots for modern art, whose aesthetics is in several aspects in tune with the Gothic mode.

Some critical voices have been taking note of this gothic paradox with a clear persistency. Edith Birkhead in *The Tale of Terror* (1921) perceived an emotional ambivalence in the contradictory feeling of 'Fearful joy' so present in many works of gothic fiction.[8] Eino Railo, in *The Haunted Castle* (1927), also refers the ambivalence in the emotion of terror and its capacity to provoke pleasure and fear. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1975) identified the Gothic with an aesthetics based on the pleasure of fear. Elisabeth MacAndrew, in *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction* (1979), felt the presence of the emotional duplicity which she considered adequate to the gothic fictional process. Patrick Day, *In the Circles of Fear and Desire* (1985), noticed the power of the Gothic to transform anxieties and fears into pleasures. Maggie Kilgour, in *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (1995) perceived in Gothic a 'puzzling contradiction'[9] created by its simultaneous subversion and reaffirmation of the moral and social order, which reveals the antagonism of the moral purpose of certain gothic novels and the pleasure created by the aesthetic fruition of terror. A fact that led Stephen King to conclude that the main purpose of the Gothic 'is to reaffirm the virtues of the norm by showing us what awful things happen to people who venture into taboo lands.'[10] Fred Botting, in *Gothic* (1996), considered that the Gothic does not belong to darkness nor to light, nor to reason or moral, superstition or corruption, good or evil, because it has to do with both poles of the opposition due to their constant dependence which led him to conclude that the 'objects of terror and horror not only provoke repugnance, disgust and recoil, but also engage readers' interest, fascinating and attracting them. Threats are spiced with thrills, terrors with delights, horrors with pleasures.'[11] The ambivalent nature of the Gothic was also apprehended by Dani Cavallaro in *The Gothic Vision - Three Centuries of Horror, Terror and Fear* (2002), where he noticed the contradictory feelings of revulsion and fascination provoked by gothic narratives, which use darkness with negative and positive connotations turning it into an example of gothic ambivalence, because as he concludes: 'darkness is an ambivalent phenomenon, associated, on the one hand, with chaos and deception, and on the other with illumination and truth.'[12] Cavallaro also recognises the double nature of these narratives of darkness, whose 'Gothicity primarily refers to tales of obsession and haunting which employ images of disorder, alienation and monstrosity for the purposes of both entertainment and ideological reflection.'[13]

As we have already observed, this gothic duplicity comes from its sublime dimension which creates a concern with the production of pleasurable fear that stimulates the thrill of the forbidden underlining a persistent propensity for subversion. The association of terror and beauty also has very positive effects,

because they are two opposite poles that offer the possibility, as Devendra Varma recognises, of reviving 'our apprehension of life itself by enlarging our sensibility, making readers more conscious of the kinship of terror and beauty and renewing awestruck wonder at possible forms of being.'[14] The contact with so many possible forms of life that surpass the limits of many conventional categories, in a genre so often associated with the theme of death, seems to underline the paradoxical nature of the Gothic, which seems to have the intention of preserving life in the face of much death. In an essay entitled 'Contemporary Gothic: Why We Need It,' Steven Bruhm refers to the positive effects of Gothic in readers who seem to need it to feel more alive, because if a horror story can make their blood pressure rise, this shows that Gothic produces symptoms of life in spite of recreating death, which reveals its paradoxical tendency to be attracted by pleasant terrifying subjects in order to know life better, which led this author to the conclusion that 'Paradoxically, we need the consistent consciousness of death provided by the Gothic in order to understand and want that life.'[15]

The excessive preoccupation with the darker side of human life - death, crime, insanity and perversion - can cause obsessions and apocalyptic visions which are not only natural and adequate to certain existential experiences in this *fin-de millennium*, but they can also translate the perverse effect of a very nihilistic and negative aesthetics that, instead of exorcising our worst fears and ghosts, can be used to turn them even more disturbing, as it happened, in 'The Fall of the House of Usher,' with the reading of 'Mad Trist' by Poe's narrator to calm down the nerves of a very disturbed Roderick Usher, when he was on the brink of madness and very close to his psychological disintegration, a ruin which the best forms of art and literature were not able to avoid. All the works of art, produced by Usher, are proof of his anxiety, and all of them are evidences of his psychological disorders revealing that his terror of the soul dominated him completely, in spite of his artistic activities. In the poem 'The Haunted Palace,' a poetic equivalent to the 'House of Usher,' we can find the verses that translate the power of evil of an irrational force able to cause a total unbalance in human mind: 'But evil things, in robes of sorrow, / Assailed the monarch's high estate.'[16] Art and literature seem to be totally impotent against the nightmare of a mind haunted by his terrible memories, and at the end chaos triumphs over order, which questions the cathartic power of art in general and Poe's gothic fiction, in particular, to solve mental breakdowns. In a letter to Rufus Griswold, Poe explained that: 'By "The Haunted Palace" I mean to imply a mind haunted by phantasms - a disordered brain.'[17] This disordered brain seems not only to be a metaphor for Usher disturbances, but also for Poe's personal disorders, which the ambivalent power of his art could help to mitigate or to stimulate turning him into an addict to a kind of 'perverse art.' In *The Romance in America* (1969), Joel Porte stated that 'Usher is a portrait, somewhat caricatured, of the artistic temperament in its most decadent - that is, romantic - state.'[18] This very conscious portrait of the artist as a madman, victim of

his perverse impulses, reveals the self-referential nature of the Gothic and its awareness about its own duplicities and dangers.

One of these dangers consists in the unstable emotional duplicity involved in the aesthetics of the Gothic Sublime. The ambivalent relations between pleasure and pain or between terror and beauty can be dangerous whenever their balance is lost, revealing the dark side of the paradox of sublimity. This fact is very often dramatised in Gothic fiction through some Faustian characters who possess a fatal curiosity that leads them to transcend the limits of their human condition through artistic or scientific experiences that put them and other human beings at risk due to their total submission to uncontrollable and perverse impulses. In *Forbidden Knowledge* (1996), Roger Shattuck used the term 'pleonexia' to translate this irresistible will to surpass the limits of our human condition, considering it 'an overweening resolve to reach beyond limits, particularly limits on knowledge, even at the risk of harming others.'[19] Both authors and characters in the Gothic mode are victims of these irrational impulses, which are exposed in several fictions dedicated to the theme of the Double, where they express their fascination for the abominable. Melville, for instance, when he finished *Moby-Dick*, confessed that he had written a very wicked book, but he felt spotless as a lamb. Charles Brockden Brown had already clarified his readers when he stated that '[g]reat energy employed in the promotion of vicious purposes constitutes a very useful spectacle.'[20] Stephen King also assumed his dark side when he revealed that his destructive side was very powerful in his books, which led him to confess 'Yes, folks, in the *Stand* I got a chance to scrub the whole human race, and it was *fun*!'[21]

Consequently, there could be a potential double effect in every gothic narrative. On the one hand, it can be seen as a form of personal therapy and, on the other, it can be used to justify destructive acts. In *Terrors of Uncertainty* (1989), Joseph Grixti defends that fictional violence possesses cathartic properties, which can explain certain Stephen King's assertions about the necessity of occasionally 'lifting a trapdoor in the civilized forebrain and throwing a basket of raw meat to the hungry alligators swimming around in that subterranean river beneath.'[22] However, some alligators can never be totally satisfied, and we should be aware of this uncertainty, because the subversive powers of the Gothic experience usually avoid old certainties and raise disturbing doubts. Through horror stories we have learned that a Dionysian force may evade our Apollonian status quo without warning. Dependent on the tension of opposites, the Gothic possesses a duplicity we should never ignore, because, as David Punter says, in *Gothic Pathologies* (1998), 'Gothic is always that which is other than itself.'[23]

The Gothic being 'a very knowing and self-aware genre,'[24] as Catherine Spooner observed in *Contemporary Gothic* (2006), where she underlined its great degree of self-consciousness, it is just natural we could question its creative process and its effects, as Mary Shelley did when she called *Frankenstein* her

'hideous progeny.' In *Delights of Terror* (1983), Terry Heller analysed the aesthetic experience of terror concluding that

> [s]ensational tales of terror are unique in that within their aesthetically closed forms, they encourage the entertainment of catastrophe. The reader can pretend to be terrified without the risk of a really terrifying experience. The play of art makes a dangerous part of the world available to imagination.[25]

However, nothing is purely aesthetic and when art transcends all its limits it can turn into a very real source of danger and destruction. Perhaps it is relevant to ask whether the manifestation of horror in creativity is a response to a world desensitised to violence, or if it helps to create a cycle of violent actions stimulated by all the sensationalist images of crime and death transmitted in violent films, music, video games and some other forms of gothic culture. Virginia Tech and Columbine High School Massacre show that human minds are much too fragile and vulnerable not to be afraid of these uncertainties.

Notes

[1] N. Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror or the Paradoxes of the Heart*, Routledge, New York, 1990, p. 188.
[2] E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990, p. 53.
[3] M. Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, Oxford University Press, London, 1933.
[4] S. Monk, *The Sublime - A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII - Century England*, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1960, p. 90.
[5] J. F. Lyotard, *L'inhumain - Causeries sur le Temps*, Galilée, Paris, 1988.
[6] V. Mishra, *The Gothic Sublime*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1993.
[7] E. Poe, 'The Fall of the House of Usher', in *Poetry and Tales*, P. F. Quinn (ed), The Library of America, New York, 1984, p. 319.
[8] E. Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror*, Constable & Company Limited, London, 1921.
[9] M. Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, Routledge, London, 1995, p. 10.
[10] S. King, *Danse Macabre*, Berkley Books, New York, 1981, pp. 442-443.
[11] F. Botting, *Gothic*, Routledge, New York, 1996, p. 9.
[12] C. Cavallaro, *The Gothic Vision - Three Centuries of Horror, Terror and Fear*, Continuum, London, 2002, p. viii.
[13] Cavallaro, p. 8.
[14] D. Varma, *The Gothic Flame*, Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, NJ, 1987, p. 226.

[15] S. Bruhm, 'Contemporary Gothic: Why We Need it', in *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, J. E. Hogle (ed), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 274.
[16] E. Poe, 'The Fall of the House of Usher', in *Poetry and Tales*, The Library of America, New York, 1984, p. 326.
[17] E. Poe, 'Letter to Rufus W. Griswold' (Philadelphia, May 29, 1841), in *The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe*, Vol. I, J. W. Ostrom (ed), Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1948, p. 161.
[18] J. Porte, *The Romance in America*, Wesleyan University Press, Connecticut, 1969, p. 61.
[19] R. Shattuck, *Forbidden Knowledge*, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1996, p. 171.
[20] C. B. Brown, *Weekly Magazine*, No. 1, 17th March, 1798, p. 202.
[21] King, p. 450.
[22] King, p. 205.
[23] D. Punter, *Gothic Pathologies - The Text, The Body and The Law*, Macmillan, London, 1998, p. 1.
[24] C. Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic*, Reaktion Books, London, 2006, p. 23.
[25] T. Heller, *Delights of Terror*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1983, p. 29.

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From Gothicism to Transcendentalism: The Birth of a Nation's Culture

Jean-Baptiste Dussert

Abstract
The aim of this paper[1] is, starting from the novel *Wieland* (1798) by Charles B. Brown, which is considered as the first American Gothic novel, to study an important articulation of this tradition. First, this fiction gathers the topics invented by Horace Walpole and his successors, but it differs from these British narratives in reducing their erotic connotation and increasing the supernatural dimension of that genre. Indeed, this story delivers a criticism of superstition and fanaticism, which is all the more singular since, from a European point of view, the first America appears like the ground of election for Puritanism. The peculiarity of this religious feeling, tinged with purity, abnegation and a kind of ingenuousness, suits perfectly to that virgin country and becomes its identity. Secondly, the transposition of the Gothic aesthetic and sensibility into the wilderness seems to me one of the causes of transcendentalism. But, how did the American own philosophy take root in the British Gothic tradition, when Ralph W. Emerson wrote: 'We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe?' I will try to clarify that original articulation between Gothicism and Romanticism, that gave rise to a nation's culture.

Key Words: Gothic novel, Transcendentalism, colonialism, fanaticism, Puritanism, American Revolution.

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It is not surprising that the Gothic novel was the literary genre that emerged as the only one likely to be that of the United States of America, if we consider that its archetype, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), by Horace Walpole, inspired a universe of fiction, which was especially in vogue in England during the second part of the eighteenth century, and it was from the British Crown that the thirteen colonies took their independence during the same time. It leads one to suppose that politics overrides the reader's sensitivity and imagination, and that a young nation takes more time to develop an original culture than to endow a constitution. Thus, even after the Revolution, America continued under the strong influence of British Civilisation. A problem that we must consider is whether the Gothic atmosphere could be transposed or take root in North America, in a virgin land, not in the sense that there was no culture in it, seeing that American Indians had filled these regions with their own traditions and legends, but that the characteristics of this novelistic genre did not really exist in American society. Seemingly there was no ancestral fortress, no decadent aristocracy, no tyrannical religion, no age-old legend in existence to serve as the settling for that medieval world that is necessary for the

growth of Gothic. Indeed, a great number of Gothic stories consisted of the sudden emergence, or rather resurgence, in modernity, of an archaism that came from the Dark Ages, for which there was no apparent equivalent in the New World. But this interpretation is perhaps too simple, and this literary acclimatisation might be the better way to understand American society at its origin, to grasp its relative complexity, and to gather the scattered and sometimes contradictory elements of the culture of a budding nation. I would particularly like just to connect the birth of this literature to a more original aspect of American creation at the time: Transcendentalism. I will probe two questions: what was the novelty of the American Gothic novel in its early stages, and what relationship could be established between it and Transcendentalism, the first original and major intellectual movement in North America?

The plot of a traditional Gothic novel needs, at its basis, the figure of an oppressor. In *Wieland* (1798), by Charles Brockden Brown, which is the first American Gothic novel, this function is personified by the character of Carwin. Although he 'was an Englishman by birth, and, perhaps, a Protestant by education,'[2] he 'had embraced the catholic religion, and adopted a Spanish name instead of his own.'[3] These biographical elements are enough to make the reader wary of him, for the Gothic genre was the universe of one nation, England, and was thus characterised by an Anglican sensibility. For this reason, the villain is often a priest or a monk from Italy, or even better, from Spain, which is supposed to be under the Catholic Church and the rule of the Holy Inquisition. The Gothic genre can then be partly interpreted as a criticism of the fundamentalism and obscurantism of Rome, of persecutions trigged by this institution. Characterised in this way, Carwin becomes irremediably a 'stranger,' embodying the motives of the schism and of the religious wars. The criticism of Catholicism is all the more virulent since its rigorism does not correspond to saintliness, and, actually, conceals vice. Carwin seems to correspond to this criticism, when after a moralising discourse that suits his austere appearance, he faced alone Clara Wieland, whom he desires, and who is destined to be the victim of the tale. Moreover, this scene depicts a rare occurrence of eroticism in early American literature of this period, seeing that it begins with Clara speaking the following words: 'I was alone. My habit suited the hour, and the place, and the warmth of the season. All succour was remote. He had placed himself between me and the door.'[4] So, she is half-clothed, at Carwin's mercy, and the couple forms the traditional Gothic relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. In reading this scene, we might believe that this first American Gothic novel was nothing more than a copy of the European, but there are some distinctive features which appear, that are due to its relocation in the New World. The plot involves more than the confrontation between a libertine man and an ingenuous girl, for a third type of character was introduced in the American novel, directly inherited from the history of the populating of the thirteen colonies. I am, of course, referring to Puritanism.

Each of the immigrants offered a dichotomy of personalities, in the sense that they were torn between the purity of faith and the temptation to fanaticism. *Wieland* thus describes perfectly the epic of Clara's parents. Her father turned to a great piety, so that his 'Residence in England [became] almost impossible, on account of his religious tenets'[5] and that he 'embarked for Philadelphia,'[6] where he settled with his wife. The father is described as being 'visited afresh by devotional contemplation.'[7]

At a certain point, the reader asks himself why the narrator is telling him the story of this genealogy and of the devotion of the parents, because they die at the very beginning of the novel and the children are not raised with that same religious fervour. Clara stresses this: 'Our education had been modelled by no religious standard. We were left to the guidance of our own understanding, and the casual impressions which society might make upon us.'[8] So, when the drama reaches its peak, when she finds her sister-in-law and children murdered, she and the reader immediately accuse Carwin, for in a traditional Gothic novel, he would have to be the killer. But, it was Clara's brother, Theodore, who committed these homicides. This drastically changes the moral of the story, introduces a break with the traditional Gothic genre, and perhaps gives it a larger intellectual importance. If Theodore became a murderer, it was the moral responsibility of Carwin, who used his talent of biloquist or ventriloquist to serve his designs, particularly to seduce Clara. So, *Wieland* is almost an experiment, for it relates the subjection of a puritanical family to the phenomenon of hearing voices. So puritans does not really take the place of monks, priests and aristocrats, who were characters from the old Europe, for they were impossible to adapt to North America, yet they become important in the renewal of that genre by Americans.

A later Gothic novel, *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), by Nathaniel Hawthorne, is particularly interesting from this point of view. As the title indicates, this book has as its setting a residence, home of the Pyncheon family which occupies it. The plot opens with the founder of this family, Colonel Pyncheon, a 'Puritan magnate,'[9] who stole the land where the house was built; he did this by having its owner, Matthew Maule, accused of witchcraft. What is interesting is the transposition of the aristocratic or dynastic family into the New World. Of course, some aspects of the story are fantastic. For example, when Matthew Maule, at the time he is to be hanged, curses the Colonel by saying: 'God will give him blood to drink!'[10] This prophecy is then fulfilled when the Colonel dies, choked with blood flowing on his ruff. But, if at various moments, a trivial situation is interpreted as fantastic, the earth of Gothicism is not here in this book. Yes, we have, for example, the traditional persecutor or villain in Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon, who incorrectly condemns his relative, Clifford, for the murder of his uncle, the Colonel. His description perfectly fits the requirements of the genre. However, one of the most important trait of the Gothic novel is that the Colonel's death, whose description is particularly agonising, releases his relatives, Hepzibah and Clifford,

from the curse described throughout that causes them to be prisoners of the house, of a malediction, of their family, etc. The old Clifford says to his sister: 'We are ghosts! We have no right among human beings - no right anywhere, but in this old house, which has a curse on it, and which, therefore, we are doomed to haunt!'[11]

This retort suggests the moral of this novel, formulated by the author in his preface: 'the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief.'[12] It seems to me that the importance of this problem, advanced by Hawthorne, is only understandable if we consider that the traditional structure of the Gothic novel was altered and destabilised by the new political and social conditions of the United States. If the Puritans appear in *Wieland* to offer a critical variation on fundamentalism, these Puritans merge with the old European aristocracy in *The House of the Seven Gables*. This is, perhaps, sociologically and historically unrealistic, but it allows the author to develop a founding criticism for the young Republic. Indeed, there is also an important character, Holgrave, an artist and follower of the French philosopher Charles Fourier. He will marry Phoebe, the youngest heiress of the Pyncheon family; he eventually reveals that he is the latest descendant of Matthew Maule. From this point of view, the novel can be interpreted as 'the fall of the house of Pyncheon,' for there is a reconciliation between two families opposed by their social ranks. But, before he has entered his new family, and perhaps adopted its ideas of power, the young artist states:

> Just think, a moment, and it will startle you to see what slaves we are to bygone times - to Death, if we give the matter the right word! … A Dead Man sits on all our judgement-seats; and living judges do but search out and repeat his decisions. We read in Dead Men's books! We laugh at Dead Men's jokes, and cry at Dead Men's pathos! We are sick of Dead Men's diseases, physical and moral, and die of the same remedies with which dead doctors killed their patients! … I ought to have said, too, that we live in Dead Men's houses; as, for instance, in this of seven gables![13]

It is not the thought of a young man, which could neither be reduced to a problem of the generation gap, nor to a criticism of familialism. Nor is it a political judgement, the socialist stand of a bohemian artist. It seems to me that this speech has some value for the Gothic genre.

The Pyncheon family in its tradition is described as 'resistant' to the new America, in other words, the society that emerged with the independence of the United States. The narrator laid great stress upon the fact that the family's founding father was a distinguished member of the colonial aristocracy. So, the century which followed this death, with all its political disruptions, was lived as a decadent

period, not in the sense that the Puncheons became aware of the weakening of their power and fortune, but that they saw the world changing, and set their hopes on a restoration or the exile. The Puncheon family seems to be the incarnation of the Gothic genre, or the remnants of the aristocratic society which was necessary to this universe. After the Revolutions, in a Republic at peace, it was able to perpetuate itself, but it had to find other motives, as I tried to show. For I point out, in conclusion, that the transcendentalism repeats many arguments clearly put forward or just suggested in these novels.

The American Gothic novel apparently shares the same constituents as its English model. We recognise it in the same characters, but appointed to other roles. Such is the case of those I called oppressors, as these two novels show it. On the one hand, the religious obscurantism conceals no longer vice or lust, but prompts a fanaticism which inspires a killing frenzy. On the other hand, the aristocracy forfeited his power and did his utmost to survive, and, although they are nostalgic and conservative, are forced to adapt themselves to their time, by trading like Hepzibah Puncheon; the only figures of villain, Carwin and Judge Puncheon, keep in background and are denatured. If we consider that English Gothic novel originally represented the highest degree, but also the ultimate collapse of the oppression by nobility and clergy, its American variant interests us for it is, firstly, a transposition of this society to a virgin land where no similar social structure existed, and for this colonial society was, secondly, overthrown by the American Revolution. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, the conservation of the old order is thus lived as an ordeal by Clifford and his sister, until the death of Judge Puncheon, the ghost of the Colonel, liberated them from their social class and from their imprisonment in this place. The euphoria that accompanies their flight by train, then the discovery of a new life under the auspices of a young woman from New England, Phoebe, and of a revolutionary artist, Holgrave, is an ode to joy and freedom in living in this new Republic. The connection between Gothic novel and transcendentalism may be found here. These two novels show that the abolition of aristocracy was only able to give way to a society where the social distinction was founded on the capital. In other respects, transcendentalists shared two ideas with these novelists, the claim for an autonomous cultural identity of the United States, and for a society where money did not replace titles. The American literature and philosophy share the same revolutionary and utopian purpose, that appears particularly in the transformations of the Gothic genre.

In an article published in *The Boston Quarterly Review*, Orestes Augustus Brownson passed this severe criticism of early American Literature:

> Feeling ourselves inferior, we could have no confidence in our own taste and judgement, and therefore could not think and speak freely. We could not trust the working of our minds. We

> were safe only when we thought as the English thought, wrote as the English wrote, or sang as the English sang.[14]

This thought of a literary critic is inserted chronologically between the two novels which constituted my paper, and allows us to better understand the evolution of the Gothic genre, and its relationship to the birth of the American Nation. By proclaiming their independence from England, the United States not only desired the autonomy of their literature and philosophy from a colonial pattern, but caused the advent of an egalitarian society which was incompatible with the traditional Gothic plot. Therefore, it seems that the story depicted in *The House of the Seven Gables* summarises the emancipation from some old societal patterns and marks the birth of the American 'Gothic' literature. I placed *Gothic* in quotes, for a Republic, as I said, could not perpetuate the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. But O. A. Brownson, in the article quoted above, has this prediction for the American society and literature - 'The struggle which is coming up here is not between the highborn and the lowborn, between the gentlemen and the simplemen, for, thank God, we have learned that all who are born at all are wellborn. It is to be a struggle between MAN and MONEY.'[15]

Notes

[1] I would like to thank Professor Donald Spinelli (Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan) who read over this article.
[2] C. B. Brown, *Wieland, or the Transformation*, The Modern Library, New York, 2002, p. 63.
[3] Brown, p. 62.
[4] Brown, p. 82.
[5] Brown, p. 17.
[6] Brown, p. 17.
[7] Brown, p. 17.
[8] Brown, p. 27.
[9] Brown, p. 11.
[10] N. Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, The Modern Library, New York, 2001, p. 36.
[11] Hawthorne, p. 146.
[12] Hawthorne, p. 4.
[13] Hawthorne, pp. 157-158.
[14] O. A. Brownson, 'American Literature', in *Selected Writings of the American Transcendentalists*, G. Hochfield (ed), The New American Library, New York, 1966, pp. 247-248.
[15] Brownson, p. 248.

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‘Ken’s Mystery’: Blending Gothic Foundations with Gaelic Folklore

Eoghain Hamilton

Abstract
First published in November 1883, ‘Ken’s Mystery’ by Julian Hawthorne has been recognised as a minor vampire classic. Although it has been reprinted in collections of supernatural tales over the years, the story has received little attention from literary critics. Based on Hawthorne’s experiences in Kinsale, County Cork, Ireland during the winter of 1881-1882, ‘Ken’s Mystery’ is much more than a cautionary tale of an encounter with a female vampire. It is a careful interweaving of vampire lore and Gothic trappings with local Irish settings and cultural customs. In writing ‘Ken’s Mystery,’ Hawthorne overlaid Celtic vampire legends such as the ‘Leannan Sidhe’ (the Irish muse who steals young artists’ lives) and Scottish ‘Glaistig’ (who drinks the blood of men having lured them to her lair), onto a more recent Irish legend, ‘The Stolen Bride,’ in which a young bride is kidnapped on her wedding night. He added a modern element by creating in the character of Elsie a possible warning for young Anglo-American dandies who might be tempted to dally with local maidens as they travel through Europe. As a result of these carefully crafted elements in the story, ‘Ken’s Mystery’ enriches conventions of the Gothic tale through use of an Irish context and local cultural customs. The story rewards readings from a number of literary perspectives and warrants closer critical attention.

Key Words: Gothic, Ireland, gaelic, vampire, folklore, culture, female, dandy, Halloween, Kinsale.

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In the 19th century English writers such as Matthew Arnold helped cement the stereotypical view of Ireland and the Irish. They portrayed Ireland as a land of superstitious peasants, of dreamers lost in a beautiful but unproductive Celtic twilight. The Irish were buffoons, childlike and prone to violence. During this time, the stereotypical Celt became a byword for inferiority while the Irish were attributed simian qualities to indicate their barbarity. Within Ireland, the Anglo-class wrote stories about their own lives. Their depictions of Ireland, as seen in the ‘Big House’ novels of Maria Edgeworth, focus on the relations of landlords and tenants, and on privilege and civilisation. This privileged society was cut off from the Gaelic-speaking Catholics who lived around them as tenants on their land. Neither version addressed the Gaelic identity. By default, Gaelic Ireland was left to be described by the stereotype, its inhabitants and customs seen as ‘beyond the Pale,’ barbaric and uncivilised. They were, in effect, ‘The Other.’

In 'Ken's Mystery,' Hawthorne addresses the ethnic stereotype but describes a vastly different experience. He spent the winter of 1881-1882 in Kinsale, a town in southern Ireland. In Kinsale, Hawthorne was exposed to the culture of the Irish peasantry for whom it seems he had a particular regard. 'The fishermen and their wives and daughters have the blood of the hidalgos in their veins.'[1] In Kinsale, Hawthorne saw the remnants of ancient nobility. A nobility that recalls a powerful Gaelic class foreign to the perception of the Irish at the time. It is precisely this reference to and acknowledgement of a powerful Gaelic class that challenges typical portrayals of 19th century Ireland and the Irish.

Primarily a Gothic tale, 'Ken's Mystery' is laden with Gothic conventions. J. A. Cudon describes Gothic literary conventions as including:

> wild and desolate landscapes, ancient buildings such as ruined monasteries; cathedrals; castles with dungeons, torture chambers, secret doors, and winding stairways; apparitions, phantoms, demons, and necromancers; an atmosphere of brooding gloom.[2]

In 'Ken's Mystery,' Hawthorne's portrayal of an extinct Gaelic nobility combined with his knowledge of Gaelic folklore and his experiences in Kinsale enrich tired conventions of the Gothic.

The first convention to undergo Hawthorne's Gaelic treatment is that of isolation. In her essay on 'Gothic Romance' Tracy describes isolation as one of the key components in the Gothic, she suggests that it provides atmosphere,

> The landscapes run to mountains, chasms and heavy forests... Novelists from the Brontës onward often favour the desolation of the moors, dramatic in their lack of shelter. Much of the action takes place in the dark.[3]

Hawthorne uses the lonely south coast of Ireland to provide isolation and atmosphere in 'Ken's Mystery.' Ken tells the narrator that this is '[a] lonely region too... . It seems incredible that so beautiful a country should be so deserted.'[4]

Hawthorne continues his use of landscape to create a sense of the uncanny. Through this evocation of the uncanny in 'Ken's Mystery,' Hawthorne confronts the age of science and reason that the late 19th century was. However, Hawthorne uses his knowledge of Gaelic folklore to do his confronting. He adopts the Gaelic lore associated with November Eve or *Samhain* to construct a sense of the uncanny. In his extensive study *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, the anthropologist Evans Wentz found that November Eve was 'the time of all times when Ghosts, demons, spirits and fairies are free.'[5] November Eve provides the weird backdrop in which the story takes place. This weirdness or sense of the uncanny is conveyed almost immediately on the narrator's arrival in Ken's

apartment. Ken is very glad to see and importantly *feel*, his friend on 'to-night of all nights in the year.'[6] The term *feel* creates for the reader a sense of the uncanny that on this night reality is not what it seems. This is compounded when Ken relates to the narrator that 'this is November-eve, when, as tradition asserts, the dead arise and walk about, and fairies, goblins, and spiritual beings of all kinds have more freedom and power than on any other day of the year.'[7] Later on it is with a sense of warning that we hear Elsie tell Ken that November Eve is 'our one night of the year!'[8] The repetition of this motif throughout the story adds to the building sense of the uncanny. This feeling is further built upon when as he is leaving the fort (the bastion of Anglo-Saxon civilisation) Ken stumbles and (now outside the bastion of Anglo-Saxon civilisation) finds himself in a changed landscape, the opposite of the friendly coastal landscape described by Ken earlier in the tale. This new landscape is now different, threatening.

> Neither my immediate surroundings nor the general aspect of the region appeared familiar. Dark, silent hill-sides mounted up on either hand, and the road, for the most part, plunged downward, as if to conduct me into the bowels of the earth. The place was alive with strange echoes... . A certain feeling of anxiety and insecurity began to take possession of me.[9]

In Celtic cultures it was believed that on November Eve it was possible to slip between two worlds, our world and the world of the *Sidhe*. Ken goes through a portal when he stumbles outside the fort. After his stumble the landscape around him has changed.

> But the path was singularly difficult to find, or rather the path I was following did not seem to be the right one. I did not recognize it; I could have sworn (except I knew the contrary) that I had never seen it before.[10]

Without realising it Ken is now in the otherworld. Here all things are possible, the rules regarding time do not apply. Hence he can exist in the 16th century, his banjo can age three hundred years in one night and he can encounter a woman that lived over three centuries ago. Timeslips, journeys in Fairyland, and encounters with weird women are all part of the Gaelic lore of *Samhain* that Hawthorne has neatly interwoven into the text. They provide a distinctly Gaelic sense of the uncanny that in true Gothic character challenges all things rational.

In his construction of Elsie, Hawthorne adds a Gaelic identity to the concept of the female vampire. In his essay on *The Vampire in Legend Lore and Literature*, Devendra Varma describes an experience with a female vampire who bears a striking resemblance to Ken's Elsie.

> What an experience to be embraced by a female vampire! - by a lady of utterly bewitching ... and teeth of such sparkling whiteness and perfection ... to look at her large luminous eyes shadowed with sadness, to listen to the rustle of silk and a tiny jingle of bracelets or pendant earrings, before swooning into oblivion.[11]

Elsie, like her predecessor Carmilla and other 19th century depictions of female vampires, is both a seductress and an aristocrat. She is the femme fatale, the temptress, whose face is hidden in an ancient Gaelic cloak. She is the seductress who brings with her pain, and death, often as punishment for sexual activity. Elsie's literary heritage can be traced to the poetic influences of Coleridge and Keats. Indeed Elsie bears a striking resemblance to the strange woman in Keats' 'La Belle Dame sans Merci.' Ken first sees Elsie in a graveyard, she is hooded in black through which he can see a pair of 'sparkling eyes.' Ominously, her laugh has a 'mocking quality, that seemed hardly human at all.'[12]

The inspiration for Elsie's vampire nature can be found in Irish folklore, particularly in the Gaelic Leannan Sidhe. In his essay on *Irish Fairies, Ghosts, Witches,* Yeats describes the Leannan Sidhe:

> The Leanhun Shee [sic] seeks the love of men, if they refuse she is their slave; if they consent, they are hers and can only escape by finding one to take her place. Her lovers waste away, for she lives on their life. She gives inspiration to her slaves.[13]

The Leannan Sidhe is a female vampire who confers great creative powers on the poet/artist but in return drains the life force from her victims. At the beginning of 'Ken's Mystery' we find that Ken, once vibrant playboy and artist, is living a reclusive life, his health deteriorated. This is due to his encounter with Elsie the Leannan Sidhe.

Traces of the Scottish 'Glaistig' are also present in Elsie's character. The Glaistig is another female vampire spirit. In *Superstitions of the Islands and Highlands of Scotland,* Campbell asserts that a 'glaistig was once a mortal noblewoman, to whom a "fairy" nature had been given.'[14] The Glaistig is said to lure men back to her lair where she sends them to sleep and while asleep drinks their blood. Ken is lured into Elsie's home where inside he feasts on the fairy food she gives him. Later on, he takes his banjo and sings to her while she dances around the room. Eventually he falls into a kind of swoon and wakes up the next day in a rubbish heap, his vitality is drained, his health gone. Hawthorne has taken the Gothic convention of the vampire/femme fatale and given it a Gaelic identity, something that was uncommon at his time of writing.

Hawthorne also enriches the Gothic theme of fallen nobility in 'Ken's Mystery.' To create the idea of ancient fallen nobility, Hawthorne has adopted a sixteenth century folktale of a noble bride kidnapped on her wedding night by vampire-like creatures. This tale known as the 'Stolen Bride,' which Lady Wilde later published in *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland*,[15] provides Elsie with a believable background. Ken first hears the story of Eithelind Fionguala from the local physician, Dr. Dudeen, before leaving the soldiers' fort on Halloween night. Through Dr Dudeen's narrative, Hawthorne explains how the noblewoman Ethelind Fionguala, became a vampire/*Leannan Sidhe* and hence became fallen.

> Ethelind Fionguala - which ... signifies "the White-Shouldered," The lady ... was stolen away on her wedding night by a party of vampires, who ... were at that period a prominent feature among the troubles of Ireland.[16]

Hawthorne's creation of Elsie using these Gaelic influences indicates that he had much more knowledge of Gaelic folklore than has been previously asserted. Elsie is Gaelic nobility. When Ken first meets the woman, she is dressed wrapped in a 'Calla,' the Kinsale Cloak, an ancient Gaelic garment often worn by the nobility. Later, her nobility is confirmed in both her mode of dress and her home. Her slippers are embroidered with gold, she appears in her bridal dress with jewels in her hair. In the story, her house is decorated with tapestries and fine carpets and an Ottoman befitting of nobility. Elsie's house also harks back to an ancient nobility, in the story Ken comments,

> built of stone, and in a noble style of architecture; it reminded me somewhat of certain palaces of the old Italian nobility that I had seen on the Continent, and it may well have been built by one of the Italian or Spanish immigrants of the sixteenth or seventeenth century.[17]

We learn that this is the home of the 'Kern of Querin' the nobleman who Elsie had married. Elsie, the ancient noblewoman, now a vampire spirit, who appears on Halloween is the '[w]hite shouldered' woman described in Dr Dudeen's tale. This background story increases depth in Elsie's character and adds a distinctly Gaelic aristocratic feel to the tale.

Hawthorne continues his invigoration of Gothic conventions with his use of a magical treasure in the story. In his biography on Julian Hawthorne, Bassan concludes that in Gothic Literature '[e]nchanted objects, magic potions and amulets are found in great profusion.'[18] In 'Ken's Mystery' it is possible that the simple ring Ken has bought in Cork City is the magical ring of the 'Kern' and its

powers have singled Ken out for Elsie's attention. Magically, it has brought Elsie and Ken together. Hawthorne has taken the Gothic idea of an enchanted object and woven it onto a Gaelic background.

Importantly, Hawthorne deals with the frightening convention of the Gothic 'other.' At the beginning of 'Ken's Mystery' the Irish peasantry are described in the standard literary view of the time. In his narration Ken says:

> They seem simple and primitive enough at first sight, and yet they are as strange and incomprehensible a race as any in the world. They are as superstitious ... and at the same time they are shrewd, sceptical, sensible, and bottomless liars.[19]

Hawthorne confirms the stereotypical sense of otherness on the Irish but out of this rather typical Irish other he creates a new form of other in the shape of Elsie. In Elsie he creates the aristocratic Gaelic other. She is a fallen woman, a vampire, who uses her sexuality to lure her prey. She is an assertive, educated Gaelic aristocrat. Elsie, wrapped in a cloak of extinct Gaelic nobility brings a new sense of otherness to the Irish stereotype and a new sense of otherness to the Gothic, one that is a deadly threat to Anglo-American men like Ken. Hawthorne, an Anglo American of the Victorian age, would have been familiar with standard Victorian portrayals of women as a sort of domestic angel. Elsie is different from these descriptions, Elsie is a wild creature who appears to Ken in the wilds of Ireland, in the dark of a Halloween night, sitting atop a tomb. She is the opposite of the demure, comforting, domestic angel of the Victorian age. She is instead the new Victorian woman. Her actions are a warning to other like-minded Anglo American dandies who are tempted by local or 'otherly' women. When Elsie asks Ken to kiss her, he has his strength drained from him. 'Cold indeed they were - cold as the lips of death ... . Was it my life that was feeding her? I was ready to give her all.'[20]

Ken awakens in a dilapidated room, his vision of the night before turned to nightmare. He is ill from his encounter with Elsie. He has lost his vitality and will return to America a convalescent man. A new Gaelic 'other' has had its revenge on the reasoned sensible Anglo-Saxon.

In her collection of short stories by Julian Hawthorne, Jessica Amanda Salmonson described Hawthorne as a 'Gothic magician.' Indeed, the numerous Gothic tales that Hawthorne produced until the mid to late 1880's required an in-depth understanding of the Gothic genre. What becomes apparent on closer inspection of 'Ken's Mystery' is that Hawthorne also had a deep understanding of Gaelic folklore, legend and mythology. In 'Ken's Mystery,' Hawthorne used this knowledge to enrich Gothic conventions by interweaving them with Gaelic folklore and his own personal experiences of Irish culture in Kinsale. The result is a new hybrid with trappings of the Gothic, fairylore and Gaelic cultural settings. It

is a new mode that focuses on the lore and customs of an ancient Gaelic nobility that may not be as dead as its Anglo-Saxon neighbours would like to believe.

Notes

[1] J. Hawthorne, *Shapes that Pass: Memories of Old Days*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1928, p. 278.
[2] J. Cudon, *Penguin Dictionary Of Literary Terms and Literary*, Penguin, London, 1992, p. 352.
[3] A. Tracy, 'Gothic Romance,' in *The Handbook on Gothic Literature*, M. Mulvey-Roberts (ed), New York University Press, New York, 1998, p. 104.
[4] J. Hawthorne, *The Rose of Death and Other Mysterious Delusions*, Ash-Tree Press, British Columbia, 1997, p. 9.
[5] E. Wentz, *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, Carol Publishing, New York, 1994, p. 289.
[6] Hawthorne, p. 4.
[7] Hawthorne, p. 3.
[8] Hawthorne, p. 14.
[9] Hawthorne, pp. 12-13.
[10] Hawthorne, p. 13.
[11] D. Varma, 'The Vampire in Legend Lore and Literature', in *The Vampire in Literature: A Critical Bibliography*, M. L. Carter (ed), UMI Research Press, London, p. 21.
[12] Hawthorne, pp. 13-14.
[13] W. B. Yeats, *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats*, Macmillan, London, 1970, p. 35.
[14] J. Campbell, 'Superstitions of the Islands and Highlands of Scotland', *Scottish Celtic Review*, Vol. 4, 1885, pp. 155-157.
[15] F. Wilde, *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions*, Kessinger Publishing, Montana, 1887, p. 37.
[16] Hawthorne, p. 11.
[17] Hawthorne, p. 16.
[18] M. Bassan, *Hawthorne's Son*, Ohio State University Press, Colombus, 1970, p. 20.
[19] Hawthorne, p. 9.
[20] Hawthorne, p. 15.

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The Walking Dude: Randall Flagg in Stephen King's Post-Apocalyptic Epic *The Stand*

Cornelia Lippert

Abstract
The current paper aims to analyse themes of Gothic liminality, moral choice and responsibility in Stephen King's post-apocalyptic narrative, *The Stand* (1990), with an analytical emphasis towards its villain, Randall Flagg. In the context of Gothic Studies, Stephen King has reached canonical status as the most popular author of contemporary American horror fiction. His 'long tale of dark Christianity,' *The Stand*, relates the post-apocalyptic struggle between forces of Good and Evil for the survivors' lives and souls. The portrayal of Randall Flagg is a fruitful focal point, facilitating a discussion of the human condition in a world torn between higher forces, as seen by King. Flagg will be shown to have certain characteristics in common with the folkloric Trickster figure, a liminal creature, morally ambiguous and transgressive. Since Flagg resembles Goethe's Mephistopheles in that he is 'Part of that Force which would do ever evil, and does ever Good,' the resulting ambiguity makes him a rewarding object of study. In summary, Flagg is a canvas on which to sketch King's stance toward religion, free will and determinism, moral choice and individual responsibility in a scope suitable for a conference paper.

Key Words: Stephen King, Randall Flagg, *The Stand*, post-apocalyptic fiction, the Trickster, Mephistopheles.

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1. Introducing Randall Flagg

Randall Flagg, who has been described as 'the epitome of the Gothic villain,' has often been seen as King's most relentlessly evil character.[1] There is, however, another element to him that, so far, has not received the critical attention it deserves: the ultimate ambiguity of the consequences his actions engender. In this paper it will be shown that Flagg does not only represent pure destruction but exhibits certain features that are usually attributed to the figure of the Trickster and lend his character a depth that has often been overlooked.[2]

Flagg is a recurring character in Stephen King's fiction and has played parts in *The Dark Tower* series, *The Eyes of the Dragon* (1987), and other works. *The Stand* (1990) constitutes his first appearance under the name Randall Flagg, and will be the exclusive focus of the current paper. Flagg features as the ultimate antagonist of the forces of Good in a post-apocalyptic American landscape, where humanity has been decimated drastically by a man-made super-influenza virus, accidentally released from a US military installation. King's use of the US

government and military as the responsible parties regarding the outbreak sets the stage for a minute dissection of society, its institutions, and questions of 'the American struggle between the law and freedom of the individual.'[3] As Magistrale notes,

> The major corpus of Stephen King's work is a critique of the ways in which the dignity of the individual is assaulted and corrupted by self-interest, powerlessness, and a dependency on bureaucratic and technological authority.[4]

Regarding this dichotomy between individual freedom and government control, Randall Flagg is the representative of rationality, technology and ultimately authority, since he formulates and constructs an authoritarian community in his new Babylon, Las Vegas. His part in the novel, however, is much more ambiguous than that. Amongst his numerous fragmented roles, Flagg exhibits certain characteristics of the Trickster; his seemingly one-dimensionally villainous function thus becomes fissionable.

Heidi Strengell endorses that 'in his Trickster aspect Flagg is not merely a menace to order but also serves a positive purpose by activating good forces to settle order in King's multiverse.'[5] The Dark Man exhibits certain characteristics of the folkloric Trickster figure, that represents the disruptive element in a society or culture; he is characterised by liminality and transgressiveness. Strengell has provided an appropriation of Babcock-Abrahams's list of the Trickster's characteristics as displayed by Flagg, and although some of her findings are disputable, Flagg resembles the description in numerous points.[6] It will be of importance to the argument that, while the Trickster is amoral and does not know good or evil, he is unintentionally responsible for both.[7]

2. I Sing the Body Politic

Flagg's all-American appearance (jeans, denim jacket, cowboy boots) is underlined by the statement that America was 'his country, and none knew or loved it better.'[8] Nadine Cross, his bride-to-be, is sure that

> he was an American man … . His home was America, and his ways were the secret ways, the highways in hiding, the underground railways where directions are written in runes.[9]

His intrinsic connection with the United States is thus highlighted to a degree that forewarns of its significance. The pre-apocalyptic 'underground railways' spoken of in the above quoted text take their name from the 'underground railroads'-clandestine efforts to usher slaves to the North and thus to freedom. Here, they denote a similar construct created and 'travelled by the poor and the mad, by the

professional revolutionaries.'[10] Flagg is described as an influencing agent on these revolutionaries, whom he guided in their rebellion against the establishment. He transformed their originally 'hysterical babble' into 'rational' and 'disciplined' discussions, facilitating decision-making and thus transforming it into something genuinely threatening and dangerous.[11] Furthermore, instances of his past involvement in American history are provided to create a factual connection between him and the country he travels. Having had dealings with the likes of Charles Starkweather, Donald DeFreeze, and Lee Harvey Oswald, Flagg is framed as having shaped some of the darker moments in the nation's past.

The Trickster figure is often intrinsically linked to spatial as well as ideological liminality, and evokes the image of a messenger who moves in between pre-established poles, thus not only crossing, but also making boundaries.[12] In order for 'in-between' to signify something, there has to be a framework of reference points, much like the stations of Flagg's underground railway. The Trickster is ascribed with the urge to wander; the parallels to the Walking Dude can hardly be missed. Making the aforementioned 'hysterical babble' of terrorists and extremists heard and understood by the rest of society is the work of a messenger. Flagg is thus establishing communication between the order and that which has been expelled from it. Those excluded segments of society, as matter out of place, can be regarded simultaneously as a form of dirt and as a by-product of creating order.[13] Mary Douglas determines that 'where there is dirt there is system.'[14] When society's purity threatens to tip the balance into sterility, or gets threatened by its exclusions in another fashion, the established order will have to find a way to deal with its dirt.[15] According to Hyde, '[d]irt is one of the tools available to the Trickster as he makes this world.'[16] In a way, Flagg unintentionally ensures that confrontations between society and its exclusions happen regularly, if in a very violent manner.

Flagg is depicted as a character not only superficially involved with the outsiders of American society, but actively fuelling and channelling their anger and hatred, while aiding them in their organisation. Since he is able to perfectly adapt his propaganda and rhetoric to the cause of whichever group he is with at the time, he is involved on all sides of a given conflict, pitting people against one another, as well as against the established order. 'His pockets were stuffed with fifty different kinds of conflicting literature - pamphlets for all seasons, rhetoric for all reasons.'[17] He is a wildcard seditionist, 'a clot looking for a place to happen, a splinter of bone hunting a soft organ to puncture.'[18] At the same time, he ensures communication between different groups and, if nothing else, makes them aware of each other. He is 'a very reasonable man,' as well as 'goddamned persuasive,' which makes him a dangerous politician.[19] Like the Trickster he can communicate in all languages, but ultimately is a liar.

3. Their People, Our People

While Randall Flagg supports, guides and influences radicals who try to find revolutionary ways of regaining freedom, Mother Abagail Freemantle manages to live in a completely self-sufficient and independent manner in her little house in Nebraska. Having lived in one place her whole life, Abagail stands in direct contrast to the liminal and in-between character of Flagg, who has no home but the road. While Flagg is furthermore described as 'the last magician of rational thought, gathering the tools of technology,' Abagail is a decided advocate of the old ways, living with hardly any technology.[20] As Magistrale indicates, 'King insists that only by rejecting all identification with the values of the larger community is it possible for the individual to survive.'[21] Mother Abagail's lifestyle is portrayed as wholesome and healthy, while technological progress is made out to be the root of all evil.

Randall Flagg, as 'Man of the West,' makes it his business to get the technology back up and running in Las Vegas.[22] Although much emphasis is put on technology, what it comes down to in this particular conflict is the dichotomy between rationality and irrationality.

> The fashion was to blame it on "technology," but "technology" is the trunk of the tree, not the roots. The roots are rationalism, and I would define that word so: "Rationalism is the idea we can ever understand anything about the state of being." It's a deathtrap.[23]

In the face of irrational elements like their newly developed telepathic and precognitive powers Glen Bateman assumes that only white magic will be able to be of any effect against Flagg's dark magic.[24] Only when life's mysteries are accepted as such and uncertainty is learned to be tolerated, does humanity stand a chance of avoiding an immediate repetition of its past mistakes. As Hyde writes, 'an "occult" science must arise whose task is to reclaim what has been lost.'[25] Abagail, with her strong religious convictions is a very suitable guide in this brave new world.

The power Flagg wields over the people joining him in Las Vegas thus is neither black magic, nor the promise of excess individual freedom, but the lure of order, authority, organised community, guidance and security. He summons them with the voice of rationalism. In their dreams he is calling 'not just [to] the evil ones that are like him, but the weak ones… the lonely ones...'[26] He is effectively sorting the wheat from the chaff of what is left of humanity. So, as Glen Bateman predicts, 'a strongman takes over' and the people gathering in Las Vegas are glad to let him make decisions for them.[27] They readily relinquish not only their free will, but also their responsibility. As Tom Cullen notices during his stay with Flagg's people, 'they did things without asking for explanations of why they were doing them, or what it was for.'[28] Flagg's reign is ultimately based on an installed

fear of an outside threat, the promise of protection, and intimidation through his own dark powers.

Abagail's group of survivors, on the other hand, is held together by friendship, community, respect and people who care for each other. In contrast to Flagg's intimidating supernatural power, she is a frail old woman whose strength resides within her personality and her faith. While the Dark Man builds an authoritarian city-state, the Free Zone's government is run like a New England township: a 'perfect democracy' that will work as long as the Boulder community stays relatively small.[29] Much thought is given to the 're-creation of America' and the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights are read and ratified anew before any other governmental elements are installed.[30] While close interpersonal relationships are always an important factor for the forces of Good in King's fiction, in *The Stand* a sharp distinction is being made between a very small community and group-organisation. According to Stu Redman they had to 'postpone organization as long as possible. It was organization that always seemed to cause the problem.'[31] At various points in the novel it is stated (often by Glen Bateman) that humanity's curse and blessing is its urge to group together.

4. EVIL, Evil and (Evil)

The Dark Man, however, is much more than simply a propaganda-wielding demagogue, he is 'the purest evil left in this world.'[32] This keeps him from being an actual Trickster figure, since the Trickster's amorality does not equal immorality, and certainly cannot be attributed to evil. Although King calls *The Stand* his 'long tale of dark Christianity,' and Flagg is quite clearly the adversary of God, he nevertheless is not Satan.[33] He is repeatedly compared to the devil, connoted with the according attributes, and, according to Mother Abagail - the representative of Good and leader of the Free Zone - 'he and Satan know of each other and have kept their councils together of old.'[34] Flagg is closer in nature to Goethe's Mephistopheles - another almost-Trickster - than to Lucifer; he is not so much the Anti-Christ as somewhat 'anti-creation' in a way that aligns him with 'the spirit which eternally denies.'[35] He echoes Faust's tempter further in that he is 'part of that force which would do ever evil, and does ever good … part of the part that was the whole at first, part of the dark which bore itself the light.'[36] Since Flagg is assumed to be 'conscious evil' infused with 'unconscious blackness,' or, in other words, a conductor for an evil even greater than himself, he provides what Father Callahan is pining for in *Salem's Lot*: a challenge.[37] Instead of 'skirmishes of vague resolution' being fought against the many evils of mankind, Flagg personifies EVIL as Father Callahan sees it, as opposed to evil, or even (evil). As such he offers a material opponent who can be fought and thus facilitates heroism.[38] He supplies the protagonists with a monster waiting at the end of their quest, who, once defeated, heralds the world's renewal and rejuvenation.

By providing the protagonists with an actual evil to make their epic stand against, Randall Flagg involuntarily gives direction to the changes that have been forced into existence by the plague. His affiliation with the Trickster figure, Mephistopheles and the general interdependence between light and darkness is made explicit by Mother Abagail: 'all things serve the Lord. Don't you think this black man serves Him, too? He does, no matter how mysterious His purpose may be.'[39]

5. Conditio Humana

Flagg is a demagogue and agitator who brings out the worst in a crowd. Apart from embodying base human traits and characteristics reminiscent of Jung's 'shadow' figure, he is, as already mentioned, explicitly evil. King seldom leaves human depravity unexplained, often referring to childhood trauma to supply reasons. In order to provide the protagonists in *The Stand* with a suitable adversary - pure evil - Flagg thus has to be superhuman.

> He was no longer strictly a man, if he had ever been one. He was like an onion, slowly peeling away one layer at a time, only it was the trappings of humanity that seemed to be peeling away: organized reflection, memory, possibly free will … if there ever had been such a thing.[40]

Free will is clearly associated with the human condition but simultaneously left open for debate, as in many of King's works. It is, if existent, reserved for people who are capable of reflection and demonstrate a willingness to make sacrifices. The Dark Man, however, who 'doesn't know himself' appears to be nothing but a small wheel in a far bigger machine that he has no way of comprehending.[41] Moreover, Flagg, unbeknownst to himself, is not omniscient but fallible, which also makes him trickable and permits accidents and coincidences to happen. His Trickster-like side allows for his deeds to have a positive outcome, even if unintentional. Flagg is ultimately responsible for the failure of his authoritarian society and the subsequent thriving of the Boulder Free Zone. It is made abundantly clear, however, that humanity is by no means saved; along with the planet itself, it is merely going through 'a period of rest.'[42]

A close analysis of Randall Flagg thus shows that in *The Stand* evil is not infallible or all-powerful, but neither is humanity. In fact, both might ultimately destroy themselves with the same tools. King's 'long tale of dark Christianity' allows for many shades on the spectra between free will and determinism; good and evil; light and dark.[43] It gives room to ponder seemingly unanswerable questions about the human condition at length, but shies away from taking a definite stand. Flagg's constant birth and rebirth, however, illustrates the workings of King's macrocosm on a comprehensible scale. While Fran cannot answer Stu's

final question of whether humanity is likely to ever learn from its mistakes, Flagg would have had a response: 'Life was such a wheel that no man could stand upon it for long. And it always, at the end, came round to the same place again.'[44] The shard of Trickster in Flagg would know about disruption and repair; the very ambiguity that he ultimately embodies gives room for hope.

Notes

[1] D. Winter, *The Art of Darkness*, Penguin Publishing, London, 1986, p. 72.
[2] As will be shown later, the parallels between Flagg and the Trickster have already been analysed by Heidi Strengell, in *Dissecting Stephen King.*
[3] S. King, *The Stand*, Hodder, London, 1990 [1978], p. 1314.
[4] T. Magistrale, *Landscape of Fear: Stephen King's American Gothic*, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, Wisconsin, 1988, p. 6.
[5] H. Strengell, *Dissecting Stephen King: From the Gothic to Literary Naturalism*, University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 2005, p. 149.
[6] Strengell, p. 142.
[7] L. Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World*, Canongate, Edinburgh, 1998, p. 10.
[8] Ibid., p. 219.
[9] Ibid., p. 737.
[10] Ibid., p. 221.
[11] Ibid., pp. 221-222.
[12] Hyde, *Trickster*, pp. 6-7.
[13] Ibid., p. 176.
[14] M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1966, p. 35.
[15] Hyde, pp. 197-185.
[16] Ibid., p. 177.
[17] Ibid., p. 219.
[18] Ibid., p. 221.
[19] Ibid., p. 1098.
[20] Ibid., p. 853.
[21] T. Magistrale, *The Second Decade: Danse Macabre to The Dark Half*, Twayne Publishers, New York, 1992, p. 42.
[22] Ibid., p. 952.
[23] King, *The Stand*, p. 852.
[24] Ibid., p. 853.
[25] Hyde, *Trickster*, p. 182.
[26] Ibid., p. 598.
[27] Ibid., p. 407.
[28] Ibid., p. 1145.

[29] Ibid., p. 749.
[30] Ibid., p. 148.
[31] Ibid., p. 1319.
[32] Ibid., p. 598.
[33] Ibid., p. xiv.
[34] Ibid., p. 599.
[35] J. W. Goethe, *Faust*, Norton & Company, London, 2001, p. 37.
[36] Ibid., p. 36.
[37] King, *The Stand*, p. 754.
[38] S. King, *Salem's Lot*, Hodder, London, 1975, pp. 219-220.
[39] Ibid., p. 600.
[40] Ibid., p. 1125.
[41] Ibid., p. 939.
[42] Ibid., p. 1319
[43] Ibid., p. xiv.
[44] Ibid., p. 1325.

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Dopo Notte Atra e Funesta: Handel's *Ariodante*: A Forerunner of the Gothic Novel?

Angela Fodale
Translated by Adriano Murelli

Abstract
Georg Friedrich Handel's opera *Ariodante* was composed and first performed in London in 1735, almost thirty years before Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) was published. Still, this opera can be seen as an earlier example of the Gothic novel. The libretto is inspired by Ginevra's Scottish episode in Ludovico Ariosto's poem *Orlando Furioso* (1532) and anticipates the two main settings of the Gothic novel, Italy and Scotland, with their castles and ruins. Ginevra, the daughter of the King of Scotland, is in love with Ariodante and rejects Polinesso's love. Polinesso wants to take revenge on the couple and forces Ginevra's lady-companion to dress like the princess. Ariodante sees the false Ginevra letting Polinesso into the princess's rooms; he thinks that Ginevra betrays him and goes away to commit suicide. After many peripeteias, Ariodante comes back to the court to prove Ginevra's innocence and defeat Polinesso. All elements of the classic Gothic novel are present: the young woman, her lover (the hero) and the villain, who lubriciously threatens the young woman and tries to kill the hero; the double, the dream and the mirror, with all their pre-psychoanalytical connections; the setting of the action (castles, woods, ancient ruins). Still, it is in the music that the Gothic element finds its full expression: more frequently than in any other of Handel's operas, in *Ariodante* the classical form of da capo aria is broken, forced, interrupted; additionally, Ginevra's and Ariodante's arias are mostly in minor keys: the choice of adopting 'dark' tonalities may be regarded as representing lack of certitudes, a typical feature of the Gothic novel. Instead, the only character who systematically sings in 'bright' major keys is Polinesso, the villain. Both the plot and the atmosphere created by the composer make *Ariodante* a significant forerunner of the Gothic novel, which certainly requires careful investigation.

Key Words: Handel, opera, eighteenth century.

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1. Handel's *Ariodante*

The Gothic novel is one of the few literary genres for which a precise date of birth can be set: 1764, when Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* appeared. However,

> a craving for the darker emotions, an imaginative attraction to decay, ruin, disorder, and death, a fear of the false order imposed

> upon the mind and society by the fixed value systems of a rigid neoclassicism all contributed to the outbreak of a gothic impulse before Walpole … . Subtle and subdued at first, eighteenth-century Gothicism was one tributary of the general revolt against rational structures that would later coalesce into the mighty stream of Romanticism at the end of the century. … Gothic voices can be heard quite distinctly in the morbid lines of the Graveyard poets of the 1740's and 1750's, but the emotional tremors of a buried Gothicism may be detected even earlier in the century in some unexpected places.[1]

One of these 'unexpected places' can be found in opera, a genre that usually follows patterns already existing in theatre and literature. But Handel's *Ariodante*, represented at Covent Garden in 1735, displays all features of the Gothic novel good thirty years in advance.[2] Handel adapted a libretto by Antonio Salvi, inspired by Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and dating back to 1708.

2. Gothic Characters

William Patrick Day argues that all Gothic stories display one same plot: the protagonist is dragged into 'a world where the Self dissolves and disintegrates, attacking itself as an Other; from this underworld the protagonist may be released … but he or she cannot escape.'[3] The title of Handel's opera, *Ariodante*, seems to designate the male character as the protagonist; however, from a dramatic perspective, Ginevra is far more prominent. Act I begins with a nearly idyllic situation: Ginevra, the beloved only daughter of the King of Scotland, is in love with the knight, Ariodante, who loves her too; she lives in a luxurious palace with a beautiful garden. The only disturbing element is constituted by Polinesso's insistent attentions. In act II Ginevra's descent to the underworld begins: her fiancé is believed to be dead, she is accused of shamelessness, repudiated by her father and condemned to death; even when she sleeps she is haunted by *songes funestes*, nightmares. For Ariodante too act II is a nightmare: as he believes to have seen Ginevra betraying him, he decides to commit suicide. But then Ariodante discovers Polinesso's intrigues at the beginning of act III, while Ginevra remains in prison and is tormented by anguish and uncertainty until the last scene of the opera; her only hope to be saved residing in the victory of Polinesso. This makes Ginevra a real Gothic heroine: she must face a trial; her father repudiates her; she does not know what she is accused of, and cannot prove her innocence.

Just like Ginevra is the typical heroine of a Gothic novel, Polinesso represents the typical villain - much more than in *Orlando Furioso*:

> I portrayed Polinesso, Duke of Albany, as an explicitly evil character, and let him act out of interest and ambition, not out of

> love, so the Audience is less stricken by the horror of his death and the Virtue of the other Characters stands out more.[4]

Salvi maintains that he does not want the audience to feel dread, yet he portrays Polinesso as a tangible incarnation of evil.

3. Gothic Elements: The Double, the Dream and the Mirror

In scene 1 Ginevra sits in front of a mirror and pretties herself for Ariodante (in the previous versions of the libretto this detail is absent). Beside her stands Dalinda, her confidant, who will later on be seduced by Polinesso, disguise herself as Ginevra and take over her name. It seems as if Ginevra's own *Doppelgänger* came out of the mirror. Only at the end of the opera, when it is revealed that Dalinda, and not Ginevra, had let Polinesso in the princess' rooms at night, is the natural order re-established, the *Doppelgänger* exorcised and Ginevra takes control of her mind again.

In *Ariodante* we find further instances of doubling: another couple is that formed by Ariodante and his brother Lurcanio. At the end of the opera Ariodante marries Ginevra and Lurcanio marries Dalinda. So, Dalinda and Lurcanio are respectively Ginevra's and Ariodante's alter egos. In fact, Lurcanio wants to take revenge for Ariodante's (supposed) death, challenges Polinesso to a duel and kills him. Then, when the two brothers are face to face (but Ariodante is concealed) the duel does not take place. From James Hogg's *Memoirs of a Justified Sinner* to Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae* and Conrad's *The Duel*, the duel - often to be fought against one's own brother - represents the conflict with one's own double.

Polinesso is the negative double and rival of both brothers: he is loved by Dalinda and wants to win Ginevra's heart. Whereas the opposition Ariodante vs. Lurcanio can be solved with no conflicts, the opposition Ariodante/Lurcanio vs. Polinesso, i.e. Good vs. Evil, cannot be overcome.

In Gothic novels, dream is a recurrent element: the process of writing does not follow realistic, but dreamlike rules; Gothic novels 'appear to be like the manifest content of a dream and, like dreams, they are perfectly constructed stories.'[5] Dream is often the element that gives the impulse to the beginning of the narration; finally, dream is often related to the topic of double. The textual play of successive *mise-en-abyme*, often relating a dream, is a nearly institutional feature of fantastic narration: shorter stories are inserted within the frame of the main narration.[6]

At the end of act II, Ginevra falls asleep and dreams: her visions are first pleasant, then sorrowful. As in the similar story of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Ginevra falls asleep in the moment of greatest sorrow, just like Hero faints and is taken for dead.

4. Gothic Settings

The Gothic novel has two typical settings: Italy and Scotland.[7] *Ariodante* takes place in Scotland; however, due to its Ariostian origins, it draws on an Italian model (intricate plots,[8] dreams, madness, castles, knights), which is among the forerunners of Gothic novels.

The scenery of Gothic novels is characterised by the presence of an enclosing building, usually a half-abandoned castle.[9] *Ariodante* takes place in a castle, and Ginevra never comes out of it: her range of action reaches no further than its garden. In act I we see the most embellished and comfortable parts of the castle: Ginevra's room and the garden. In act II the scenery is more distressing: the garden at night in the moonlight with ancient ruins and a secret door (secret passages can be added to the list of Gothic *topoi* in this opera), then a gallery in the intimidating public part of the palace. Finally, the last act is set in a wood, presumably in its deepest part, where Ariodante is hiding and Polinesso's soldiers want to kill Dalinda; then, the scenery changes again to the garden, the enclosure where the duel takes place, a room where Ginevra is imprisoned, and the royal hall. Particular attention needs to be paid to scene 1 of act II, for the stage direction contains two specifically romantic features, the moonlight and the ruins, that appear neither in Ariosto nor in Salvi's original libretto (Ariosto only speaks of uninhabited houses).

5. Gothic Music

Hence, the characters of this opera have the same features as those of the Gothic novel; additionally, they act within a 'Gothic' setting and the plot of the story shows typical devices of the Gothic novel. Most interesting, music itself describes a world in opposition to classical 18th century serenity: it is a Gothic world, dominated by

> a desire to displace reason and to surrender one's self-control to something larger and rationally incomprehensible. In an age grown too dependent upon the force of reason, the Gothic counterforces … could be expected to erupt with great power. Walpole explained the inevitability of a Gothic upheaval … as a torrent of repressed feelings bursting through the barriers of reason wherever "the great resources of fancy have been dammed up by a strict adherence to the common life."[10]

Among the uncommon musical elements in *Ariodante*, we may cite the frequent use of solely instrumental music, which often accompanies ballets. Instrumental music usually recurs in scenes where something is celebrated, as here in act I and III, and in 'infernal scenes,' here the dream scene that ends act II. In baroque opera recitative mimetically adheres to spoken language and represents the 'logical' element, while arias express feelings because they combine words and music, but the latter prevails. In this sense instrumental music, which is fully

deprived of words, symbolises an escape from rationality. So in act II instrumental music is used in order to show Ginevra's unconscious by means of a dream.

It is even more interesting to see how the main musical form of 18th century music, da capo aria, is constantly manipulated. Usually da capo aria alternates with arioso, a musical form similar to a monologue which is placed in dramatically relevant moments. Arioso is close to recitative, although it is a melodic form and has no internal divisions. By contrast, da capo aria consists of an A-section followed by a shorter B-section with a reduced number of instruments; then, the A-section is repeated with some variations carried out by the singer. Operas composed in this period usually contain one or two ariosos, about twenty da capo arias and only one or two duets (also following the form of da capo aria). In *Ariodante* we observe a higher than usual frequency of ariosos and duets along with a unusual manipulation of da capo arias.

The first instance of this manipulation is in the duet Ariodante-Ginevra 'Prendi, da questa mano' (act I). Here, the repetition of the A-section is interrupted by the entrance of the King: this musically what happens on scene. Handel's realistic choice is in contrast with all previous musical realisations of Salvi's libretto - at least as far as we know.[11]

In act III there are three instances of manipulation of da capo form. The first one occurs at the very beginning of this act, when Ariodante sings: 'Numi, lasciarmi vivere / per darmi mille morti / è questa la pietà?', and he is interrupted by Dalinda. In the score this piece is named 'Sinfonia': however, the instrumental part is extremely short and Ariodante starts singing immediately, so this piece is actually an aria. As it does not present any internal divisions, it may be classified as arioso. Still, the vocal line and the meter (ariosos are usually composed by two octosyllables rather than three septenaries) contrast with this interpretation. It may more convincingly be argued that this piece represents the A-section of an aria, interrupted by Dalinda's cries. In baroque opera it often happens that an aria is interrupted by an external event, usually the entrance of a character; however, it is quite uncommon that this device occurs more than once in the same opera.

In the middle of act III there is another ambiguous piece: Ginevra's aria 'Sì, morrò, ma l'onor mio' begins with a Largo phrase followed by an Allegro section. Is this a da capo aria interrupted after an unusually short A-section and an overgrown B-section? Or should the Largo be considered as an appendix of the preceding recitative, so that the Allegro section is an A-section which is then interrupted? Or again, is the Largo to be seen as a short arioso (it is composed by two octosyllables, the typical meter of ariosos) immediately followed by the first hendecasyllable of the A-section of an aria? Actually, it is not clear at all why Ginevra stops singing - does she faint or does she exit all of a sudden?

The last instance of an interrupted da capo form is quite clear: Ginevra is in prison and begins singing her aria 'Manca, o Dio, la mia costanza.' Here, the A-

section is interrupted: the King and Ariodante enter, followed by the royal cortege sounding trumpets, and set Ginevra free, thus acknowledging her innocence.

We are faced with four instances of an interrupted da capo form. In none of them does the interruption foreshadow a negative turn in the plot; on the contrary, all instances have to do with Ginevra and Ariodante, whereas Polinesso's arias always pattern with the classical form. Hence, it may be argued that this breaking of the classical form has a positive connotation.

It is a common assumption that baroque opera is tonally 'blind,' as it contains no tonal macrostructures. But *Ariodante* starts with a G-minor ouverture followed by a G-major aria, and ends in G-major. In the middle of the opera, the aria 'Scherza infida,' constituting the climax of desperation for Ariodante, is in G minor; the climax of desperation for Ginevra, at the end of act II, is in E minor, the relative minor of G major. G (Sol) is the basic tonality of the whole opera, and the libretto is pervaded by the 'sun-night' (sole-notte) opposition and by references to eyes and sight. Reversing traditional imagery, the coming of the night coincides with greatest happiness, whereas the coming of the day is most painful. One of the features of the Gothic novel is a perspective reversal: what is comfortable and familiar turns into a source of obscure fear.

That this is more than a chance coincidence is confirmed by another reversal. The arias sung by the main characters Ginevra and Ariodante are often in minor keys or 'darkened' by many flats (G minor, C minor, E minor, D minor, F minor). This does not really surprise: these tonalities express the characters' desperate situation. In turn, Polinesso, the worst character, systematically sings in 'bright' major keys. Though quite astonishing, this may be related to the typically Gothic reversal of good and evil, light and darkness. So, the aria 'Coperta la frode' is in C major; 'Spero per voi sì sì' is in F major; 'Se l'inganno sortisce felice' is in the relative minor of C major, A minor; 'Dover, giustizia, onor' is in D major.[12]

The choice of 'simple' tonalities for Polinesso's arias has nothing to do with any vocal limitations of the first performer,[13] but is a conscious stylistic choice aiming to underline Polinesso's hypocrisy. And the way Handel uses tonalities in his arias is uncommon and reveals the complexity of the character: Charles Burney, Handel's contemporary, noticed that in the aria 'Spero per voi' the composer was 'more licentious in the use of discords than usual.'[14]

Even if there are no skeletons or ghosts, *Ariodante* proves to be a forerunner of the Gothic novel, according to the *Receipt for a Modern Romance* provided sixty years later by an anonymous Anti-Ghost from Philadelphia.

> Take a haunted castle; … provide the owls and bats uninterrupted habitations among the ruins. … Convey to this castle a young lady … . Make her dreadfully terrified … . Convey her … through a trap-door, and from the trap-door to a flight of steps down-wards, and from a flight of steps to a

> subterraneous passage, …; here present either a skeleton with a living face, … or a ghost all in white, and … a suit of armour moving … . … [A]nd after the lady has been dissolved to a jelly with her fears, let her be delivered to a man of her heart, and married.[15]

Notes

[1] F. S. Frank, *The First Gothics. A Critical Guide to the English Gothic Novel*, Garland Publishing, New York and London, 1987, p. xix.

[2] In his correspondence, Walpole mentions his admiration for Handel's operas; in turn, the political vicissitudes of the government of Sir Robert Walpole, Horace's father, had a strong impact on the composer's activity. C. Hogwood, *Georg Friedrich Händel*, Edizioni Studio Tesi, Pordenone, 1991, p. 133 contains a satire in which Handel is compared to Robert Walpole.

[3] D. H. Richter, *The Progress of Romance. Literary Historiography and the Gothic Novel*, Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 1996, p. 10.

[4] A. Salvi, 'Gentilissimo Lettore', in *Ariodante: Partitura dell'Opera in Facsimile: Edizione del Libretto*, A. Salvi and C. F. Pollarolo (eds), Ricordi, Milano, 1986, p. LXXXVII.

[5] Consider for instance *The Castle of Otranto* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*: both were written under the influence of a dream and contain the topic of the double. G. Franci, *La Messa in Scena del Terrore. Il Romanzo Gotico Inglese (Walpole, Beckford, Lewis)*, Longo Editore, Ravenna, 1993, p. 14.

[6] C. Corti, 'Il Doppio Come Paradigma Fantastico-Gotico (Testi di H. Walpole e W. Beckford)', *Il Confronto Letterario*, Vol. VIII, No. 16, 1991, p. 320.

[7] Italy is the setting for *The Castle of Otranto*, *The Monk*, several of Ann Radcliffe's novels; Scotland for *Memoirs of a Justified Sinner* and Scott's, Conan Doyle's and Stevenson's stories.

[8] In *Orlando Furioso*, only the final of Ginevra's story takes place 'live'; the rest of the story is told twice to Rinaldo. This is a typical device of Gothic novel (cf. Hogg's and Stevenson's works).

[9] 'One of the indispensable conditions of the novel of terror is architectural insularity; the Gothic building possesses the human characters, surrounds them with filial secrets, identity crises, and lethal predicaments within its walls, and finally determines their salvation or destruction by spectacular means.' Frank, p. xxiii.

[10] Frank, p. xx.

[11] The musical score of the first version by Giacomo Antonio Perti is lost. O. Termini, 'From Ariodante to Ariodante: *Ariodante* by Pollarolo (Venice, 1718)', in A. Salvi and C. F. Pollarolo, p. XLVIII.

[12] It may be interesting to compare these arias with the C-major/A-minor arias in *Alcina*, who is strictly related to *Ariodante*. In *Alcina* the two tonalities are used either when young, sincere characters sing, or when characters tell the truth, sometimes unconsciously.
[13] The other roles that Handel wrote for Maria Caterina Negri are highly demanding, and include that of Bradamante in *Alcina*.
[14] W. Dean, *Handel's Operas 1726-1741*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2006, p. 295.
[15] Anti-Ghost, 'A Receipt for a Modern Romance', *The Weekly Magazine*, Philadelphia, 30th June 1798, Vol. II, No. 22, p. 273, cited in Franci, p. 10.

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Part 2

Lights! Camera! Action!

Representing European Identities in Classic Hollywood Cinema and 18th-Century Gothic Literature

Niall O'Donnell

Abstract
This paper proposes to examine and compare representations of North-Western European identity as contrasted with Southern and Eastern European identities (as well as nationalities from further afield) in the Gothic literature of the late 18th century and classic Hollywood horror cinema of the 1930s. I aim to show that works from both periods display great similarities in this regard due to specific similarities in their production contexts, particularly in terms of notions of European and foreign identity. In terms of Gothic literature, I will demonstrate that the protagonists in works such as Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) and particularly Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) display characteristics associated not only with Britishness but also with the Northern European Gothic tribes who were considered at the time to have been the source of many of the positive characteristics associated with Britain, such as a love of liberty. The antagonists, on the other hand, display characteristics such as superstition, violence and tyranny more generally associated with the south of Europe and the more general foreign 'Other'. I will also examine such a contrast within Hollywood horror cinema in the 1930s. I will pay particular attention to the character Dr Muller played by Edward Van Sloan in *The Mummy* (1932) as an example of a North-Western European identity which was officially legitimised in US legislation in the form of the Immigration Quota Acts of the 1920s which sought to promote North-Western European immigration into the US and vastly reduce Southern-European and Asian immigration.

Key Words: *Mummy*, Italian, horror, film, Hollywood, semiotic, nationality.

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1. 18th-Century Gothic

The term 'Gothic' is nowadays often synonymous with 'horror' and for many people in 18th century Britain, this was also true. In general, it was associated with a barbaric, Catholic and medieval past, and contrasted with an enlightened and rational present.[1] A large majority of the Gothic novels of the period reflect this. Works such as Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) and Anne Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) feature villains associated with both Catholicism and the feudal aristocracy. Their nationality is also key to their characterisation. Lewis' Ambrosio is Spanish and Radcliffe's Schedoni is Italian. A conventional reading of these characters would suggest that they represent common Southern-European stereotypes of the

time: excessively passionate, violent and tyrannical.[2] Yet works such as these are not merely polemical tracts demonising a particular national culture.

While 'Gothic' often suggested negative associations, it was a contested term in 18th century Britain. Though it was commonly invoked to suggest a conflation of barbarity, decadence, violence, Catholicism and foreignness, it was also employed in different fashions. One common idea it was associated with was liberty, especially that which was associated with Britain. Many commentators noted Britain's apparent greater degree of liberty and social mobility compared with continental Europe. They marvelled at the peasantry's knowledge of their rights, particularly their right to freedom of expression.[3] Britain's pride in this reputation only increased with the onset of the French Revolution, when the perceived lawlessness and tyranny across the English Channel was contrasted with the perceived order and liberty of Britain. Yet this love of liberty was not of purely British origin. Rather it was traced back to the Germanic tribes of medieval Northern Europe. Tribes like the Saxons and the Goths were idolised for sacking Rome and ending the tyranny and bloodthirstiness with which the Roman Empire was popularly associated. English nationalists liked to trace a direct link between these tribes and British society.[4] The Whigs, for example, used the term in what they saw as a positive way to hark back to the Saxon source of the British Constitution, which they held up as the cornerstone of British liberty.[5]

This lineage was not only traced to a sense of social and political liberty, but also to a popular conception of the English character. One of the main principles behind a sense of Englishness was that of balance. The ideal English person was seen as one who could combine apparently incompatible elements: to be passive and reserved yet ready to fight if insulted; a gentleman still able to converse with the peasantry.[6]

Ellena, the heroine of *The Italian*, is presented as such a combination of contrasting elements. On the one hand, she embodies many of the characteristics of a traditional Gothic heroine. She is passive, sexually terrorised and held captive by the forces of evil.[7] Her chief desire in the novel is to be married. Yet she is also fiercely proud.[8] She refuses to have her good reputation sullied by the insinuations of the hero Vivaldi's parents and be under their control. But she never becomes too proud, with Radcliffe always reminding the reader of her 'proper pride.'[9] But most importantly, she embodies the ancient Saxon spirit of independence. She asserts her right to individual freedom by refusing to marry Vivaldi due to his parents' disapproval.[10] Her combination of apparently incompatible elements such as frankness and innocence, rebellion and obedience, and nobility and self-reliance mark her as British despite being nominally Italian.[11] This sense of balance, which could also be applied to Vivaldi, was seen as a key element of English national identity during a period when Englishness was coming to be defined in terms of a British imperial identity.[12]

2. 1930s Horror

A similar conception of a balanced North-Western European figure can also be found in some of the classic horror films of the 1930s. A semiotic analysis of the 1932 film *The Mummy* can illustrate this.

To an extent every filmgoer engages in the process of interpreting codes on a basic level every time they watch a film. Christian Metz uses the example of an audience understanding that the action in shots of one man riding a horse alternating with shots of another chasing him is understood to be happening simultaneously.[13] Yet cinemagoers in the 1930s were presented with more complex and abstract codes due to the strictures of censorship of Hollywood cinema. The Production Code was put in place in 1930, and more strictly enforced after 1934. It greatly restricted Hollywood's potential for direct representation of material that the Code's creators deemed morally dubious. Therefore, directors who wished to insert such material into their works developed a generic stable of codes which, in the manner Metz described, operated across the variety of genres of Hollywood cinema. Thus they became recognisable to sophisticated filmgoers, who attended the cinema frequently.[14]

Horror cinema borrowed many of the basic structures of other popular film genres. Most films featured a romantic heterosexual couple who find happiness together by the film's end. This is illustrated in romantic comedies and melodramas, and in horror films too, in the form of couples like John Harker and Mina Seward in *Dracula* (1931) and Henry Frankenstein and Elizabeth in *Frankenstein* (1931). The opposition between hero and villain and chaos and civilisation recalls the basic elements of the western. So similar were the basic structures of film genres in fact that Robert B. Ray has claimed that every genre film of the time was a thinly-veiled western about the fear of encroachment on civilisation.[15] But just as any genre film might undermine or deliberately play with its established generic codes, so too could horror films generate more complex interpretations.

On a surface level, *The Mummy* lends itself to a simple conservative reading. It tells the story of a mummified priest, Imhotep, who is revived and seeks out the reincarnation of his ancient forbidden love Anck-es-en-Amon in the form of Helen Grosvenor, with whom Frank Whemple, a young British archaeologist, becomes infatuated. Frank (and his father and fellow archaeologist, Sir Joseph) are coded as rational and hard-working in their roles as archaeologists. Sir Joseph states as much directly, espousing a view of a 'disinterested science' explaining the mysteries of the past when he exhorts his impatient assistant early in the film to forget about glory and personal reward and concentrate on the methodical work of their profession.[16] Being white and bourgeois, they might also be presumed to represent the majority of American cinemagoers in the thirties who were themselves white and middle-class.[17] Reynold Humphries suggests that cinemagoers would have identified with Frank Whemple as he is a white

heterosexual male.[18] Therefore, according to Andrew Tudor's conservative interpretation of 1930s horror, one of these men would emerge as the individualist expert belonging to the bourgeoisie or occasionally aristocracy who defeats the peripheral threat, operating in the centre of a centre-periphery divide.[19]

On the other side of the film's binary opposition is Imhotep. He is clearly foreign not only on a basic or denotative level but also in a connotative sense in his relentless pursuit of Helen which codes him as a foreign male due to the stereotype of the time of immigrant men as dangerous sexual threats to American women.[20] This representation is also exemplary of the generic portrayals of mysterious, sexualised and exotic foreign characters that emerged in 1930s cinema as identified by Ruth Vasey.[21] His relationship with his mute and entirely subservient Nubian slave is strongly suggestive of the then stereotypical conception of a homosexual sado-masochistic relationship, further distancing him from the perceived moral norms of heterosexual romance.[22] He is also coded as superstitious, according to Humphries, in his faith in the power of the word.[23]

Standing between these poles of order and chaos is Dr Muller, played by Edward Van Sloan, already recognisable due to his roles as Van Helsing and Dr Waldman in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* respectively. The conventions of arranging credits suggest initially that his role is a supporting one: he is listed fifth behind Boris Karloff as Imhotep, David Manners as Frank, Zita Johann as Helen and Arthur Byron as Sir Joseph. Yet a close look at the film indicates that he is in fact its most important agent and voice of authority.

The film opens with the discovery of Imhotep's mummified body and a casket containing the Scroll of Thoth, reputed to have the power to revive the dead. Sir Joseph is curious to open the casket but Muller warns him against it. The crucial contrast between their attitudes is that Whemple's curiosity is informed by the desire to accumulate knowledge he espouses, but Muller's is informed by his wariness about the power of the Ancient Egyptian gods, or superstition, as Bruce Kawin identifies it, in contrast to the 'straight' Whemple.[24] He is wary because he understands and engages with the alien culture, unlike Sir Joseph who uses it to obtain the artefacts he wants, but initially refuses to acknowledge that this culture has any supernatural power. Muller though, shares Imhotep's belief in the power of the word and fears the power of the Scroll of Thoth, and tells Sir Joseph that the Egyptian gods still live around them. In this manner, Muller resembles Sir Joseph in his scientific interest in reconstructing the past, but differs from him in his awareness that this might involve the resurrection of a powerful and destructive force. He thus combines the rational logic and scepticism of the scientific mind with a more superstitious belief in the supernatural. This dichotomy is summed up neatly when Sir Joseph tells Muller that he recognises his recognition of his mastery of 'the occult sciences,' equating the superstitious with the scientific.

Ultimately Muller is proven correct in his wariness. The Scroll of Thoth *does* have the power to revive the dead (and the awakened Imhotep punishes Sir

Joseph's assistant's curiosity by driving him insane at the sight of him), Imhotep *does* have deadly supernatural powers and the gods *are* well and truly alive as Isis intervenes directly in the film's climax. In this manner the film seems to suggest that an immersion into the foreign, exotic culture, to an extent, is acceptable. Muller is granted the power of agency due to this immersion. It gives him knowledge to identify Imhotep's threat and power (in the form of an ancient charm) which helps to defend himself, Frank and Helen, against Imhotep. It is, therefore, in fact, he who emerges as the bourgeois expert who uses his knowledge of Ancient Egyptian culture to combat the Mummy, though he problematises Tudor's schema somewhat as he emerges from somewhat outside the centre according to his model. Imhotep too wields power: to kill and command remotely, and to transgress the boundary of life and death both for himself and his love. But he belongs solely to the alien culture and thus uses his power for evil. On the other hand, the Whemples do not engage with the culture and are powerless. Sir Joseph is killed early on by Imhotep, and Frank achieves nothing in attempting to save Helen from him.

Muller is then a balanced character, combining rationality with superstition. He also manages to combine binary oppositions in terms of nationality. While both he and Imhotep are clearly identified as foreign on a denotative level, Imhotep's Ancient Egyptian identity marks him as belonging to a culture perceived as mysterious and exotic. This sense of difference is also apparent in his dress: long flowing robes and North African fez in contrast to the simple black and white evening wear of the Whemples. Yet Muller is identified as Austrian. While foreign, he manages to integrate visually with the Whemples by wearing similar evening wear and sober suits. He does have a generic Hollywood Germanic accent but not one strong enough to make him stand out to a great degree.

While it might seem unusual for such films to feature characters clearly marked as foreign as the primary agents of action among the protagonists if one sees Hollywood as a wholly conservative force, it does in fact seem to tally with US immigration policy at the time.

One can certainly find anti-foreign sentiments in the United States during this period. In 1930, 65% of the American population (roughly 80 million people) lived in small towns; whereas immigrants (many of whom were Catholics from Ireland, Italy and Poland) tended to live in large cities.[25] A division thus emerged between a traditional culture that defined itself as white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant and built around the small-town community, and that which it defined as foreign, individualistic politically radical, urban and Catholic. Increased immigration led to a sense that this traditional culture was being eroded by an amoral immigrant culture.[26] The October Revolution in 1917 and numerous radical activities that took place in the United States in that decade and the twenties, such as the Sacco and Vanzetti murder trial, led to hysteria about foreign spies and radical agents

which manifested itself in nativist groups such as the Klu Klux Klan who remained active and powerful through the 1920s and into the 1930s.[27]

And though immigration policy might at first glance seem to reflect these sentiments in its strictures, it was in fact more complex. The policy was restrictive, but distinctions were made between different locations. In 1917 a literacy test was introduced to ensure that potential immigrants could speak English. This favoured North-Western European countries such as the United Kingdom and Ireland where English was the dominant language.[28] In 1921, the Emergency Quota Act further limited immigration levels in general, but with a definite North-Western bias. The quota restricted immigration from individual countries to 3% of the number of foreign-born people of individual nationalities resident in the United States in 1910. While this did apply to all European countries, it actively discriminated against Southern and Eastern European countries. A large proportion of immigrants, largely Italian and Polish, from these regions had arrived in the United States since 1910. Therefore, even though the annual inflow of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe had outnumbered that from the North and West by roughly three to one, these countries actually received lower quotas than North-Western Europe. A further immigration act of 1924 further restricted Southern European immigration and effectively ruled out African immigration by reducing the quota to 2% of foreign-born people resident in the United States in 1890.[29] By 1929, 89% of immigration quotas were allocated to the North and West of Europe.[30]

Muller thus represents this preferred North-Western European immigrant. He engages with the foreign Egyptian culture to an extent but not so much that he cannot integrate with the audience-substitution characters. What is crucial about his engagement with this culture is that he uses the knowledge and power it gives him to support the protagonists representing the community. He is, therefore, the bourgeois individualist who protects the community, though he is an outsider in terms of this community. This suggests that an immigrant is welcome if they are racially and culturally approximate to American culture, and contribute to American society. Imhotep though remains fully-integrated with the alien culture and is thus doomed to attempt to repeatedly revive it as a 'walking repetition compulsion.'[31] He is trapped in the past, but Muller manages to combine the past and the present, the Old World and the New, just as characters such as Ellena combined apparently incompatible opposites.

Notes

[1] F. Botting, *Gothic*, Routledge, Abingdon, 1996, pp. 2-3.
[2] A. Smith, *Gothic Literature*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2007, p. 24.

[3] I. R. Christie, *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain: Reflections on the British Avoidance of Revolution*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1984, p. 60.
[4] Botting, p. 5.
[5] R. Miles, 'The 1790s: The Effulgence of Gothic', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, J. Hogle (ed), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 47-48.
[6] R. Porter, *The Pelican Social History of Britain: English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1982, pp. 22-23.
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[8] A. Radcliffe, *The Italian, or, The Confessional of The Black Penitents: A Romance*, Penguin Books, London and New York, 2000, p. 32.
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[10] Ibid., p. 211.
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James Whale's *The Old Dark House*: Classic Gothic Cinema as the Origin of *The Rocky Horror Show*

Armando Rotondi

Abstract
The purpose of the following study is to analyse the main elements of an the American Gothic cinema masterpiece *The Old Dark House* directed by James Whale. Specifically, I want to show the importance of *The Old Dark House* for the creation of such a theatrical production as *The Rocky Horror Show* (1973) written by Richard O'Brian and directed by Jim Sharman, who were also authors of the film version in 1975. This origin is evident thanks to the presence and exploitation in both films of situations, locations, in the similarity of some characters and in peculiar sexual elements.

Key Words: Horror movies, Universal Studios, camp culture, sexual diversity, Gothic literature, Gothic cinema.

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The Rocky Horror Show (1973)[1] by Richard O'Brian, and, later, the film adaptation, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), both directed by Jim Sharman, can be considered as milestones of musicals in theatre and on the screen.

Its structure and themes are a product of the sexual revolution and an emblem of a movement for freedom of sexual and queer behaviour. These elements are essential for *The Rocky Horror Show* to become a parody of a 'genre': the Gothic of which O'Brien's musical uses the peculiarities with great respect and inventiveness.

The success of the musical lies precisely in this mockery of Gothic stereotypes, primarily literary and thereafter cinematic. As the latter is 'mockery', distorted and reinterpreted in a comic way, it is still present and plays a vital role in the success of the musical, and the conventions used in Gothic novels are shown as a musical and self-deprecating parody. The dark atmosphere, the mysterious characters, the haunted castle in *The Rocky Horror Show* form a backdrop of bizarre and comical adventures involving the protagonists of the musical, and draw a caricature of the Gothic.

Inside *The Rocky Horror Show* there are features belonging to what is commonly called 'Camp Culture,'[2] the aesthetic sensibility based on the appealing of the bad taste. The protagonist in the musical, Dr. Frank-N-Furter, is a typical representative of this culture, and, together with his creation, Rocky, he is a clear reference to *Frankenstein*, the celebrated novel by Mary Shelley.

However, in order to find the influence of the Gothic in *The Rocky Horror Show*, we have to look not just at the horizon of Gothic literature, which also

provides the first reference for the show, but at the most purely cinematic horror production of Universal Studios in the early 30s.

It has been repeatedly highlighted that O'Brien's musical is in effect a show full of literary and film quotes, an element that is clear already from the first song, *Science Fiction / Double Feature*, that serves as an introduction to the main storyline:

Song 1: Science Fiction

Magenta Michael Rennie was ill
The day the earth stood still
But he told us where we stand
And Flash Gordon was there
In silver underwear
Claude Rains was the invisible man
Then something went wrong
For Fay Wray and King Kong
They got caught in a celluloid jam
Then at a deadly pace
It came from outer space
And this is how the message ran.
Chorus

Magenta Science Fiction -
Ushers Wah, wah, wah
Magenta - double Feature
Ushers Doh, doh, doh
Magenta Dr. X -
Ushers Oo, oo, oo
Magenta - will build a creature
See androids fighting -
Ushers Oo, oo, oo
Magenta - Brad and Janet
Ann Francis stars in -
Ushers Oo, oo, oo
Magenta - *Forbidden Planet*
Ushers Oh, oh, oh
Magenta Oh, at the late night, double feature
Picture show
I knew Leo G. Carroll

Was over a barrel
When Tarantula took to the hills
And I really got hot
When I saw Janet Scott
Fight a Triffid that spits poison and kills
Dana Andrews said prunes
Gave him the runes
And passing them used lots of skills
And when worlds collide
Said George Pal to his bride
I'm gonna give you some terrible thrills
Like a:

Chorus

Magenta I wanna go -
Ushers Oh, oh
Magenta - to the late night double feature
Picture show by RKO
Ushers Oh, oh
Magenta To the late night double feature picture show
In the back row
Ushers Oh, oh
Magenta To the late night double feature picture show.[3]

Starting from this track, Jeffrey Weinstock notes in his monograph on the film adaptation:

> The Rocky Horror Picture Show wastes no time in establishing its indebtedness to certain specific cinematic traditions and foregrounding that this midnight movie will be all about other "late night double features": the movie's very first song, "Science Fiction/Double Feature", reflects nostalgically on the pleasure of taking in both classic and B science fiction movies. In quick succession, the song references *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), *Flash Gordon* (1936), *The Invisible Man* (1933), *King Kong* (1933), *It Came From Outer Space* (1953), *Forbidden Planet* (1956), *Tarantula* (1955), *The Day of the Triffids* (1963), *The Night of the Demon* (1957) and *When Worlds Collide* (1951).[4]

These film references are well-defined and they range from the horror production of 30s, particularly by Universal Studios and RKO, as James Whale's *The Invisible Man* and *King Kong* by Schoedsack and Cooper, to the 50s films. Film references and tributes are present in the iconography of *The Rocky Horror Show*, for example in its set design and costumes, until the final quote with the ballet performed by Frank-N-Furter and his guests, with a curtain that rises and shows the great RKO logo, almost at the end of the show.

However, it is in the works of *The Invisible Man*'s director, James Whale, where we can trace the main influence and themes of *The Rocky Horror Show.*

Whale is the incarnation of the 30s Gothic film, the director who most left his mark on the genre and on the whole production of the Universal. Michael Mallory writes:

> If any one man can be said to have established the pattern for Universal Horror throughout the 1930s, it is the British-born director James Whale. Tod Browning may have gotten there first with Dracula, but it was Whale's themes, motifs, and quirky vision that other filmmakers tried to duplicate in their own work.[5]

The Rocky Horror Show is configured, in our opinion, as a great quote and a great tribute not just to such films mentioned by Weinstock and quoted in the lyrics of *Science Fiction / Double Feature*, the first song of the musical, but especially to those two, both directed by James Whale, missed in the list: *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Old Dark House* (1932).

An homage to *Frankenstein* is already obvious from the name and figure of the protagonist Frank-N-Furter, who wants to create a perfect creature; then in the set design of the laboratory; and even in the character of Riff Raff, which seems to mimic Bela Lugosi in the role of the servant, Ygor, in *Son of Frankenstein* (1939) by Rowland V. Lee, second sequel to the Whale's film. Whale himself directed *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), considered by many as his masterpiece.

More problematic and more interesting is the relation between *The Rocky Horror Show* and *The Old Dark House*, perhaps the highest point among the films that have the classic theme of an *old dark house during a stormy night* as a background.

Leaving aside the technical details, such as the all-star cast, starring Boris Karloff, Charles Laughton, Melvyn Douglas and Gloria Stuart, we focus on the factors that make *The Old Dark House*, in all intents and purposes, the main source of influence for *The Rocky Horror Show*, regarding style, history and setting.

It is necessary, to present, a brief overview of the film plot. Whale's work is based on the novel *Benighted* by John Boylton Priestley (1894-1984) and adapted by Benn W. Levy and R. C. Sheriff: during a stormy night, on the border between England and Wales, five travellers find refuge in the Fenn's mansion. The

travellers are: a married couple (R. Massey, G. Stuart) and their penniless friend (M. Douglas) in a car, and a nobleman (C. Laughton) with his dancer girlfriend (L. Bond) in another one. A crude, dumb, angry butler (B. Karloff) welcomes them. The landlord is a centenarian (quoted in the credits as J. Dudgeon who is actually the actress Elspeth Dudgeon) confined to bed upstairs; on her behalf there is a sixty-year-old son (E. Thesiger), pathologically worried about the decorum of the house; he has a sister (E. Moore), a hysterically fanatical hag, and a brother (B. Wills), a dangerous arsonist, locked in a room because even his relatives consider him mad.

This story cannot fail to recall the plot of *The Rocky Horror Show*. Also we have here a very shy couple, Janet (S. Sarandon) and Brad (B. Bostwick), who find refuge in a disturbing castle during a storm. The no less disturbing butler Riff Raff (R. 'Brien) introduces them to the landlord, Dr. Frank-N-Furter (T. Curry), dressed only with heels, fishnet stockings, baby doll and lace gloves. They have arrived during a very special occasion: the convention of Transylvania's travesties, the fateful moment when Frank-N-Furter will create Rocky (P. Hinwood), the perfect sexual creature. The young couple is upset by the bizarre characters that inhabit the castle and forced to stay for the night, which will mark a real initiation to sex.

Whale starts from the classic Gothic ambience of the old house in a dark and stormy weather, to create a poisoned parody of the traditional British family. The work is full of a sharp humour typical of Whale, who dispenses, with unerring timing, the suspense and creates a crescendo of fear that has nothing supernatural, but it is born from human weaknesses: insanity, infirmity or sickness. Like in *Frankenstein*, the director deploys shadows, sound effects, bizarre shots, reaching a grotesque climate, rarely equalled. Even the British director has a referent, namely Paul Leni,[6] author of *The Cat and the Canary* (1927). James Curtis writes:

> If his work on *Frankenstein* was influenced by *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *Metropolis*, *The Old Dark House* was influenced by *The Cat and the Canary* and contained a great deal of humor. In 1952, Whale told Gavin Lambert of his admiration for *The Cat and the Canary* and his director Paul Leni, particularly because of its adroit mixture of horror and humor. Whale also liked the sets in *The Cat and the Canary* because Leni, like Whale himself, had been a designer for the stage.[7]

There are several elements that lead us to place *The Old Dark House* as the ultimate referent for *The Rocky Horror Show*. First of all, the stories have multiple points of contact, such as a mixture of humour and horror that, in both, reaches the grotesque parody of Gothic culture stereotypes. Finally we cannot forget that *The Old Dark House* represents the most proper theatrical work directed by Whale, that

could be a reference for O'Brien's work, written for the stage and then adapted for the screen. We can read in Curtis' volume:

> Of the 20 feature films directed by James Whale, *The Old Dark House* is arguably the most theatrical. The set of the main hall was designed as if for a proscenium stage, with staircase at one side, a balustrade running along the top, and doors and hallways for entrances and exits. Whale confined much of the action to the relatively simple room, with its huge fireplace and rustic dining table, the only exteriors being those of the house itself and an opening sequence in which the Wavertons and Roger Penderel brave the drenching storm on their approach.[8]

Beyond the formal aspects a much more significant element combines Whale's film and O'Brien's musical, namely an intellectual commonality of purpose. We totally agree with what Michael D. Klemm writes: 'Whale loosened up a lot with *The Old Dark House* (1932), a bizarre little film with an all-star cast that, along with *Frankenstein*, would someday provide the inspiration for *The Rocky Horror Show*.'[9]

Klemm focuses his attention on the characters of Riff Raff and Magenta, from *The Rocky Horror Show*, and Whale's Horace and Rebecca, stating: 'The masters of the house are the elderly Femm Horace and Rebecca. Like *Rocky Horror*'s Riff Raff and Magenta, they are siblings ... and there are subtle suggestions of incest. Wet Horace invites his guests to sit by the fire while his sister Rebecca repeatedly shrieks that there are no beds'.[10]

In fact, this similarity is evident, even if we have to notice again that a character like Riff Raff undergoes not only the influence of *The Old Dark House*, but also one of the servants, Ygor, interpreted by Bela Lugosi in Rowland V. Lee's *The Son of Frankenstein*.

The aspect that is really interesting for Klemm concerns the point when he discusses the monstrosity of *The Old Dark House*'s characters. These are, in fact, normal people and their monstrosity is born from an ambiguous sexual behaviour, exactly as repressed and perverse Frank-N-Furter and other characters created by Richard O'Brian. Klemm states: 'Like the antagonists of the later *Rocky Horror*, the inhabitants of *The Old Dark House* seem to be Hollywood monsters primarily because of seemingly perverse sexuality.'[11]

It is a new sexuality, but with some differences: in the musical O'Brian fits it into the context of the sexual revolution, criticism of the couple as it was then conceived (after all also Whale, as mentioned, gives us a critique of the conservative British family); in the case of James Whale this new sexuality has origin from the life of the director (Whale was one of the few openly gay artists in Hollywood) with a quite strong influence in the genesis of the film. Comparing the

'sweet travestied' Frank-N-Furter with Sir Roderick, interpreted by Elspeth Dudgeon, but mentioned, in the credits, as 'John Dudgeon,' we can quote Curtis who writes about *The Old Dark House*:

> Benn Levy, in adapting the book, recast Sir Roderick as the 102 year-old patriarch of the family, an invalid who is nonetheless the sanest of the bunch. To play the role, Whale needed an actor who could believably appear to be the father of 62 year-old Eva Moore and - perversely - he selected a woman for the job. For years, the identity of the actor billed as "John Dudgeon" in the film was a mystery; David Lewis cleared the matter up in the 1975. "Jimmy couldn't find a male actor who looked old enough to suit him", he explained, "so he finally used an old stage actress he knew called Elspeth Dudgeon. She looked a thousand".
> Whale kept the secret from the rest of the cast, hinting only at an upcoming surprise.[12]

In conclusion, *The Old Dark House* seems to be the film and the artistic work which has exercised the greatest influence on *The Rocky Horror Show*. These essential reasons are well presented in Michael Mallory's account of Whale's film: 'In fact, *The Old Dark House* plays like something of a shaggy-god prolonged joke: after a night of horror, the visitors leave on a bright, sunny, dry morning, to Horace cheerfully bidding them goodbye.'[13] This is, in fact, what happens also to Brad and Janet who are left lost and confused in the dust by the departure of the home-star ship, but unharmed after a night of horror.

Common aspects bind, Whale's film and O'Brian's musical: primarily, a parody of the Gothic culture through the grotesque, already present in *The Old Dark House* and proposed in *The Rocky Horror Show*; secondly touching theatrical elements used by Whale in his direction and elements of sexual diversity that are the basis of the strangeness and the monstrosity of the characters. They are aspects that go far beyond the quotes and tributes to other films such as Whale's *Frankenstein*.

Notes

[1] *The Rocky Horror Show* was presented at the Theatre Upstairs at the Royal Court Theatre (19th June 1973), directed by Jim Sharman, with the following cast: Tim Curry (Frank'n'Furter), Richard O'Brian (Riff Raff), Patricia Quinn (Usherette/Magenta), Berlinda Sinclair (Janet Weiss), Christopher Malcolm (Brad Majors), Lil' Nell (Columbia), Rayner Bourton (Rocky Horror), Paddy O'Hagan (Eddie/Dr Everett Scott) and Jonathan Adams (Narrator).

[2] See F. Cleto (ed), *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject - A Reader*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1999.
[3] R. O'Brian, *The Rocky Horror Show*, Samuel French, London, 1983, pp. 1-2.
[4] J. Weinstock, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, Wallflower Press, London and New York, 2007, p. 83. See also J. Weinstock, *Reading Rocky Horror: The Rocky Horror Picture Show and Popular Culture*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2008.
[5] M. Mallory, *Universal Studios Monster - A Legacy of Horror*, Universe, New York, 2009, p. 198.
[6] About Paul Leni see the catalogue *Paul Leni: Grafik, Theater, Film - Eine Ausstellung vom 10. August bis 26. Oktober 1986 im Deutschen Filmmuseum Frankfurt am Main*, Das Filmmuseum, Frankfurt am Main, 1986.
[7] J. Curtis, *James Whale - A New World of Gods and Monsters*, Faber & Faber, London and New York, 1998, p. 180.
[8] Ibid., p. 176.
[9] M. D. Klemm, 'Of Gays and Ghouls', in *Cinema Queer.com*, <http://www.cinemaqueer.com/review%20pages/ofgaysghouls.html>, previously in *Outcom*e, January 1999.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid. See also D. Hogan, *Dark Romance: Sexuality in the Horror Film*, McFarland, Jefferson, NC, 1997, pp. 8-9. Here Hogan studies the sexual elements in James Whale's *Frankenstein*, without considering *The Old Dark House*.
[12] Curtis, op. cit., p. 180.
[13] Mallory, op. cit., pp. 175-176.

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Evil Against Evil: Demonic Sexuality in William Friedkin's *The Exorcist*

Gord Barentsen

Abstract
The paradoxical nature of labels like 'religious porn' and 'excruciating entertainment' that used to describe William Friedkin's film *The Exorcist* (1973) point to a more fundamental indeterminacy at work in a film deceptively simple in its presentation of 'Good' and 'Evil.' Yet Regan MacNeil's complexity eludes the moral binarisms often surrounding the film; her possession by the demon Pazuzu manifests a more profound indeterminacy - a fundamentally shattering initiation into sexuality that has yet to be explored in psychoanalytic approaches to the film which tend to frame her in terms of the orthodox Oedipal narrative. I will explore this idea of demonic sexuality in *The Exorcist*, specifically as it articulates the central event of Regan's possession and its ambiguous containment by what is, ultimately, a strongly conservative film. The presence of an obscure Assyro-Babylonian demon in a thoroughly Christian narrative of good versus evil is curious - why Pazuzu and not, say, Satan or Lucifer? As a demon invoked for protection against other demonic beings - particularly the baby-snatching Lamashtu - Pazuzu's possession of an adolescent girl already presents him as a force of indeterminacy and destabilisation. But this possession more significantly allegorises what Leo Bersani calls the 'shattering tension' of adolescent sexuality marked by 'that which is intolerable to the structured self.' Drawing on Bersani's post-Freudian contextualisation of adolescent sexuality, I will focus on Pazuzu and his particular role in Regan's possession to shed light on the shattering nature of demonic sexuality constituting the hermeneutic core of *The Exorcist*. A close reading will focus on the representation of this self-conflicted force in the film and its resistance to both verbalisation and containment by the contending discourses of neuroscience, psychiatry and religion.

Key Words: Psychoanalysis, film, Freud, Bersani, sexuality, evil, Pazuzu, exorcism, horror, gothic.

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Whatever else can be said about *The Exorcist*, it is a controversial and culturally pervasive film. Descriptions of it range from 'effectively excruciating entertainment' to 'religious porn,' and the death threats against Linda Blair after the film's debut are perhaps the strongest testament to the film's impact. Colleen McDannell is one of many writers underscoring *The Exorcist*'s preoccupation with morality and the struggle between good and evil, arguing that 'the creative tension ... between good horror and good story' informs a 'wider spiritual message' set

forth by Blatty.[1] However, I want to argue that a psychoanalytic reading of *The Exorcist* profoundly troubles such a reading, revealing deeper complexities in the film that compromise its guiding dualisms of Good-Evil and Religion-Science. Specifically, this instability takes the form of what I call the demonic sexuality constituting the hermeneutic core of *The Exorcist*. This demonic sexuality is depicted with the typically Gothic suite of sexual taboo, winged demons and images of blasphemy and abjection - that is, pea soup through rubber hoses; but behind this is a radical indeterminacy tied to what psychoanalytic theorist Leo Bersani calls the 'nonlinguistic biology of human life.'[2] This indeterminacy resists both religious and psychiatric discourses, even as the film's anxious conservatism attempts to circumscribe it within Catholic exorcist discourse - a circumscription also legitimating, in part, the developmental teleology Freud sought in his own theory of sexuality. The shocking excesses of Regan's possession embody what Bersani refers to as the shattering effect of sexuality on the child's ego, a sexuality characterised by contentless indeterminacy and its hysterical affects. Drawing on Leo Bersani's significant work with Freud, I want to track the aetiology and operation of this demonic sexuality in *The Exorcist* and explore how it articulates the central event of Regan's possession and its ambiguous containment.

To begin with, we must ask a question absent from commentary on the film: *why Pazuzu?* Surely 'Satan' or 'Lucifer' would be more resonant and lucrative with Western audiences? One possible answer lies in Pazuzu's archaeological history, which articulates demonic sexuality in a way that typical Christian theodicy cannot. An Assyro-Babylonian demon, Pazuzu is the king of storm-bearing winds causing drought and famine in the wet and dry seasons; more significantly, Pazuzu is invoked as protection *against* evil. Nils Heeßel writes: '[Pazuzu's] image was used to ward off other demonic beings [and he] served particularly as the antagonist of the baby-snatching demon Lamashtu, and was a favourite amulet of pregnant women and young mothers.'[3] This history is not wasted on the film's creators; Father Merrin's Iraqi colleague speaks to this conflicted aetiology, ruminating 'evil against evil' in Arabic, making it significantly arcane for Western viewers as Merrin examines the Pazuzu pendant. The Director's Cut also insists on Pazuzu's recognition through repeated apparitions. Moreover, that Regan is possessed ('snatched' away from her mother) by a demon originally invoked *against* child-snatching is a significant marker of demonic sexuality's auto-annihilatory core: asked by Karras how long he will possess Regan, Pazuzu replies: 'until she rots and lies stinking in the earth.' The adolescent female body is thus the site of evil's apparent self-destruction - a point to which I shall return.

Pazuzu is uncovered in ancient Mesopotamia, the proverbial cradle of civilization. Given the archaeological motif framing the film's beginning - a well-known metaphor for psychoanalytic anamnesis - this discovery can be seen as a modern Gothic analogue to the fundamental indeterminacy, marked by repetition,

that Bersani sees in Freud's theory of sexuality. Indeed, elsewhere in his work on Freud Bersani identifies Assyrian archaeological art at Nimrud and Nineveh (the same site that opens *The Exorcist*) as particularly significant emblems of aesthetic indeterminacy.[4] For Bersani, Freud's desire to place sexuality in a stable model of teleological development is threatened by the very discovery of 'pleasurable unpleasure' and its 'insistent repetition.'[5] To map this paradigm on to the dynamics of demonic sexuality in *The Exorcist*, then, is to see Pazuzu as what Bersani calls a 'self-cancelling formulation'[6] refuting the film's discursive binarism predicated on the phenomenological presences of good and evil - even as this phenomenology is crucial to the central nemesis-relationship between Merrin and Pazuzu. Thus, notwithstanding this narrative need for presence, the core of demonic sexuality in *The Exorcist* is precisely what Bersani describes as a contentless, shattering experience, as

> [a] massive detachment of the sexual from both object-specificity and organ-specificity...[thus, this] shattering experience is, it would seem, without any specific content - which may be our only way of saying that the experience cannot be said, that it belongs to the nonlinguistic biology of human life.[7]

The beginning of *The Exorcist* performs this indeterminate core Bersani sees in Freudian sexuality. The first supernatural manifestation of evil occurs with the clock stopping in tandem with the invocative 'evil against evil.' Merrin's first encounter with Pazuzu is foreshadowed by two fighting dogs - a trope repeated in the two wrestling boys in the hospital waiting room during Regan's first visit. These scenes repeat this conflict of the Same with itself ('evil against evil'), the paradoxical irresolvability of pleasurable-unpleasurable sexuality whose 'mysterious repetition,' Bersani suggests, lies beyond the pleasure principle.[8] *The Exorcist* wilfully aligns itself with the Gothic tendency to render the feminine as the site of this sinister force: Merrin's confrontation with Pazuzu leads him to seek refuge in the traditionally male sphere of the coffeehouse, where the sight of male-male camaraderie in the form of one man leading another by the hand gives him temporary relief. It is only when leaving the male world of the Muslim souq and passing into the female sphere that he is once again threatened by silence, glowering looks and a near miss from a speeding carriage driven by a withered crone in black.

Regan's possession is the obvious locus of this nonlinguistic demonic sexuality and its dénouement; from the outset it cuts across and punctures the attempts by neuroscientific, psychiatric and religious discourse to articulate and thus contain it. But in the film's ambiguous ending not only is the sovereignty of Catholic discourse reinstated; so, too, is the orthodox Freudian teleology of sexual development even as the broader psychoanalytic project of the talking cure is

wholly denied. Yet true to Gothic form, these containments are far from stable. Critiquing Freud's work on sexuality, Bersani wonders if the difficulties in Freud's text are not symptomatic of 'the dysfunctional relation of our language to our body.'[9] Indeed, the nonlinguistic biology of human life informs demonic sexuality here through the Gothic's grotesqueness and indescribable affect of Regan's abjection: glossy green bile, her corpse-like body strapped to the bed, her head turning completely around to mimic Dennings's offensive argot and so forth. Indeed, the gender polarisations we see in the film's opening and the abjection of the feminine throughout lead us to look for foundations further back. The first manifestation of possession comes after Chris's attempt to reach Regan's absent father - a traumatic event Regan secretly overhears: 'Jesus Christ! Can you believe this? He doesn't even call his own daughter on her birthday? ... He doesn't give a shit!' Leaving to one side for now the film's ambiguous end, father figures - indeed, all significant masculine figures in *The Exorcist* are either wholly absent or decidedly impotent. Almost the first words we hear from Regan are her desire for a beautiful gray gelding; Burke Dennings is a malicious drunkard; Father Karras is ravaged by guilt and crises of faith; and Father Merrin's justification for taking alcohol despite his frailty ('The doctors say I shouldn't, but thank God my will is weak') leads to a somewhat quizzical, disquieted look from Chris. Chris MacNeil counters this as a figure of the phallic mother - a well-known and respected actress who gets invited to intimate White House dinners, short hair and professional attire masculinising her persona in the context of 1970s America. If we keep in mind the 'great anxiogenic force' Laplanche and Pontalis attribute to the phallic mother,[10] we can track the sequence of events establishing not only the reign of the phallic mother in this almost exclusively female household, but also the anxiogenic preconditions for the eruption of demonic sexuality determining the rest of the film. Same-sex bodily contact, so muted and proper between men (as in Iraq), assumes an ominous quality in the primary homoerotic relationship between Chris and Regan. The central inconsistency in Freud's attempt to define sexuality is that sexuality soon becomes decoupled from specific (genital) objects;[11] and to this end the same-sex wrestling repeated throughout the film is not only cited by Freud as a sadistic prelude to sexual object-choice;[12] it is also an aesthetic emblem of what for Bersani is the ontological indeterminacy of sexuality as 'atemporal substratum' to sex - a substratum both anterior and inaccessible to language and discourse.[13]

If this is the case, we may well ask: who, or what, shatters Regan? If we align indeterminacy with the polymorphous perversity Freud sees in infantile sexuality, can we conclusively answer this question? While *The Exorcist*, as Gothic, undoubtedly concretises this demonic sexuality as Pazuzu, a psychoanalytic approach opens the question to the possibility of the absent father - or, perhaps, the 'shattering mother' - as part of the larger demonisation of female sexuality in the film. It is because of this 'shattering ontology' of indeterminacy that Regan's possession is both pliant toward and resistant to discursive containment. We see

early on that scientific discourse fails to address Regan's situation even as hypnosis gives doctors direct access to the demon against its will. Similarly, the possession falls both outside and inside Church criteria for exorcism: the purported glossolalia is only backwards English, and Pazuzu reacts violently to Karras's fake holy water. But Pazuzu knows about Karras's deceased mother, can psychokinetically open nightstand drawers and augurs Merrin's arrival from afar with demonic howls.

As the agent of demonic sexuality and indeterminacy in the film, Pazuzu's own identity is in flux. Apart from the central nemesis-relationship between Pazuzu and Fathers Merrin and Karras (whose names are tellingly isocolonic), the demon's identity is metonymically constituted - from Captain Howdy (who may or may not be the person inside her, says a hypnotised Regan) to 'no one' to 'us' to 'the devil.' We can now see how this resistance to the imposition of the proper name is fitting for an entity whose attacks are almost exclusively sexual, manifesting in modern Gothic tropes both the cruelty and shattering sadomasochism Freud sees at the heart of infantile sexuality,[14] and which Bersani suggests is the condition of sexuality's very emergence.[15] The hypnotised Regan seizes the hypnotist by the testicles, and the demon's taunts to Fathers Karras and Merrin include 'Your mother sucks cocks in hell!' and 'Stick your cock up her ass you motherfucking worthless cocksucker!' Discussing the theoretical impasse Freud reaches with the de-objectification of sexuality, Bersani writes:

> Sexuality would be that which is intolerable to the structured self. From this perspective, the distinguishing feature of infancy would be its *susceptibility to the sexual*. The polymorphously perverse nature of infantile sexuality would be a function of the child's vulnerability to being shattered into sexuality ... The *mystery* of sexuality is that we seek not only to get rid of this shattering tension but also to repeat, even to increase it. [Thus, sexuality] could be thought of as a tautology for masochism.[16]

If we see Regan's possession as an uncanny liminality between self and Other or ego and unconscious, then the object-aspect of sadomasochism dissipates and we are left precisely with Bersani's sadomasochistic sexuality, 'a kind of melodramatic [and here, Gothic] version of the constitution of sexuality itself, [as it makes visible] the ontological grounds of the sexual.'[17] In a 1910 footnote to his *Three Essays on Sexuality*, Freud explicitly categorises objectless, instinctual sexuality as an *archaic* phenomenon, writing that '[t]he ancients laid the stress upon the instinct itself ... while we despise the instinctual activity in itself, and find excuses for it only in the merits of the object.'[18] It is precisely in this sense that we can read Regan's possession as a return of the repressed - here of the repressed masculine in what is the only significant heterosexual relationship in the film, and a disastrous one at that. This sexual ontology is marked by the blasphemous

sadomasochistic acts performed on the adolescent female body as part of the film's 'melodramatic' enactment: the possessed Regan invites doctors and priests to paedophilic sex and breaks her hymen on a crucifix, forcing cunnilingus on Chris when she attempts to stop her. During the exorcism, the cruelty of infantile sexuality manifests as the possessed Regan vacillates not between male and female object-choices per se, but between the phallic father and mother figures of God and Chris - both of whom are ostensibly absent in this supernatural liminal space. Ellis Hanson inflects this argument, adding that in this scene 'Regan enacts a complex gesture of resentment and desire toward her mother because ... she holds her mother responsible for the castration they are both struggling to disavow.'[19] The mother is thus seen as the demonic adversary, against whom struggles - Pazuzu. Following Hanson, I suggest that the exorcism itself is an inflected repetition of the 'evil against evil' conflict dyad previously seen in the fighting dogs and wrestling boys.

Demonic sexuality is ultimately yet problematically quashed by both the imposition of the Father (God) in the exorcism and partial reinstatement of sexual object choice - here sublimated in the form of God the Father as Regan glimpses Father Dyer's clerical collar and kisses his cheek. A further case for this partial reinstatement can be made when we consider Bersani's suggestion that only a 'radical disintegration and humiliation of the self' can lead the subject through to sexuality as such;[20] and in this light Regan's crucifix-fornication has a certain irony - 'Let Jesus fuck you!' as a brutalisation and blasphemous aspect of Regan's ultimate (if provisional) identification with Father Dyer as divine proxy. But Karras's attempt to give Merrin a case study and psychiatric appraisal of Regan's 'multiple personalities' is dismissed with an authoritative 'There is only one,' resuscitating the face-to-face nemesism between Merrin and Pazuzu at the film's opening. Karras' early attempts at a talking cure are cancelled by the Word, the Logos of God as dictated and commanded through the exorcism. Karras is warned specifically against conversing with the demon: 'The attack is psychological, Damien. And powerful. So don't listen.' At the end of the film Regan appears ignorant of the ordeal, and it seems as if the psychoanalytic project itself fails - perhaps we can say it is repressed. But Regan kisses Father Dyer without quite knowing why, an enigmatic look on her face as she turns away. The Gothic knows no truly happy ending, and even as Chris's car drives off into the distance and Lt. Kinderman links arms with Father Dyer, we are left with imperilled music and a sense that with the absence of the biological father anamnesis and demonic hysteria are never too far away. 'Exorcism' has an archaic meaning of conjuration that predates its familiar meaning of adjuration and expulsion of evil;[21] and this uncanny formulation leads one to wonder what, ultimately, has been conjured forth in the exorcism of Regan MacNeil.

Notes

[1] C. McDannell, 'Catholic Horror: The Exorcist (1973)', in *Catholics in the Movies*, C. MacDannell (ed), Oxford University Press, New York, 2008, p. 198.
[2] L. Bersani, *The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986, p. 40.
[3] N. Heeßel, 'Pazuzu', in *Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East: Electronic Pre-Publication*, 2007, viewed on 13th May 2010, <www.religionswissenschaft.unizh.ch/idd/prepublications/e_idd_pazuzu.pdf>, p.1.
[4] Bersani, pp. 67-70.
[5] Bersani, pp. 30-35.
[6] Bersani, p. 40.
[7] Bersani, pp. 39-40.
[8] Bersani, pp. 34-35.
[9] Bersani, p. 34.
[10] J. Laplanche and J-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, D. Nicholson-Smith (trans), Norton, New York, 1973, pp. 70-71.
[11] S. Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', in *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, A. Richards (ed), J. Strachey (trans), Penguin, New York, 1991, pp. 59-61.
[12] Freud, p. 122.
[13] Bersani, p. 40.
[14] Freud, pp. 110-111.
[15] Bersani, p. 37.
[16] Bersani, p. 38.
[17] Bersani, p. 41.
[18] Freud, p. 61n.
[19] E. Hanson, 'Knowing Children: Desire and Interpretation in *The Exorcist*', in *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*, S. Bruhm and N. Hurley (eds), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2004, pp. 123-124.
[20] L. Bersani, quoted in S. Bruhm and N. Hurley, pp. xxvi-xxvii.
[21] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd Edition, 1, 1b.

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Gothic Cinema: Horror on Screen and the Perils of (Over)Interpretation

Dagmara Zając

Abstract
The term 'Gothic cinema' has been used and abused ever since the assortment of new critical perspectives in the seventies brought about the reevaluation of the literary Gothic. Nevertheless, the torrent of criticism celebrating the Gothic was not limited to literature: films such as *Blade Runner* or *The Devil Rides Out* are still being analysed in terms of Gothicism as the key for interpretation. I would like to argue that the films which primarily should be considered and analysed as Gothic are the Hollywood horror classics. The paper will attempt at identifying the parallelisms and connections between the early Gothic literature and the Gothic cinema of 1930s. It will also investigate the possible consequences of applying the concepts of a literary critic - Elisabeth Napier - to horror film research. The Hollywood classics have been read as, variously, expressions of class violence and anxiety, female oppression and rage, or sexual repression and freedom. While the 'psychological concerns' of the Gothic have become a critical commonplace, it is difficult to question any such interpretations. Nevertheless, the critics tend to overlook the unconvincing conclusions, loose ends and the screenwriters' reliance on coincidence, characteristic to the majority of the films. According to Napier, the Gothic novel is a mode of writing which exhibits a strong tendency towards closure, stabilisation and formal resolution; still, other techniques function deliberately to create an atmosphere of unease and the mood of fearful suspense. I want to argue that this disruptive form of writing has directly influenced the Gothic horror film of the 1930s. The main purpose of this paper is to argue that the problems of disjunction described by Napier are not limited to the eighteen-century literary form, but are also characteristic of the classic Gothic cinema. The question remains: have Hollywood horror films of the 1930s been subjected to 'over-reading'?

Key Words: Gothic cinema, Elisabeth Napier, overinterpretation.

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In his introduction to *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, H. P. Lovecraft stated that 'the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear.'[1] The feeling has been represented in art for time immemorial: painting, music, and literature have had their share in conveying it in a number of ways. It comes as no surprise that in the beginning of the twentieth century, the theme has also been picked up by the new medium of cinema. Even though the very first horror films were created in Germany, it were the Hollywood classics of the thirties that marked the emergence

of the genre. Ever since the opening night of Tod Browning's *Dracula*, we can observe the enormous popularity of horror films.

In spite of the immediate commercial success, the films themselves were not that popular with the critics. In the beginning, this particular genre, similarly to cinema itself, was associated with low-brow entertainment and the early manifestations of mass culture. The position of cinema as an art form was formed relatively late. Moreover, horror itself could not be accepted without reluctance. Similarly to the early reception of the Gothic novel, horror films were initially dismissed for not having met the moral and aesthetic standards of the paradigm. Situation changed in the seventies with the emergence of *literary theory*, a label grouping together new critical perspectives: the Marxist, feminist, and psychoanalytical schools of criticism brought about the reevaluation of the literary Gothic. At the same time, new interpretational possibilities were recognised for the horror film.

The example which best illustrates this change of approach is the famous article by Laura Mulvay, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.' Her idea of a woman as a sexual object of the image provided a framework for the discussion of feminist film theory that was to follow. Another example might be the critical trend inspired by the Marxist perspective: zombies appearing in the earliest horror films have often been interpreted as laborers in a capitalist regime. The horror films of the thirties, similarly to the Gothic novel of the eighteenth century, have become increasingly popular with the critics. However, there are not many works that would attempt an interdisciplinary approach, enabling an analysis of the mutual influence between the media.

In this paper, I would like to argue that, first of all, the films which primarily should be considered and analysed as Gothic are the Hollywood horror classics. The paper will attempt at identifying the parallelisms and connections between the early Gothic literature and the cinema of 1930s. Secondly, it will investigate the possible consequences of applying the concepts of a literary critic - Elisabeth Napier - to horror film research. To begin, I would like to discuss Gothicism in terms of the convention that influenced the forming of a film genre.

First of all, it is natural to assume that at the time of its emergence, horror film was definitely influenced by its literary counterpart, which was obviously an earlier cultural creation. It is worth emphasising that this counterpart was not the literature of the thirties, as the titles referred to the classical Gothic novel. There was *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, but it was as late as the sixties that Lovecraft's fiction was adapted for screen. Nevertheless, there are not many critics who would discuss this influence in detail. The term 'Gothic cinema' has been used and abused instead: the films such as *Blade Runner* or *The Devil Rides Out* are still being analysed in terms of Gothicism as the key for interpretation, while only a few separate aspects of the convention are referred to. I believe that in order to discuss the original - or primary - Gothic cinema, one needs to look back to the

structuralist conceptions of genre. One might even go so far as to suggest that only in the case of the Hollywood horror classics and the traditional Gothic novels we can speak of genre in traditional sense of the term.

For both literature and cinema, the forming of a genre depends primarily on the stability of the convention. The repeatability of particular elements is as important as the structure for their organisation. When we consider Charles Altman's concept of film genres, we can notice that the pattern could easily be used to describe most Gothic novels of the eighteenth century. The dualism of a black-and-white world, the repetition and accumulation of familiar themes and motifs, as well as plot predictability, are common features of the novels by Ann Radcliffe, Horace Walpole or Matthew Gregory Lewis. Before the parallels and connections can be discussed in more detail, I would like to briefly mention one possible consequence for research after it is opened up for an interdisciplinary approach.

In *The Failure of Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth-Century Literary Form,* Elisabeth Napier considers various strategies used by the authors in the early Gothic fiction. She argues that some of the techniques which were intended to stabilise the genre have 'failed' to achieve this aim. According to Napier, the Gothic novel is a mode of writing which exhibits a strong tendency towards closure, stabilisation and formal resolution; still, other techniques function deliberately to create an atmosphere of unease and the mood of fearful suspense. As a consequence, instead of clarity and reassurance, what those strategies offer to the reader is confusion and destabilisation in the literal sense. In other words, neither of those tendencies works well for the genre's stability: Napier argues that the Gothic novel remains fundamentally 'a genre of imbalance,' because its authors finally neither decided convincingly for either extreme nor found a middle way between them.[2]

Napier claims that if we consider this destabilisation of cross-purposes within the genre, we begin to notice how the schemata used in the novels often work against the authors' aims. Contemporary critics, choosing to look beyond the surface of standardised plots and stock characters, may be therefore mistaken in their analysis which celebrates the 'profound depths' of Gothic fiction. There is a widespread belief that 'the Gothic is attempting to render psychological truths that it cannot fully confront but that certain more enlightened critics have been able to deduce from it. If this is the case, the Gothic has simply been subjected to over-reading.'[3]

The Hollywood classics have been read as, variously, expressions of class violence and anxiety, female oppression and rage, or sexual repression and freedom. While talking about the 'psychological concerns' of the Gothic has become a critical commonplace, it is difficult to question any such interpretations. Still, if we agree that horror cinema of the thirties has been directly influenced by the disruptive form of writing which was Gothic fiction, what are the possible

consequences for the films' analysis? Do we have any reasons to believe that, in some cases, we may even speak of overintepretation and over-reading?

Let us now consider in more detail how closely a Hollywood horror film resembles a Gothic novel. Coming back to Altman's genre pattern, one of the basic rules operating in the film is the structuring of oppositions. In cinema, there is the protagonist and the antagonist: for the Hollywood horror classics, the polarisation takes form of the struggle between the hero and the villain, or the monster. Numerous examples include the resurrected Imhotep from *The Mummy*, James Whale's Frankenstein's Monster, or the vicious voodoo priest, Legendre - the villain from *White Zombie*.

A similarly dualistic approach may be observed in Gothic fiction. It is worth emphasising that once the opposition has been set, it remains stable till the ending. The villain would always remain evil - even if offered a chance to repent for his sins, as in the case of Manfred in Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*. The interesting thing is that such a clear and rigorous contrast and division began to change at some point in both cinema and literature. In its post-Gothic form, horror is no longer black-and-white, as ambiguity in the characters has become a new, commonly accepted standard.

Another universal feature of Gothic fiction and Hollywood horror classics is the tendency towards closure and formal resolution. It is not only needed in order to restore balance to the destabilised world of horror: its ultimate aim is to achieve a state of moral and social equilibrium. This compulsive need to solve and resolve results in the endings where 'the vicious are punished, the virtuous are rewarded, and social and ethical imbalances are tidily corrected.'[4] The best example of such an ending may be found in the aforementioned *Castle of Otranto*: the story ends with the true heir of Alfonso restored and the usurper Manfred retired to do penance in a convent.

Prioritising the happy ending makes both Gothic fiction and the Hollywood horror classics quite predictable. One does not even have to refer to the plot itself: it is enough to examine a couple of film frames that were shot towards the film's ending. The closing sequence would usually involve the rescued heroine sighing in relief in the arms of her beloved, as the music brings to mind a typical melodrama ending.

There are various problems connected with this urge to stabilise. More often than not, other elements of the work are sacrificed to it. It is especially conspicuous in terms of character and plot plausibility, and the result is usually painfully disjunctive. In such works the abrupt tonal shifts or sudden 'flattenings of character' may occur as the authors make decisions about their characters' final destinies.[5] An example may be the conclusion of Ann Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest.*

La Motte, whose flaws have given rise to a strange combination of sympathy and hate on the part of the reader, is not permitted to share in the concluding

celebration of Adeline and Theodore, despite his apparent reform. The novel's 'absolute polarization of good and evil' necessitates that virtuous and villain characters 'remain permanently apart.'[6] Radcliffe's dismissal of La Motte from the novel makes the conclusion quite unconvincing. Although the villain 'awakened so keen a remorse for the injuries he had once meditated against a benefactress so noble, that his former habits became odious to him,'[7] he was suddenly transformed into his former self after being 'exposed to the tempting dissipations of Paris.'[8]

In the Hollywood horror classics, we can observe a similar tendency to ultimately condemn the characters that might seem morally ambiguous, as the proverbial happy ending is designed for two people only. The best examples are the desperate men looking for vengeance, such as doctor Wendergast in *The Black Cat* or Paul Lavond in *The Devil-Doll*. They are both able to gain the viewers' sympathy, as from the beginning their claims and motivations are presented as justified. Nevertheless, because of their desire for vengeance, which is considered to be immoral, they need to be punished.

Suddenly, towards the films' endings, they both become unpredictable and do things that seem illogical and are inconsistent with their character as presented earlier in the script. The composed and dignified doctor Wendergast mercilessly tortures his opponent, and as a consequence looses the viewer's sympathy. Paul Lavond, on the other hand, having regained his daughter's trust and affection, decides out of the blue to disappear from her life forever.

Apart from the unrelenting moralising and the restoration of the *status quo*, another parallelism between Gothic fiction and horror cinema of the thirties is the accumulation of recognisable themes and motifs. The particular elements are virtually the same in film and literature: the atmospheric representation of the *locus horridus* - the place of horror - is one of the best examples. The Gothic locales, described in much detail by eighteenth-century authors, can be easily subsumed by cinema, along with a wide array of paraphernalia, including bats, owls, rats, and spider webs.

The problem with the standardised depictions of the *locus horridus* is that contemporarily it is often read as an externalisation of a character's internal state. In both Gothic fiction and the Hollywood horror classics, the underground spaces, such as caves and dungeons, are often associated with the dark retreat of the human subconscious. Haunted moors and marshes, on the other hand, are usually linked to the character's feelings of sadness and dejection. Napier argues that such interpretation of the Gothic locales may be considered an act of over-reading. Due to the lack of authorial comment, such passages lose their potential to explore human psychology.

A similar problem of interpretation is connected with the use of 'stock characters' in both Gothic novel and the horror film classics. In *Science and Destabilization in the Modern American Gothic,* David Oakes gives the idea some thought. He believes that the use of such 'stock characters' is one of the most

prominent element of Gothic literature. Oakes gives numerous examples, such as the 'wicked monk, innocent heroine, evil female seducer, desperate hero, wandering immortal, wicked tyrant,' and others.[9] These character types repeatedly appear in early works of Gothic literature; Oakes argues that the use of these 'highly simplified figures' allows writers to present them as 'the embodiment of ideas.'[10] For example, the heroine and hero become living representations of purity, innocence, and all the other good qualities valued by society. Conversely, the villain, in whatever form, comes to embody all the dark traits, such as greed and betrayal, condemned by most people.

Similarly, Elisabeth Napier argues that Gothic characters are often so highly generalised or idealised that no truly individual portraits emerge at all. She believes that this impoverishment results from the fact that the characters are sacrificed to other, more highly valued, aspects of narrative such as moral or plot. Consequently, 'this subordination of character in Gothic fiction recurs frequently enough to cast doubt on recent critical celebrations of the Gothic as psychologically exploratory.'[11] Although Napier admits that the extent to which Gothic writers willingly analyse their heroes and heroines differs, she claims that the full exploration of the characters they create is seldom achieved. In short, 'most Gothic villains look alike and virtually all Gothic heroines do.'

In the case of Hollywood horror classics, the simplifying of character and relying mostly on externalised representations of thoughts and emotions is even more pronounced. First of all, the directors of that time did not yet try to represent the subjective psychological states. With the dialogue limited to a minimum, the viewers had to rely on the image and the behavior. Moreover, they could recognise the villain immediately as they saw the face of Boris Karloff or Bela Lugosi appearing on the screen.

Let us consider one of the interpretational ideas which, according to Napier, would probably be considered an act of over-reading. The heroine's fascination with the villain/monster has often been analysed as an act of rebellion against the patriarchal standards and the dominating cultural paradigm. Nevertheless, this subversive potential may be questioned if we consider how the women end up. In Karl Freund's *The Mummy*, Helen Grosvenor is not only attracted to Imhotep; she goes as far as to actively seek him out. Still, as the film comes to an end, she turns out to have been literally under his spell. Having been punished for harbouring such inappropriate desires, she returns to her usual self, happily in love with the dull Frank Whemple.

To sum up: there are many parallels and connections between the early Gothic literature and the Hollywood horror classics of 1930s. If analysed with reference to Elisabeth Napier's controversial study, the constitutive features of the Gothic convention turn out to be the sources of disjunction within the genre's structure. For both horror cinema and literature, those elements often result in the moments of destabilisation. While the torrent of appreciative criticism has made the

psychological concerns of the Gothic an interpretational standard, one could indeed ask whether the films and novels have not been subjected to over-reading.

Certainly, it would be impossible to reject all the contemporary interpretations celebrating Gothic fictions and films. Nevertheless, I believe that Napier's ideas make it possible to take a broader approach, which would allow us to appreciate the experience of reading, or watching, more fully. What is more, by allowing an interdisciplinary perspective, Gothicism in film and literature is opened for a wider spectrum of interpretations.

Notes

[1] H. P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, Dover Publications, New York, 1973, p. 1.
[2] E. R. Napier, *The Failure of Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth-Century Literary Form*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1987, p. 6.
[3] Ibid., p. 3.
[4] Ibid., p. 10.
[5] Ibid., p. 11.
[6] Ibid., p. 12.
[7] A. Radcliffe, *Romance of the Forrest*, J. B. Smith, Philadelphia, 1859, p. 278.
[8] Ibid.
[9] D. Oakes, *Science and Destabilization in the Modern American Gothic: Lovecraft, Matheson, and King*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 2000, p. 4.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Napier, p. 34.

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Part 3

Got(h) Sex?

Do Gothic Lolitas Just Wanna Have Fun? An Examination of the Goth-Loli Style Tribes in Hong Kong and Tokyo

Anne Peirson-Smith

Abstract
This paper explores the trend for young adults in Hong Kong and South East Asia to dress up in themed costumes as Gothic Lolitas (Goth-Lolis - *gosurori*) assuming the persona of characters from Japanese comic books (*manga*) and animated cartoons (*anime*), video games, television shows and pop music bands. The paper will explore the underlying reasons why individuals pursue this 'Goth-Loli' dress-up activity and the cross cultural, literary and historical influences that have guided them and their global followers. The study, which is part of an ongoing large scale research project[1] tests out Stone's ideas of the appropriacy of appearance in the development and presentation of self via the capacity of fantastic socialisation processes,[2] whilst also revisiting Eicher's work on communicating and exploring identity through the dressing of public, private and secret personas.[3] Interviews were conducted with a selection of Gothic Lolitas in Hong Kong and Tokyo who regularly dress in a range of costumes in both private domestic spaces and public places or at organised themed events. Research questions included, what it means for Gothic Lolita participants to assume another persona, what motivates them to dress up, how they decide to choose a particular character, whether it is a form of creative expression, what resources they use for creative guidance, sub-cultural rebellion, secret or overt expressions of self, why and how they employ dress to pursue a particular Gothic fantasy and the role of gender socialisation in this type of costuming. Findings suggest that dressing up as a Gothic Lolita is multi-vocal experience representing different things to different participants, depending on demographic and psychographic profiles, including the reaffirmation of identity, and the escape from a known reality - in an attempt to recapture a 'cute' childhood innocence, and the visible, often mediated adherence to a defined and reassuring sub-cultural collective in the Asian context.

Key Words: Gothic Lolita, gothic style, gothic costume, sub-cultural style, gothic fashion, gothic bodies, gothic identity, neo-style tribes.

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1. Introduction

In this paper, I will firstly address the Gothic Lolita trend in terms of the notion of dressing up and the presentation of the spectacular, non-normative presentation of self or multiple selves. Next, I will examine this specific dressing up activity by the fashion tribe of Gothic Lolitas in terms of their assumed Gothic inspired identities. Finally, I will fuse these themes together by suggesting that although

quintessentially Japanese in origin, the Loli-Goth or Goth-Loli tribes in South East Asia, as a form of cultural hybridisation, have significant connections and share parallel universes with their global Goth-Loli sisterhood and other neo style tribes, whilst adopting their own unique cultural take on their appearance and lifestyle underpinning this distinctive sartorial practice. In doing so, the Goth-Loli trend masquerades as pure entertainment, yet can be seen as a form of dark fun, and as a counterpoint to the postmodern pressures of the human condition in contemporary Asian Cities and specifically within the city spaces of Hong Kong and Tokyo.

2. Extraordinary Dressing Up

The wearing of an extraordinary costume connected to a theme symbolically transforms the identity of the player enabling them to re-present their ordinary self in a new guise through role play. Costume, therefore. becomes a kind of magical instrument. Stone's analysis of the transformative quality of fantasy costumes adopted by children at play during their early phases of socialisation has relevance to the process of dressing-up in costume as a general activity amongst people of all ages across a range of contexts from theatre, festivals and masquerade events to fan based subcultures.

3. Presenting the Secret Gothic Self

Dressing up in the guise of a Gothic Lolita enables the player in their spectacular presentation of self to transcend the acknowledged roles first encountered in the fantastic socialisation phase of childhood development. Here, the costumed player appears to be projecting the secret self into the public domain, adapting Eicher's typology of the three personas manifested through dress via public, private and secret selves. In communicating an identity the public persona is revealed to everyone, signalling the demographic features and professional garb of the wearer, whilst the private self, familiar to friends and family, is based on the clothing of relaxation and leisure, and the secret self or bedroom self is a restricted zone reserved for the individual and intimates based on the wearing of fantasy dress. This tripartite model also has gender implications, according to Eicher, who proposed that women were more at liberty to pursue their fantasies and dress up as their secret selves, whilst men were more confined, as a rule, to expressing themselves only in public and private dress.

Certainly, there seem to be more females involved in the Lolita dressing up brigade, constituting a visible sisterhood. Yet, males are becoming increasingly involved in the Goth Loli scene, pointing to a queering of the genre. Whilst many female Goth Lolis interviewed passed this cross-dressing trend off as mere mimicry and appeared intent on denying any notion of transgender subversion, this development also mirrors the performative androgyny, gender subversion, and gender fluidity of the wider Goth neo-culture.

4. Gothic Lolita Trend - Japanese Youth Street Fashion Context

The creative and spectacular excesses of Japanese youth fashion on the streets of Tokyo and its style and fashion vortexes in Harajuku and Shibuja, is often seen as the source for style tribes such as the Goth Lolis. The rationale behind this profusion of eyeball popping street fashion may be located in the changing socio-economic landscape. Japanese youth street culture has ironically flourished as an expression of creative individuality where fashion is being used to challenge the traditional conformist and collectivist value systems. A sense of belonging and self have become invested in an assumed Gothic persona, and its connection to a potentially anti-social, sub-culture, is often at odds with traditional Asian cultural values.

5. Gothic Lolitas in Focus - Presentation of Gothic Self

Amongst the profusion of style tribal groupings, enter Gothic Lolita from the late 1990s - or Goth Loli, for short.[4] This is a fandom fixated by fashion and which also continues the Gothic preoccupation with clothes or costume in the search for self. The 'look' then is depicted by a hyper feminine take on the Victorian porcelain doll whose outfits comprise a black and white knee length dress or skirt in cotton or taffeta and a ruffled high neck blouse decorated with ribbon or lace trim with under-petticoats or bloomers, worn with long knee socks, black platform shoes or boots and a black and white lace headdress. To complete the look, a black parasol, crucifix, black lace gloves and black lace or grosgrain/silk handbag often in the shape of a bat or coffin may be donned. In terms of bodily appearance, hair is worn long and curled, often in the form of a dark wig; make-up is minimal but based on death-mask like, white foundation, red or black lipstick and kohl or black eyeliner - all sparingly applied and only worn when dressed in character (in stark contrast to contemporary Western Goths).[5] In essence, for the Goth Loli style tribe the blending of sources and styles all add to the aesthetics of the look which is slavishly authentic in its stylised black and white lacy clothes and accessories as directed by the *Gothic and Lolita Bible* providing insider knowledge about Goth Loli clothes, accessories and make-up with advice on how to buy or create the Lolita look at home or off the shelf.

6. Gothic Lolita and Gothic-ness

This leads us to question - what is the real connection between Goth-Lolis and the Gothic? Also, in true Gothic tradition, what, and how much if anything, has been borrowed or plundered from the past and how does this visually manifest itself across cultural boundaries?

Gothic styles across art, architecture and literature have always been about Visi-Goth-like 'plundering the past for artefacts and ideas that will anachronistically express current tastes'[6] in various revivals that sought to articulate a mythic nostalgia for an imagined past. As a consequence, the Gothic,

across time, space and place has always been based on multi-levelled meanings articulating various cultural ideologies.

In this way, Goth Lolis continue the trend of utilising familiar Gothic motifs - black clothes, crucifixes, coffins, bats, pale skin and dark looks - to signal and enact their identity in a liminal, performative and material manner, whilst also reflecting the shadow-like aesthetics and sensibilities of a Gothic world inhabited by the youth followers of global Gothic style and fashion trends.

7. Gothic Differences and Similarities

The Goth Loli connection with traditional Gothic sources resides more at the aesthetics of the surface than perhaps do other Gothic subcultures or neo-cultures, in the sense that it is really all about the visual presentation of the secret self. Most Goth Loli respondents in this study when questioned about the meaning or source of the Gothic related it to Gothic Lolita trends, and failed or refused to connect outside of this frame. Yet, they did appear to aspire towards a mythical vision of, and a longing for, an imagined past of a historic romantic Rococo or Baroque European traditions, despite the fact that they appeared to mix and match their outfits irrespective of historical knowledge or authenticity. The surface expression of Gothic-ness at the corporeal level also aligned with a seeming avoidance of deeper ideological or intellectual articulation, unlike other Gothic neo tribes as related by one informant who insisted that Gothic Lolitas in Hong Kong came together at weekends, 'just to share costume ideas and gossip about life in general, and never, talk about work or heavy stuff like that' (Winnie, Gothic Lolita).

Back at street level, there is also a growing number of Gothic transnational global followers who access Goth Loli websites and blog sites, appearing to have an insatiable desire for this 'look,' and in the absence of access to prescribed Goth Loli brands make their own outfits guided by online advice from the virtual Goth Loli sisterhood. Such evidence of a growing, globally oriented fandom supports the notion that an exchange of transnational sub-cultural capital is founded on affinity rather than the darker forces of exoticism or orientalism.

This global following of Gothic Lolita lookalikes also supports Appadurai's belief that transcultural flows do not emanate from one fixed point, but are part of a more complicated, multi-layered ebbing and flowing of a tidal wave of cross-cultural capital. According to this notion, it is almost impossible and maybe irrelevant to locate the authentic source(s) of the Goth Loli style in any definitive manner.

8. Complexities of Lolita Culture

Similarly, in terms of authenticity to source location, the Lolita style tribes in general have rarely been acquainted with the characters in Nabokov's novel, nor do they connect with the Western sexualised and fetish readings of the Lolita trope or the middle aged male fantasies or Lolita Complex (*rori-kon/loli-con*) harboured by

local men or the young nerdy otaku who frequent the Maid Cafes where the hostesses dress in black and white Victorian servant uniforms. Most of my informants both in Tokyo and Hong Kong strongly denied any sexual over- or undertones in their personal dress-up agendas and categorically stressed, in binary oppositional terms, that when dressing as Victorian ladies or dolls their intention was to be a kawaii-like, child-like, innocent 'cute princess-like person.' This discourse is articulated and extends beyond their physical appearance because Lolitas and Goth Lolis, in my observation, adopt soft voices, special lady-speech and exaggerated gestures. In this way, they insist that they are communicating their authentic 'true selves' or their 'inner people,' unlike Cosplayers[7] who authentically dress up as their favourite Japanese manga (comic book) and anime (cartoon) characters and who just outwardly engage in mimicry. This view was vocalised by one Lolita who claimed that she would be a Lolita for life in thought and dress, which enabled her to remain bonded to the Lolita sisterhood, whilst another lived for her Lolita meetings at the weekend. Perhaps typical of most sub-cultural or neo-tribes, Goth Lolis struggle to protect their assumed identities from redefinition by others who are playing out Western style fantasies, or are overtly sexual from the perspectives of other style tribes, media commentators or the male gaze.

In this sense, Goth Lolis are actively utilising clothing and appearance, as indeed do other style neo-tribes, to deploy gender relations in the face of societal expectations by resisting the pressures to be the same as their peer group, or by avoiding conforming to parental and institutional notions of acceptable attire.

Gothic Lolitas are also perhaps controlling their appearance and what it communicates - concealing or protecting their sexuality as the flounces and frills detract from their bodily shape, whilst the corsets and petticoats delineate a material and impenetrable chastity-belt like barrier between themselves and the potential male predator.

9. Gothic Lolitas: The Darker Side

The dark side of the Gothic Lolita universe, whilst seemingly focused on a surface concern with faux Gothic costume and accessories, also periodically manifests itself in murder and suicide by Goth Lolis in Japan.

The Goth Loli sisterhood is also not all sweetness and light as some of my Hong Kong interview respondents suggested, as the obsessive quest for visual authenticity, beloved of many neo style tribes, engenders a critical community of commentators bordering on the bitchy through the Goth Loli social networking sites. As one of my Hong Kong respondents observed,

> You have to get the whole outfit looking totally right or you will see bad comments about you in the chatrooms or on your blog like, "Your hat and bag is not right and too cute - it's not the Gothic Lolita way and your make-up is all wrong!" And then you

> feel really small and have to try to do better, as people will be really watching your outfit at the next meet. I've known girls be depressed for weeks about that bad talk about them.

10. Playing at it - Just Serious Fun?

But, this is the business of serious fun and games as the costume and make up are applied and accessories acquired, the Lolitas change their voices, poses and persona - they actually become Gothic Lolita as inner self.

The level of involvement appeared critical to the dressing up process whereby it appeared important for the Lolitas to fully enter a fantasy world whilst wearing their authentic costume that becomes a reality for the player, and possibly more of a reality than the actual social worlds that they inhabit on a daily basis. Certainly, the players that I observed were engrossed in their role as individual characters, or in cast ensembles, and their common enjoyment of this activity seemed to be the overriding consideration, creating a carnival atmosphere both visually and atmospherically. These normally shy teenagers morphed into regal, haughty, darkly robed Gothic princesses who strike a commanding pose in front of the crowds of paparazzi-like photographers documenting their every move on the streets of Harajuku or at organised Cosplay events in Hong Kong.

It would appear that the Lolitas interviewed did relate to this activity as a form of reinventing childhood play, not only in the choice of some of the cute characters taken from their childhood memories, but also in the escapist tendencies noted by the Lolitas themselves in the search for their perfect world by dressing up as an idealised character. This is summarised in the words of Lolita Sheena,

> We dress as Lolitas and we become Lolitas because we have created our own world or paradise, which is perfect, beautiful, pretty, safe and traditional, like when we were children and no-one can stop us. And of course we have fun and are more relaxed and happy when we get together.

Here, Sheena appears to be escaping, not simply back into her naïve childhood, as her Gothic Lolita-enrobed self, but the transformative journey that she is making is maybe taking her into a mythic, utopian domain.

11. Conclusion

To sum up, Gothic Lolita style tribe membership is not an end in itself, but an important social and cultural process that has tapped into and generated transnational flows of subcultural capital across a range of Goth related historic and geographic sites. It is the creation of a social world whose passport for entry is the wearing of fantastic Gothic costume, forming the basis of shared relationships

that are dynamic and which shift over time within the structured setting of public conventions and meetings in real time and online. At the same time, it affords the individual Goth Loli player a way of celebrating individuality, whilst also expressing and performing the secret true inner self publicly, albeit within the safe confines of the Gothic collective in the seemingly entertaining process of dressing up.

By donning a Gothic material persona on the corporeal surface, it appears that the Gothic Lolitas have created and control their own paradise-lost with dark overtones, signalling a dark velvet-like form of rebellion, based on localised and transnational cultural borrowings.

So, I asked one Gothic Lolita in Hong Kong, 'What are you going to do with your life?,' 'Well,' she replied, with a dark, enigmatic smile, 'for me the future is too far away, I'm young and free and can dress as I please - so for now I just wanna have fun!'

On the surface, it looks like great fun being a Goth Lolita, but in true Gothic spirit, it is in fact a deadly serious game for those who choose to play.

Notes

[1] This research project was made possible by a Hong Kong SAR Government Funded Research Grant (GRF) 9041411-660, *Cosplay and the Dressing up Box: An Investigation into the Cosplay Phenomenon in Hong Kong, 2008-2011*.

[2] G. P. Stone, 'Appearance and the Self', in *Dress and Identity*, M. E. Roach-Higgins, J. B. Eicher, K. P. Johnson (eds), Fairchild Publications, New York, 1962, pp. 19-39.

[3] J. P. Eicher, S. Baizermann, J. Michelman, 'Adolescent Dress, Part II: A Qualitative Study of Suburban High School Students', *Adolescence*, Vol. 26, No. 103, Fall, 1991, pp. 679-686.

[4] The devil is in the detail of this Goth-Loli outfit and its carefully combined component parts, but also in the sub-species which not only includes other forms of the Lolita look of which there are many stemming from the *Shojo* (young girl - neither naïve child nor sexually aware woman) culture. This neo-tribe includes amongst others, Sweet Lolita (*Ama-Rori)* with pink and pastel coloured be-ribboned clothes) and Classic Lolita (more mature, classical Victorian) or Punk Lolitas (*Rori-Pan*) complete with leather, zips and safety pins, and also other subtle variations on the Gothic Lolita style.

[5] The actual origins of the Gothic Lolita style appear to reside in the form of a backlash against *Kogal* girl cute or the *Ganguro-Mamba* fashion excesses, and has also been attributed to Japanese Visual Kei glam rock as a source of style inspiration. The über star of Japanese visual Glam rock, Mana, the cross dressing,

former lead guitarist of visual kei band, *Malize Mizer*, is known in his on-stage persona to adorn himself in high Victorian funereal mourning dress, complete with dark crinoline styled dresses, large wigs and somber make-up. His own fashion label, *Moi-Meme-Moitie*, encapsulates the Goth-Loli style and he is also credited with inventing the terms, *Elegant Gothic.*

[6] C. Spooner, *Contemporary Goth*, Reaktion Books, London, 2006, p. 12.

[7] Cosplay or costume play (kosupure) is the growing global trend for young adults in Japan, Hong Kong and South East Asia to dress up in themed costumes assuming the persona of characters from Japanese comic books (manga) and animated cartoons (anime), video games, television shows, and popular music bands. Cosplayers generally consider that dressing up as a 'Lolita' is a disputed variant of cosplay as purist cosplayers often do not recognise this to be legitimate form of the activity because it is allegedly not strictly character or anime based, and is also considered to be part of a more general teen fashion trend.

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Chick-Fangs, Power Relations, and Being Human

Yvonne Leffler

Abstract
Gothic vampire stories are more popular than ever. Stephanie Meyers *Twilight* novels have sold more than 85 million copies. The first two novels have become films and teenagers, especially girls, have queued for hours, even days, to get tickets to the opening night of the new film, *New Moon*. Charlaine Harris' books about Sookie and her vampire lover, Bill, have become just as popular and the TV serial *True Blood*, based on Harris' novels, has been shown in most western countries. These new 'chick-fang stories' seem to offer the audience an enjoyable emotional experience and a fascinating gothic romance. I will start by showing how chick-fangs, as I shall call them for short, constitute a successful combination of gothic and romance and how they are an example of today's 'compound fiction,' fiction that combines elements from different popular genres and media. This forms the basis for a discussion of how these modern gothic vampire stories reflect important contemporary trends and how they both confirm and challenge current ideas of the ideal way of life in postmodern society. I will show how the vampire myth is used to point to certain discursive practices and a complex set of power and gender structures. I will also explore how the vampire motif and other gothic elements are used to deal with burning issues of being human, such as interpersonal relations and the meaning of life and death, as well as the ongoing discussion about good and evil. Finally, I will discuss why especially young women find chick fang so attractive. How these stories might satisfy certain emotional needs and how they might be used as handbooks on how to become a woman and how to handle the 'horrors' of everyday life.

Key Words: Chick fang, vampire romance, Gothic fiction, gender structures, fan fiction.

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Gothic vampire stories are more popular than ever. Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* novels have sold more than 40 million copies and the first two novels have become films. Charlaine Harris' serialised novels about Sookie and her vampire lover, Bill, have become just as popular; the TV serial *True Blood* was shown in most western countries last year.

These new vampire romances, which I call chick-fangs for short, are a successful combination of gothic, romance and chick-lit. They are examples of today's 'compound fiction,' fiction that combines elements from different popular genres and media. They mix genres such as romance, domestic fiction, crime, gothic and fantasy, and are the result of a dynamic interplay between different

media such as literature, film, TV, role plays and computer games. *Twilight* and *True Blood* have also initiated a vast production of fan fiction, chatting and vampire societies on the internet. Fans all over the world participate as both consumers and producers in a collectively elaborate fantasy.

The books are based on a long tradition of vampire novels and vampire films. Vampires, such as Edward in *Twilight* and Bill in *True Blood*, are both examples of the glamorous sympathetic vampire, a well-known protagonist originating from Romantic tales. The first fictional vampires from around 1800 are Byronic bohemians, rebellious aristocrats with a dark past. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century the vampire became more of a sexy and deadly blood-sucking monster, often an old predatory male-like Dracula in Bram Stoker's novel. The Byronic vampire was reborn in the late twentieth century as a much more suffering outsider than Dracula. Louis, the confessing vampire in Ann Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1995), is an illustrative example of this new kind of humane vampire. The last few years, the old predator Dracula has been replaced by a young sympathetic and good-looking high school celebrity, like Edward in *Twilight.*

The playful handling of vampiric elements and generic conventions is another frequently used feature in modern vampire films and serials, such as Roman Polanski's *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967) or Anders Banke's *Frostbite* (2006). Also in *Twilight* and *True Blood* the distinguishing features of the traditional vampire are deconstructed. Daylight and sunshine are no longer a danger to Edward, and Bill's vampire fangs do not show until they are about to be used. Bill is in some ways a more traditional vampire than Edward. He sleeps during the day, is fatally burnt by sunlight and cannot enter a home without being invited. However, they have both crossed the line between being a monstrous vampire and a human being, and they are in many ways more honest and decent than most humans depicted in the novels. They always act the chivalrous knight to their fair ladies, and they deny their vampire nature and their desire to drink human blood. Edward tries to survive on wild animals and Bill constantly goes on a reducing slimming cure when he feeds on a synthetic Japanese blood substitute, 'true blood.'

But the success of these new chick-fangs is not just due to how they use and transform the characteristics of both the classic vampire figure and the gothic vampire myth. It is much more about how the vampire myth is used to explore certain discursive practices and a complex set of power and gender structures. In chick-fangs the vampire figure and other gothic elements are used to deal with burning issues of being human, such as interpersonal relations and the meaning of life and death, as well as the never-ending discussion about good and evil. It is because of this that chick-fangs offer the young audience of today an enjoyable emotional and cognitive experience. They are romances both in the sense of romantic love stories and in the sense of fictional stories that stir the audience's

imagination, secret passions and dreams. They make the audience participate in an emotionally and intellectually challenging adventure.

In these stories the exposed female protagonist is not simply a persecuted gothic heroine, she is also a hard working detective solving the mystery of her attentive vampire admirer and his alien vampire community. To be able to be with him she has to explore what it is like being a vampire and deal with the ethical dilemmas she has to face. To her the gothic room does not primarily represent horror but rather a cognitive mystery and a moral dilemma forcing her into new challenging situations. The relationship between the two star-crossed lovers is constantly menaced by threats. As a vampire's lover the heroine gets involved in ongoing wars between different groups of vampires or between vampires and other monsters.

But what turns the love story into a true romance is that the human girl and the vampire man is an impossible match. The two lovers represent two different species, arch enemies as one of them feeds on the other. The female protagonist has fallen in love with a predator that preys on man. If the vampire loses control of his strongest instinct he will suck his mistress to death. As a consequence, both the female protagonist and the vampire lover are constantly dwelling on questions about what is right and wrong, good and evil. Is it wrong to kill another 'inferior' being if that is the only way to survive? And is it right to desert or betray your own group or species because you are in love and are loved by someone belonging to another group and species, a natural enemy to your own people?

The illustration of these ethical problems and subjects reflects some topical issues in today's global postmodern society. The dangers the heroine faces and the way she handles her situation might explain some of the popularity of chick-fangs. The attractive representation of the male vampire is another catching feature. The lure of the male vampire is bound up with the melodramatic structure. His vampiric transformation has been enacted unwillingly and he is a victim of an unjust fate. He is what Everett V. Storequest calls a marginal man, a being living in two different worlds torn between what he once was and what he has become.[1]

The portrayal of the male vampire as well as the female protagonist might therefore, as many feminist scholars observe, resonate with the experience otherness and marginalisation particular to women in patriarchal societies. It might also resonate with many adolescent girls' experience of transformation and of not belonging anywhere, being neither girls nor women. Milly Williamson's investigation of fandom shows that many female fans identify with vampires because of the physical aspect of transformation involved, the experience of physical pain and change. The female fans are fascinated by the thought of moving beyond the limits of the body and its physical sensations.[2]

That is, these chick-fangs deploy elements of gothic fantasy as a metaphor for problems associated with contemporary adolescence. The *Twilight* serial is very much a high-school drama about a bunch of kids that face what most kids face:

conflicts with parents and a feeling of otherness. The most clumsy and odd girl of them all, Bella, manages to handle both her own family problems and the trouble of being in love with a vampire, as well as all the dangers her love puts her into. The gothic deployment of supernatural beings and forces illustrate everyday problems can be compared to the exaggerated plot lines found in most soap operas, where the personal life is dominated by conflict and catastrophe, blown up to improbable proportions. Bella's and Sookie's worlds are regularly threatened with apocalypse but this functions to address the problems and conflicts of the personal sphere, and in such a way that the audience finds it both interesting and credible.

My point here is that gothic and romance make for a captivating combination. In chick-fangs it is always the heroine's romantic relationship with 'Mister Right' that makes her a prey to evil forces or creatures originating in the gothic plot, and it is her love that forces her to participate in her lover's, or his vampire community's, ongoing war against evil monsters. However, the trials and sufferings of the female protagonist do not make her a victim as much as a heroine: her struggles become heroic deeds, deeds of valour. Her life-and-death struggle might not save the world but it does save those persons, or vampires, whom she loves and cares about. That is, to her, the relationship with the outsider is worth the price she has to pay. To be chosen by the glamorous vampire gives her life meaning and makes her special: it satisfies her desire to be involved in something that matters. It makes her stand out, just as much as her boyfriend stands out being a vampire. The melodramatic representation and gothic form of the stories serve to show that reality can be grandiose and therefore offer the audience - at least for a while - the feeling of participating in something exciting and significant.

What I claim is that these romantic vampire narratives of today very much reflect a contemporary dilemma of the 'self' and offer means of handling the experience of a central cultural paradox; the promise of personal success in a social set-up that prevents the majority to realise their potential for that kind of fulfilment. These stories might satisfy the audience's and their fans' 'wish image' and especially their thirst for romance and for a romanticised past. The heroine and her vampire lover might, therefore, represent forms of recognition of the self in the idealised other, or what can be seen as recognition of the desired self in the idealised other. They offer significance rooted in the fame that surrounds the vampire figure and the stories describe a successful way to deal with a complicated life and an incomprehensible world. The female protagonist is both the victim and the heroine of the tale and in both ways she dominates it. She is the one who mediates the story; she is the dominating focaliser whose perspective decides the narrative and the one whom the story is really about. As Williamson has pointed out these vampire romances are parts of the self-help culture of the 1980s. The important message of these stories is how to 'get on with life' or 'to get a life.'[3]

The female protagonist's relationship with the vampire makes her a special girl. It also makes it possible for her to conquer death and the inevitable aging of the

body. If her lover turns her into a vampire she will remain forever young and attractive, free from disease and physical decay. If she, out of love, becomes a vampire she will be rewarded with what most people desire but never get: an experienced and mature mind in a forever young body. This message can be experienced as emotional support and as a particular comfort to young women in a western society glorifying youth and beauty.

Many scholars have claimed that the appeal of most vampire tales is the way they deal with sex: the vampire's bite has been seen as sexual penetration and rape. Sex, sexual excitement and intercourse are frequently depicted in *True Blood*; while the *Twilight* serial is a remarkably chaste story about true romantic love. Still the *Twilight* series is loaded with sexual connotations. But although sex smoulders beneath the surface, chick-fangs are far less concerned with sex than they are with body and health. In the traditional vampire tale the bite is fatal to the victim, bringing disease or death. The transformation into a vampire is depicted as a fatal disease resembling the most feared diseases of the times, such as tuberculosis and syphilis in the nineteenth century and cancer and aids in the twentieth century. In today's chick-fangs the vampire is less often depicted as a carrier of infections than as a healer, often working as a successful physician or surgeon, like Edwards father in *Twilight*. Bella and Sookie, who are often severely injured when attacked, are cured or returned to life by their lovers' blood. In these tales vampire blood cures almost anything, especially fatal wounds and poisoning.

To conclude, in chick-fangs the predatory blood-sucking vampire has become a blood-giving healer, the fatal bite has been replaced by a life-restoring blood transfusion and the affected victim has become a successfully cured patient. That is, in chick-fangs the bite is not as fatal to the victim as to the predating vampire. The humane vampire more often injures himself to offer his blood to his beloved than feeding on her blood. If the vampire bites his beloved he risks losing control, to give in to pure lust and instinct. To him feeding is connected to perversion and irresponsibility. Thus, lust is a complicated thing in modern vampire tales. To today's vampire the dominating urge is not sex or killing but hunger. To him gluttony is in every sense of the word a fatal mortal sin.

Replacing sex by feeding, genitals by guts, may be attributed to the changing perceptions of modern audiences and reflect important contemporary trends. Food and feeding might be more of an issue than sex in a time where diet, slimming cures and exercise programs are claimed to be the means to beauty, health and a long and happy life. To be fit and youth-looking has become desirable personal qualities. A beautiful face and a good-looking and healthy body are important to a person's image and success. To some people the purpose of life seems to be to achieve and preserve good looks. Undisciplined feeding has become a shameful activity. The focus on feeding and hunger as the most conflicting needs and desires in the modern vampire tale might tell us something about present day taboos.

Twilight, *True Blood* and other chick-fangs have been criticised by feminist scholars for being part of a new and developing backlash movement against feminism. They have been accused of advocating a conservative sexual politics and a patriarchal ideology, stressing the difference between the sexes and endorsing submissive versions of femininity. To the devoted audience of chick-fangs these narratives probably tell another story. They might confirm as well as challenge current ideas of the ideal way of life in postmodern society. Just as with fairy tales for children the fundamental effect of romance might be to create and maintain hope.[4] Chick-fangs are likely to have much the same therapeutic value. Edward and Bill are in many ways superior to Bella and Sookie but still these stories are very much chronicles of female competence and triumph. They focus on an intelligent and able heroine who finds a man, and makes him recognise her special qualities.

Both Bella and Sookie repeatedly prove that they are capable of handling extremely complicated and dangerous situations by themselves, sometimes situations their vampire lovers are unable to handle. It is because of this that the male vampire loves the heroine the way she wants him, and it is because of this that he, out of love, is prepared to defy and stand up against his most itching desire in order to protect her from his most primitive urges. Because she is special she is capable of softening him, turning the vampire into an ideal humane man. It is hard to think of a more utopian vision of female power. In my opinion, chick-fangs provide a remarkably hopeful promise. They may advocate an old-fashioned gender structure, but although the odds are against it they show that male-female relations can be managed successfully. At least, that is the case when Cinderella becomes the gothic final girl, the survivor who fights back, in today's vampire romance.[5]

Notes

[1] E. V. Stonequest, *The Marginal Man: A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*, Russel & Russel, New York, 1937.
[2] M. Williamson, *The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy*, Wallflower Press, London, 2005, pp. 165-168.
[3] Williamson, p. 66.
[4] Compare J. A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, Verso, London and New York, 1984, p. 100. Compare also B. Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York, Random House, 1977.
[5] About the final girl in modern horror film see C. J. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, Bfi Publishing, London, 1992, pp. 35-41.

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Un/queering the Gothic: *Demi-Haunted* (2002)

Shuen Chan

Abstract
While the legendary folktale 'Liang-Zhu' or 'The Butterfly Lover(s)' is often regarded as the Chinese equivalent to *Romeo and Juliet*, one of the distinct differences between the two tragic love stories is the association with homosexuality of the former. Liang-Zhu, with its female protagonist, Zhu Yingtai, disguises herself as a boy to attend school, where she meets the male protagonist, Liang Shanbo, and falls for him even before she reveals her true sex to him, has provided a site of gender ambivalence, making both hetero/homosexual readings of the story available. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the folktale is so welcomed by popular culture and has been retold repeatedly in various contemporary forms of performance, ranging from traditional Chinese opera, musical, ballet, modern dance, TV drama, to film, etc. Although some of these rewritings are faithful to the original straight interpretation of Liang-Zhu, others venture to provide an alternative queer reading. Among these many adaptations, the 2002 Hong Kong film production *Demi-Haunted*, by setting its female protagonist as a ghost possessing a male body, as well as introducing a series of supernatural happenings which do not exist in the original folktale, has achieved an intricate variant that reinforces a queer reading of Liang-Zhu. This paper, by analysing this interesting film adaptation, aims to investigate the entangled relationship between the Gothic and Queer Studies. While a queer reading of the Gothic is often considered as an act of liberation over the repressed homosexual meaning behind the text, by the case of *Demi-Haunted*, I hope to suggest that the Gothic, though appears to be enabling on the surface, can at the same time disable the coming out of sexual taboo.

Key Words: The Gothic, Queer Gothic, Queer Studies, Liang-Zhu/The Butterfly Lovers, *Demi-Haunted*, Hong Kong movies, Cantonese opera, *tongzhi* literature.

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The relationship between queer theory and the Gothic seems forever intertwined. As some critics have observed, since the advent of academic queer theory in the early 1990s, many of the quintessential Gothic romances have been revisited with a contemporary queer perspective.[1] Such 'old wine in a new bottle' trick is not restricted to the Western literary tradition. Queer theory has also cast a new light on the way some of the Chinese legends are being reread, with 'Liang-Zhu' or 'The Butterfly Lovers' as one of the most conspicuous examples. Though the tragic love story is often regarded as the Chinese equivalent to *Romeo and Juliet*, this does not rule out its association with homosexuality which has long

been articulated as a 'gay myth' for Chinese *tongzhi* (homosexuals).[2] This is perhaps one of the reasons why the folktale is so welcomed by popular culture and has been retold repeatedly in various contemporary forms of performance. While some of these revisions are faithful to the original heterosexual reading of Liang-Zhu, others venture to provide an alternative version to the extent that some even boldly take the struggle and agony of homosexual couples as their subject matter, two of the most significant examples are the 1998 musical, *The Lover/Liang Zhu*, written by Raymond To Kwok-wai, and the 2005 musical, *The Butterfly Lovers* (Liang Zhu Zhi Xiashi Chuanqi), directed by Mak Yan-yan. Among these many re-tellings, the 2002 Hong Kong film, *Demi-Haunted* (Cantonese: *Wan Bok Lut Chaai* or Mandarin: *Hun Po Wu Qi*)[3] achieves an intricate variant that renders a homosexual interpretation possible by introducing certain Gothic elements which do not exist in the original folktale. This paper, by analysing this interesting film adaptation, aims at investigating the entangled relationships between Queer Studies and the Gothic. While it seems that with the help of the queer perspective, the Gothic possesses the potential to liberate the repressed homosexual undertone behind the text, by the case of *Demi-Haunted*, I suggest that though appearing to be enabling on the surface, the Gothic can at the same time disable the coming out of sexual taboo.

It should be noted that cross-dressing is a key element that triggers the subsequent gay association of the originally straight Liang-Zhu story. While the storyline of 'Liang-Zhu,' of which the earliest textual record can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty,[4] varies in details from text to text, the plot that a teenage girl Zhu Yingtai disguises herself as a boy to attend school where she meets the male protagonist, Liang Shanbo, and falls for him even before she reveals her true sex to him is never absent. The disguise of Zhu is thus where the homosexual potentiality of Liang-Zhu lies. Although the queer reading is by no means an over-interpretation of the 'Liang-Zhu,'[5] the story itself is successful in highlighting how cross-dressing can become a site of ambivalence that problematises our understanding of gender and sexuality.

As a twenty-first century rewriting, *Demi-Haunted* has addressed 'Liang-Zhu's debate over gender and sexuality with a newfangled perspective through constructing a multilayered cross-dressing which further intensifies the destabilising force of cross-dressing. Apart from the film's reference to Zhu Yingtai's impersonation in the original story of Liang-Zhu, the multilayered cross-dressing in *Demi-Haunted* is achieved by, first, its female protagonist, Ji Wan-fei (Zi Yun-fei)'s career as a cross-dressing performer of Cantonese opera in her pervious life; second, Ji, who has become a ghost after her death, comes to possess the body of the male protagonist, Buster Chor-bat (Lu Chu-ba) to be her present incarnation, resulting in a metaphorical cross-dressing of a female soul in a male body. The interpretation of Ji's incarnation as 'a female soul living inside a male body' can be seen as a continuation of her pervious life as a 'tomboy' (as Chor-bat

calls her when she shows up for the first time in front of him). Ji's transgender identification as a tomboy is significant in a way that it takes a relatively subtle and obscure stand in rearticulating the gender trouble of Liang-Zhu compared with Raymond To Kwok-wai's gay Liang Shanbo and Mak Yan-yan's male Zhu Yingtai.[6] While these two adaptations are set to unveil the invisible homosexual undertone of the original folktale, *Demi-Haunted*, by its creation of a multilayered cross-dressing has allowed the film with more flexibility in questioning both the queer and unqueer reading of Liang-Zhu.

Cross-dressing is essential to Ji Wan-fei since her career as a famous female cross-dresser specialised in playing *wenwusheng* (male warrior)[7] is built entirely upon her transgender performance. In the scene where Ji, as a ghost, first shows up to Chor-bat and tells him that he is her present incarnation, Ji also introduces to him how renowned she was among her female fans when she was alive. On the screen, we see Ji brings Chor-bat back to the past where Ji was acting on the stage surrounded by a crowd of all-female fans. The fact that Ji, though being a woman biologically, appeals to her fans like a man rather than woman testifies how important cross-dressing is to her as a tool to construct masculinity. An even more apparent example comes later on when Ji requests to play the role of Zhu Yingtai but is teased coldly by her boss. The response she receives from her boss that 'The audience like you to play a man. You can destroy your own career [if] you want, but don't destroy my business' further exemplifies the vitality of male disguise to Ji's career. As an actress who plays man's role, Ji is more often taken as a man rather than a woman in man clothing.

Moreover, Ji's tomboy image is not merely 'functional' (functional in a sense that it helps her to boost her career). Throughout the film, we see Ji's in man's suit much more often than in women's wears. Her cross-dressing has extended beyond her performance to the extent that her embodiment of masculinity does not end with the man's role she plays in the theatre. In the very rare occasions where Ji wears a *qipao* (a body-hugging one-piece Chinese dress for women), she is all the time mocked by others since it appears strange to them when Ji dresses in her true sex. Ji herself also shows lack of confidence with her woman's look. In the scene where Ji sits in front of the mirror with her *qipao* on, her maid enters the room to inform her Master Two is waiting for her. Afterwards, the maid keeps giggling while leaving Ji's room. Ji then grabs the *changshan* (a traditional Chinese man's wear) hanging next to her. In the next shot, we see Ji and Master Two practicing spear dance (shuahuaqiang), a martial art performance in Cantonese opera, with Ji in her *changshan*, which means that she got changed after the maid had left. This proves that Ji identifies with the masculinity than femininity. Even in her romantic relation with Master Two, she seldom steps out of her role as a masculine-identified figure. Their relationship is more like male-male camaraderie than heterosexual love especially when Ji saves Master Two out of the hands of his creditor by gambling with them. When the creditor requests Master Two to

mortgage his girlfriends, Ji steps in. The creditor responds disdainfully that he is asking for women, implying that he does not consider Ji as a woman. Ji then bets his reputation as a famous 'actor' instead. After all, femininity is not something that Ji would be proud of. Rather, it is the fame that constructed with her masculinity which is worthy enough to be the pledge. It would, therefore, be more suitable to read Ji's desire for Master Two as 'homoerotic' since she is attracted to Master Two as a self-identified masculine woman.[8] Ji is, after all, biological female, heterosexual (in a sense that she and Master Two would make a biological heterosexual couple), 'but outside the usual term of heteronormativity.'[9]

This undercurrent of homoeroticism between Ji and Master Two helps to implement a queering effect upon the originally straight Liang-Zhu story. Following this, it seems quite sensible to view Ji's death as a signifier of homophobia and her revenant as the return of the repressed Other. This fits the argument of Mair Rigby that occasionally 'the Gothic text is utilized as much to advance the queer agenda of speaking out against homophobia.'[10] Of course, one can easily interpret Ji's final performance of Zhu Yingtai in *Loutaihui* (Meeting in Pavilion), the play title of the Cantonese opera version of 'Liang-Zhu' - the first and only time she plays her true sex without cross-dressing - as that she eventually comes to acknowledge that she is a woman, and wishes to express her feminine love towards Master Two, so that instead of rendering 'Liang-Zhu' queer, *Demi-Haunted* proposes the reinforcement of heteronormativity. Nevertheless, if Ji is generally taken as male and identifies with men, would it not be more accurate to describe her performance of Zhu Yingtai as a male-identified figure cross-dressed as female? Thus, while Ji regards her invitation to Master Two to come to watch her performance of *Loutaihui* as an explicit disclosure of her love to him, this disclosure also implies the emergence of homoeroticism. The fact that Master Two does not show up and Ji's accidental death on the stage. According to the movie plot, Master Two promises to come to the show but does not show up. The show starts and Ji sings on the stage while keeps looking down to search for Master Two. Suddenly, the tablet hanging on top of the stage is blown down by the wind and hit Ji's head. Ji is dead, leaving both the performance and the romance between her and Master Two in suspense - would then signal a strong sense of homophobia and the repression against coming out of the closet of Ji and Master Two as a homosexual couple. Consequently, the return of Ji as a ghost who possesses Chor-bat's body and menaces him to help her to find Master Two can be seen as what Eric Savoy would call 'prosopopoeia' - the act of personifying, of *giving face* to an abstract, disembodied Other in order to return it to narrative,' which 'disturbs logocentric order' and 'the common reality of things.'[11]

If the haunting of Ji's revenant on Chor-bat represents the possibility that he is going to help her to find Master Two and take the place of her (with a truly male-born body this time) to fall in love with Master Two, so as to complete Ji's unfinished homosexual romance with Master Two, then *Demi-Haunted* not only

recognises and exposes the implication of homoeroticism in the conventional Liang-Zhu story, it further achieves an anti-homophobic version which denounces the homophobic nature of the patriarchal heterosexual imperative. On the other hand, it should be noticed that prosopopoeia, while 'giving face' to the unspeakable, also comprises a disruptive potentiality which will naturally threaten the 'logocentric order' and 'the common reality of things.' This possible disturbance to the normality is best illustrated by the representation of homosexual figure as the menacing ghostly Other in the Gothic tradition. Rather than liberating or antihomophobic, such haunting image of the homosexual Other may in fact underpin the antipathy towards homosexuality.

Indeed, the representation of 'unauthorized genders and sexualities'[12] as uncanny is a very familiar setting in the Gothic fictions which often bears a clear political agenda behind. It is therefore wrong to take the nonconformity as the subject of the Gothic. Rather, one should be aware of its representation as threatening to the normative, which justifies Judith Butler's observation that heterosexual imperative is making use of the abject Other to construct its subjectivity.[13] Even if the Gothic has created a site of ambivalence which allows the sexual taboos to surface, the emergence itself does not help to change its nature of abject and disavowal. In this sense, what the Gothic offers is not exactly the liberation of the repressed sexual secrets. Rather, after recognition, it is once again a confirmation that these secrets are ought to be silenced.

In questioning the librating power of the Gothic, drawing on Michel Foucault's point of view, Rigby writes, '"[s]ex"…has not been confined to a "shadow existence"; rather, we have "dedicated ourselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the* secret."'[14] That is to say, 'sexual material is not repressed in the Gothic, instead, it is produced on a massive scale'[15] in the form of secrecy. Despite that '[t]he impression of concealment, the suggestion that there is a repressed secret and that secret is probably sexual, is important in many Gothic texts,' 'this impression is not really evidence of repression; it indicates, rather, the rhetorical production and exploitation of sex as "the secret."'[16] This concept of conveying sexual nonconformity in a secret form challenges the validity of the presumption that the Gothic must bear a liberating or normalising power over the transgressiveness. The Gothic, contrastingly, works in a more indirect way which provides more flexibility in articulating the sexual secret behind. Hence, while the Gothic does not help to legitimatize homoeroticism, it offers another way, though allusively, to explore same-sex love in relation to the construction of heteronormativity as the subject.

Therefore, besides probing whether there exists homosexual potentiality behind each of the retold versions of 'Liang-Zhu,' it is equally important to see why is the folktale represented in these particular ways in different times and spaces. Instead of simply proving or disproving *Demi-Haunted* as a un/queer analogy of 'Liang-Zhu,' I suggest that we should also pay attention to the inconclusiveness of the

complicated sexuality embodied in the film as undercurrent. While the Gothic is sometimes perceived as the vehicle to emancipate repressed sexual desire, homoeroticism for instance, Haggerty highlights the pitfall of regarding coming out as a solution to the confinement of the closet. Since the Gothic dynamics of repression and homophobia cannot be denied, '[t]o identify oneself in these works [of sexual transgression], or to accept the identifications made publicly, is to admit the kind of monstrosity, or monstrous villainy.'[17] When one is identified as monstrous, one is ought to be repressed. As a result, '[c]oming out may seem an answer … until it becomes obvious that coming out is exactly what a phobic culture desires.'[18]

Back to the cross-dressing in *Demi-Haunted*, I argue that a clear differentiation of whether the film aims at making the homosexual possibility explicit is impossible. In the closing scene of the movie, when Ji, a born-female as well as self-identified masculine figure now dresses in the costume of Zhu Yingtai (which is more likely to be taken as cross-dressing rather than playing her own sex), enters the male body of Chor-bat who is at the same time cross-dressed to perform the cross-dressed female protagonist Zhu Yingtai of 'Liang-Zhu,'[19] this multilayered cross-dressing to the infinity will finally results in a state of inconclusiveness which refuses to be analysed or spoken out. The ending plot where Ji leaves the body of Chor-bat of her own choice, giving up the chance of finishing the whole performance of *Loutaihui* - which, following my earlier analysis, signifies the full coming out of homoeroticism - further corroborates my reading that the film has rendered itself inaccessible in giving clear-cut distinctions about gender and sexuality. In this way, the film title, *Demi-Haunted*, which means 'half-haunted' literally is very meaningful.[20] Should a person who is partly possessed by the spectre still be considered as a human-being? Or, should it be regarded as a ghost instead? Further, can we still identify Chor-bat, now possessed by Ji - a female cross-dressed but identified herself as a man - simply as a masculine figure, and easily classify his sexual orientation as heteronormative? All these questions point to an uncertain state of indefinableness or unaccountability, which I would suggest is what makes the Gothic so fearfully attractive. Ultimately, 'nothing is so terrible as nothingness itself, the absence of a coherently meaningful symbolic,' 'the semantic impoverishment of allegory' and 'the haunting consequence of its refusal of transparency.'[21] *Demi-Haunted*, rather than simply un/queer the conventional heterosexual reading of 'Liang-Zhu,' has by its Gothic presentation invited its audience to acquire a broader understanding of how gender and sexuality can function in such an indirect and intricate way.

Notes

[1] M. Rigby, 'Uncanny Recognition: Queer Theory's Debt to the Gothic', *Gothic Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2009, p. 46.
[2] S. L. Li, 'Un/queering the Latently Queer and Transgender Performance: The Butterfly Lover(s)', in *Cross-dressing in Chinese Opera*, S. L. Li (ed), Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2003, p. 117.
[3] Since my discussion is about a Hong Kong movie, I decide to go with the Cantonese pinyin in referring to the character names. Hanyu Pinyin would be specified in the brackets following the Cantonese spelling of the names.
[4] Li, p. 109.
[5] Ibid., p. 119.
[6] Please refer to endnote 3.
[7] A sub-category of *sheng* (the male role-type) which combines *xiaosheng* (young scholar) and *xiaowu* (young warrior) together. *Wenwusheng* is a unique role-type of Cantonese opera. Actor/Actress who plays *wenwusheng* must be able to perform both the *wen* play (highly educated play) and *wu* play (martial art play).
[8] H. Leung, 'Unsung Heroes: Reading Transgender Subjectivities in Hong Kong Action Cinema', in *Masculinities and Hong Kong Cinema*, L. Pang and D. Wong (eds), Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2005, p. 94.
[9] L. Russell, 'Queer Gothic and Heterosexual Panic in the Ass-End of Space', *Gothic Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2005, p. 149.
[10] Rigby, p. 49.
[11] E. Savoy, 'The Face of the Tenant: A Theory of American Gothic', in *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*, R. K. Martin and E. Savoy (eds), University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, 1998, p. 10, italics original.
[12] G. E. Haggerty, *Queer Gothic*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 2006, p. 2.
[13] J. Butler, Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 3.
[14] Cited in Rigby, p. 47, italics original.
[15] Ibid., pp. 47-48.
[16] Ibid., p. 52.
[17] Haggerty, p. 60.
[18] Ibid., p. 60.
[19] This complicated metaphorical cross-dressing is demonstrated by the cross-cut arrangement of the movie. On the scene, the audience will see both Ji and Chor-bat are in the custom and make-up of Zhu Yingtai, so that when the shot cross-cuts from Ji to Chor-bat and from Chor-bat to Ji, it creates the illusion that Ji, in form of a spirit, is inside the body of Chor-bat.

[20] The original Cantonese film title *Wan Bok Lut Chaai* literally means a person has lost part of his/her soul. The English translation is actually quite close to what is meant by the Chinese original.
[21] Savoy, p. 6.

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Transcended Bodies, Confused Genders. Some Perspectives on the Portrayal of Sexuality in American Horror Film

Dorota Wiśniewska

Abstract
From the eighteenth century onwards, Gothic writing has been conceived of in gendered terms, and the genre itself perceived as the form portraying actual female nightmares of oppression and enclosure. Similarly, since the inception of the horror film, women have routinely been cast in the role of the persecuted. Therefore, it is not surprising that the treatment of gender in the horror genre (both literary and cinematic) is in fact markedly heterogeneous. Needless to say, horror movies spend a lot of time looking at women, who become the subject to the 'sadistic-voyeuristic' gaze. But the story does not end there. In *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) by Jonathan Demme, a serial killer known as Buffalo Bill collects women in order to flay them and use their skin to construct a 'woman suit.' Sitting in his basement sewing parlour, Buffalo Bill makes his monster a saturated beast, a patchwork of gender, sex, and sexuality. Skin, in this morbid scene, represents the monstrosity of surfaces and as Buffalo Bill dresses up in his suit and prances in front of the mirror, he becomes a layered body, a body of many surfaces laid one upon the other. Depth and essence dissolve in this mirror dance and identity and humanity disappear. Encompassing solely American horror fiction and film, this paper aims to argue that the body that scares and appals changes over time, as do the individual characteristics that add up to monstrosity, as do the preferred interpretations of that monstrosity. Within the traits that make the body monstrous, we may read the difference between an other and a self, a pervert and a normal person.

Key Words: Horror, film, gender, bodies, female, masculine, Texas, chainsaw, silence, *Lambs*.

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The onscreen relations between men and women experienced a strange twist in Howard Hawks' 1950's horror film *The Thing from Another World*. In a strange courtship scene Nikki ties Captain Hendry's hands behind his back, grabs hold of his head and pulls it forward for a kiss. Nikki, the character with a gender neutral name, was clearly involved in a kind of gender reversal game between her and the Captain. Nikki was, in many respects, a 'Hawksian woman;' she was not the kind of female heroine typical of the time. We learn, for example, that on her previous 'date' with Captain Hendry Nikki out drank him and left him passed out on the bed with a note that his 'legs aren't very pretty.' But taking on these masculine traits did not mark her as undesirable. On the contrary, her competence and toughness

seemed to make her more attractive to both Captain Hendry and the all male crew. As Naomi Wise puts it, 'Hawks films frequently show a merging of sexual roles for the benefit of both sexes - the women learn certain "masculine" values while men become "feminized." Frequently the men have more to learn than the women, who are already mature at each film's beginning.'[1] Indeed, as men struggle to devise a plan to kill the Thing, it is Nikki who suggests the way to destroy it, 'boil it, fry it.' What makes her an invaluable addition to the group is her ability to comfortably accept both her feminine and masculine features.

The scenes from Howard Hawks' movie anticipated the transgressive social-sexual relations, which eventually have become the most basic common denominator of horror. It is so because the horror film, since its inception, has offered a testing ground for many unauthorised genders and sexualities, including sodomy, incest, pedophilia, sadism, masochism, necrophilia, cannibalism, miscegenation, and, of course, masculinised females, feminised males.

This essay aims to examine horror films, and the splatter film in particular, that began to invert and challenge the patriarchal codes of the genre. I am going to look at the horror films which parodied their own sexism, 'feminising' their male monsters, and constructing a 'female gaze.' I am also going to demonstrate that their radical potential lies not only in the identification they force between the male viewer and the female victim, but their queer tendency lies in their ability to reconfigure gender not simply through transgression or inversion but by literally creating new categories.

As Carol Clover observes,

> the relation between the sexes in slasher films could hardly be clearer. The killer is with few exceptions recognizably human and distinctly male; his fury is unmistakably sexual in both roots and expression; his victims are mostly women, often sexually free and always young and beautiful.[2]

A similar sexual division appears in the assumptions about horror spectatorship. According to Laura Mulvey, viewing is a social activity in which conventional gender roles get displayed.[3] Men are thought to be brave viewers who enjoy and remain unshaken by on-screen terrors, while women clutch the shoulders of their dates for comfort and cover the eyes in response to images too evil to view. But this model of genre for Clover comes as a dilemma and she suggests that men sometimes, 'betray their sex and identify with screen females.'[4] We may thus assume that cinema spectatorship is a cultural venue in which those roles are temporarily and alternately worn and discarded during the viewing experience. Such reversal comes from the fact that, although splatter films' generic elements are indeed tenacious, they are also exaggerated. True, horror is filled with torture and the suffering of women, but as Carol J. Clover claims of contemporary films,

in horror 'gender is less a wall than a permeable membrane.'[5] Although heroines may be female and most monsters male, characters repeatedly exhibit qualities associated with the opposite sex, which inevitably affects the spectators. This sliding of gender traits is particularly evident in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) - the production that reformulated the structure and strategies traditionally employed in horror films and which anticipated the splatter subgenre.

In *Psycho* the main female character, Marion, is killed off early by knife-wielding murderer who appears, to both his victims and the audience, to be female. The snooping of the second heroine, Marion's sister, Lila, who is similarly endangered but not killed, corrects the original version: the attacking she is, in fact, a he. The psychoanalytic voice of reason revises this vision as well: although the body of the attacker might appear to be male, it is really the woman in this man who kills. The psychiatrist at the end of the film explains that Norman Bates, the killer, had 'absorbed' his mother, in life a 'clinging, demanding woman,' so completely that she constituted his other, controlling self. He further explains that after killing his mother, Norman 'began to speak and think for her, give her half of his life so to speak. At times he could be both personalities, carry on a conversation.' Bates' mother represents his gender trouble as based upon his need to occupy the place of the feminine by erasing women. The notion of a killer propelled the psychosexual fury, more particularly a male in gender distress, has proved a durable one, and the progeny of Norman Bates stalks the genre up to the present day.

Norman's gender confusion is mirrored by the 'masculine' behavior of both Marion and Lila Crane. Marion, while more obviously sexual and feminine, displays a bold initiative in stealing the money and remarkable assertiveness in the face of the various leering males she encounters. When the inquisitive highway patrolman asks if everything is all right, she defiantly states, 'I've told you there's nothing wrong except that I'm in a hurry and you are taking up my time.' Lila is even more obvious in her gender bending. She is largely asexual, and even when forced to play the part of Sam - her sister's lover's wife, it is Lila who is the more assertive and aggressive in their investigation.

The discussion of gender reversal in *Psycho* would not be complete without mentioning Hitchcock's meditation on voyeurism. Cinema is by nature a voyeuristic medium, and voyeurism is by nature a male activity. But Hitchcock, quite mischievously, engages his female spectatorship in what we commonly refer to as 'male gaze.' With the scenes to come, he, quite conspicuously, plays to the audience's, both male and female, voyeuristic tendencies. In the opening sequence the camera swoops down to peek through a hotel window and then slips through to join the two lovers. Later the audience watches Norman peek through his peephole to observe Marion as she disrobes, and almost instantly we share Norman's point of view as we also peer in at the unaware young woman. In the subsequent scene, the audience is provided an even greater voyeuristic thrill as we observe Marion in

the shower, presumably washing away the sin of her crimes and seeking redemption. What makes Hitchcock's attention to voyeurism all the more provocative is the way that the camera acts as a kind of conscious narrator. The most obvious moment of this display of narrative intent occurs in the above mentioned shower scene, which we observe through the eyes of the murderer - a woman who turns out to be a man. Yet it was not Norman who killed or had to kill Marion but 'the mother half of his mind' - when he (the Norman half) found himself aroused by her.

According to Carol Clover, female spectators delight in horror's transgressions of sexual difference and gender traits as much as the male audience. 'While they may experience fear, they also derive pleasure from viewing a monster that toys with the requisites of sexual identity as either male or female.'[6]

All three of these gender-confused characters - Norman, Marion and Lila - share one relevant characteristic. They have all lost their mothers. Horror films since *Psycho* have continuously focused on the family as a cause of insanity, monstrousness and gender trouble. Tobe Hooper's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) continues this tradition by focusing on the monstrous 'motherless' family, in which all the members have collectively degraded into monsters. Lacking the moral stability provided by the traditional role of a mother, the Leatherface family has devolved into the most animalistic and primitive version of patriarchal society: cannibals. Although, unlike Norman, Leatherface, the chief murderer in *TChM* does not wear his mother's clothes during his acts of violence, he does wear masks. The centrality of the corporeal body to Hooper's film is evident in his figure; he wears a series of different human flesh masks to display different personas: 'the killing mask,' 'the old woman mask,' and 'the pretty woman mask.'

Wearing the 'killing mask,' Leatherface wields his chainsaw with savage efficiency. He snorts and screams while chasing down one of his victims, and dragging her back into his slaughter room. However, later in the film when a fellow member of the gruesome family brings another prey back to the house, Leatherface wears the 'old woman' mask and is seen fussing about the house and timidly preparing a family meal. The interaction of the family members is filled with violence, threats, and curses. The Leatherface family lacks the nurturing support of a mother and Leatherface, apparently, plays some distorted version of that role. As Kim Henckel, one of the film scriptwriters observes, 'Leatherface is one of those characters who is what he wears - his character changes according to the face he puts on.'[7] The body, in other words, does not represent the inner workings of a spiritual soul; rather there is only body. Here the cinematic gender fluctuations are displayed most intensively, and the mask symbolises not only a strange circulation of skin as disguise, as gender, as something that does not fit, but also as metaphor for transformed subject that positions male to female, female to male, victim to murderer.

The sequel to *Texas Chainsaw Massacre,* even more than the original fixates upon identity as surface, as skin. In a series of face offs in *Chainsaw 2* between Leatherface and the sole surviving female character, Stretch, attack turns into romance as they circle each other in a crazy dance of flesh and desire. In the action that follows the face off, Leatherface actually brings the mask of his male victim over to Stretch and makes her wear it. His gesture is still much more than offering her a disguise; the 'facing' of Stretch for Leatherface is an odd courting ritual which he reenacts by next asking her to dance with him while wearing the male face. Also, in male face her gender becomes ambiguous and so does the object of Leatherface's courtship. Yet she is not male here; this is not simply a homoerotic display of desire; and there is a symbolic ring to her name when she becomes, quite literally, a 'stretch' between genders. Gender, the film seems to suggest, is skin, leather, face, not internal mechanics, certainly not genitalia. What we are watching in this scene is what Kaja Silverman has called the operation of 'suture.'[8] The scene literalises the operations of suture by emphasising the transferability of skin and the ways in which identities are sewn into one another. Monstrosity and humanity reside at one and the same time in the gendered, raced, and classed skins that monsters and victims take on and off.

Since Stretch stands in for the spectator, since she has been positioned as the one who watches, the facing scene also puts the horror spectator in the position of seeing through someone else's skin. We literally see through a male face but from the position of Stretch. Obviously this is not simply the case of deciding whether we occupy the male or female gaze; the gaze itself becomes deflected through a series of gender positions. For Carol Clover it is important that we recognise the girlishness of Stretch at the time as we acknowledge her masculinity because it is the 'bothness' of her body that allows her to stand in for the male viewer. Judith Halberstam quite radically dismisses Clover's interpretation, for whom the realms of male monsters and female victims remain unshaken. For Halberstam Stretch

> represents not boyishness or girlishness but monstrous gender, a gender that splatters, rips at the seams, and then is sutured together again as something much messier than male or female.[9]

In her post-feminist reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Halberstam continues:

> the scene in which Victor decides to destroy the female monster is … like the aftermath of a massacre in a modern splatter film, blood and flesh carpets the ground. Woman is reduced to a "half-finished creature" that man may take apart but not assemble. He can build a man from the corpses of animals and humans but fashioning a woman demands that he construct a subject that is,

> in its feature function at least, all body. The material horror of the female monster with her female genitals enrages and terrifies the scientist, he tears her limb from limb and scatters her flash upon the ground. The act of reproduction becomes here a bloody mess of dismemberment, a deconstruction of woman into her messiest and most slippery parts. … The female monster cannot be human because it is always only an object, a thing, "unfinished".[10]

As Carol Clover argues, Leatherface's construction of a mask from female skin is a symptom of a culture's gender trouble: its repression of and desire to express the feminine. Leatherface's mask is his and culture's repressed shadow. [11] Viewed in this way, Buffalo Bill of *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) is not a Frankenstein but his unfortunate monster embodying the conflicting characteristics of hypermasculinity and repressed femininity.

The subplot in *The Silence of the Lambs* introduces the pursuit of murderer, Jamie Gumb, known as Buffalo Bill. Buffalo Bill mutilates and skins his victims because he suffers a kind of gender confusion that he thinks can be cured by swaddling himself in female skin; in fact, he is tailoring for himself a female costume, or a 'woman bodysuit,' and he murders simply to gather the necessary fabric. What he constructs is a posthuman gender, a gender beyond the body, beyond the human and an identity that is a kind of carnage. Bill's route to identity is not through interaction with others but through a meticulous construction of self, a self pieced together from the skin of his victims. When we see Bill at work in his basement, he is alone at his sewing machine, asking his image in the mirror if he is desirable, or dancing in front of a video camcorder to create an illusion of femininity. The gender trouble that Buffalo Bill represents as he prances around in a wig and plays with a poodle called Precious cannot be dismissed. In the basement scene he resembles a heavy metal rocker as much as a drag queen and that is precisely the point. He is a man imitating gender, exaggerating gender, and finally attempting to shed his gender in favor of a new skin. He is a new kind of sex killer. He is not interested in getting in women, he never rapes them, he simply wants to get them out of the skin that he perceives to be the essence of femaleness. He is a woman trapped in a man's skin but not transsexual - like Stretch - a new kind of monstrous gender.

In *The Philosophy of Horror*, talking about monsters, Noel Carroll focuses on their movements across the boundaries that separate the pure from the impure, and the living from the dead.[12] There is little doubt that monsters also throw into question the opposition between male and female. For the monster is an ontological oddity, a being whose membership in categories of biological sex is often unstable. In the figure of the monster, presumptions of sexual difference on the basis of biology are as fraught with ambiguities and as historically constructed

as those based on gender attributes. Male-coded monsters are not pressured to become like women; instead they are quite willing to assume female narrative positions and, like women, in states of extreme emotional upheaval, monsters are visually fascinating. The gender fluctuations that the monsters experience put into question not only the assumption that the sadistic male viewer is the genre's ideal spectator, the presumption that the textual dynamics of classic horror are structured around a sadistic male gaze, but also the assertion that horror stories center upon heterosexual, albeit monstrous, desire. Like some monstrous parody of nineteenth-century Gothic, these characters mimic Frankenstein's monster. Sometimes, as it is in the case of Buffalo Bill, they combine in one both Frankenstein and the monster; they are scientists, the creators, and they are the body being formed and sculpted, stitched and fitted.

Notes

[1] B. French, *On the Verge of Revolt: Women in American Films of the Fifties*, Frederic Ungar, New York, 1978, p. 201.
[2] C. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1992, p. 42.
[3] L. Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Film Theory and Criticism*, G. Mast and M. Cohen (eds), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1981, p. 105.
[4] Clover, p. 46.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., p. 112.
[7] S. Jaworzyn, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre Companion*, Titan Books, London, 2003, p. 76.
[8] K. Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1989, p. 77.
[9] J. Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*, Duke University Press, London, 2000, p. 143.
[10] Ibid., p. 46.
[11] Clover, p. 78.
[12] N. Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, Routledge, New York, 1990, p. 124.

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Part 4

Spectacles of Gothic

Platonic Critique of the Vampire

Jonathan H. Nelson

Abstract
In her monograph, *Contemporary Gothic*, Catherine Spooner identifies the following four categories as constitutive of contemporary gothic culture: revival, mock, grotesque body, and consumption. In the first part of this paper I employ the latter two categories to argue that the vampire is the quintessential Goth and that both Goth and the vampire are manifestations of the following two propositions: (1) the corporeal monopolises the objects of value; (2) the corporeal monopolises the objects of reality. In the second part of the paper I employ Platonic ontology and soteriology to explain the being and the origins of the vampire. From a Platonic perspective the vampire is a (human) soul condemned to indefinite embodiment on account of living a life dominated by one or more of the following vices: over-consumption, misology. The common thread running through these vices is, according to Plato, a rejection - conscious or unconscious - of incorporeality. And since for Plato it is the incorporeal that is the really real, the vampire rejects reality and replaces it with a material image. I speculate that for coming to understand the contemporary vampire and contemporary gothic, the most salient of these vices is misology - the distrust and hatred of philosophic argument. The misologist is one who begins trusting philosophical argument as a guide to the real and the good but after a pattern of contradiction and disappointment comes to despise philosophy and to embrace the senses initially as a guide to and eventually as the source of reality and value. This Platonic critique of the vampire - whether or not one embraces its ontology and soteriology - provides a valuable new vantage point from which to evaluate both contemporary vampire and contemporary gothic.

Key Words: Plato, philosophy, vampires, misology, soul, ontology, *Phaedo*, virtue, consumption.

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1. Introduction

In this paper I use two of the four categories through which Catherine Spooner understands contemporary Gothic to argue that the vampire is the quintessential Goth.[1] Then I argue that taken together, these categories betray that Goth and the vampire are manifestations of the following propositions: (1) the corporeal monopolises the objects of value; (2) the corporeal monopolises the objects of reality. Then I employ Plato's metaphysics and soteriology to argue that a commitment to (1) and (2) precludes one from the practice of philosophy (and hence the experience of knowledge) and is, therefore, bad for the person committed

to them. Finally, I describe what Plato considers the two possible causes of a commitment to (1) and (2) - over-indulgence in physical pleasures and misology - and speculate as to the usefulness of that analysis in coming to understand the vampire and the gothic.

2. Grotesque Body

One of the categories through which Spooner invites us to understand Gothic is Grotesque Body. She argues that 'Contemporary Gothic is more obsessed with bodies than in any of its previous phases: bodies become spectacle, provoking disgust, modified, reconstructed and artificially augmented.'[2] This obsession manifests itself in a 'preoccupation with freaks, scars, diseased flesh, monstrous births and, above all, blood.'[3] Hence, Goth glories in the physical imperfections and physical brokenness of humanity - in the monsters. Moreover, Goth invites us to identify with the monsters and freaks, and even to regard them as more human than to anyone else - to have transcended the human condition through their exaggerated and painful physicality. Spooner speculates that the focus on and glorification of the grotesque is 'an attempt to reinstate the physicality of the body in an increasingly decorporealised information society.'[4] Monstrosities demand attention and demand to be recognised as real; hence, by focusing so much on the monstrous, Gothic makes the case for corporeality's monopoly on reality. If so, then the preoccupation with the grotesque is a bold declaration that the body - especially the deformed body - is most real, most authentic, and most human. And by glorifying and identifying with the monstrous, Gothic makes its case for the value of the corporeal.

The vampire is the poster-child for bodily excess and grotesquery even if contemporary vampires are not as revolting as previous incarnations. Physicality is thoroughly exaggerated by both the vampire's strengths and its weaknesses. The vampire's strengths include: speed; exponentially sharpened senses; extensive shapeshifting capabilities; flying and scaling walls; trance-inducing stares; exponentially increased sexual and seductive prowess; lack of ageing; and physical immortality. The vampire's weaknesses include: aversion to certain herbs and trinkets; the need to sleep in the earth; bursting into flames in sunlight; an impossibly specialised and wholly consuming need for nourishment; and an invariably graphic and violent death. These thoroughly corporeal strengths and weaknesses show that the vampire is essentially a monstrous and grotesque body demanding the recognition of the reality of the corporeal.

3. Consumption

Next, Spooner tries to show that Gothic is to a large extent defined by a fairly recognisable and definite pattern of consumption. Hence, in order to be considered Goth one must purchase the right kinds of goods at the right places, etc.[5] Especially important to Goth consumers, Spooner says, is the correct

(re)fashioning of the body; hence emphasising once again that the corporeal takes on paramount importance.[6] Similarly, Goodlad and Bibby argue that 'goth is unabashedly consumerist and commodity-oriented … the performance of goth identities almost always involves the expressive potential of multifarious material, from corsets and dark lipstick to Sisters CDs, Byron anthologies, Celtic crosses, and bondage gear.'[7] So not only is Goth 'unabashedly consumerist,' but the kinds of consumption Goth is concerned with emphasise once again the reality and the value of the body: corsets, lipstick, and bondage gear all draw attention to the body and together refashion it as grotesque.

The vampire is the ultimate consumer and the maximally predictable one at that - having returned from the dead to feed on the blood of the living - and is defined more by its pattern of consumption than anything else. Moreover, whereas humans strike a balance between production and consumption, the vampire is entirely preoccupied with the latter. No vampire has offered anything of value to posterity in terms of invention, science, philosophy, politics, poetry, art or literature. Quite simply, the vampire does not produce, it only consumes. And that consumption is thoroughly exaggerated such that in many vampire narratives vampirism is presented as a pitiable condition akin to addiction. In such narratives there is a recognition that the vampire is completely devoted to consumption and that that consumption is of the purely corporeal kind (whereas if there is a sense in which knowledge or information are consumed it is not in a literal corporeal sense). Indeed, to my knowledge there has never been a vampire who attempted to persuade a potential recruit to accept the Embrace so as to take advantage of sharpened mental abilities, to continue a project of systematic philosophy or a system of governance. That is, insofar as vampires consider vampirism desirable they do so on account of the increased capacity for consumption - of blood, sex, power and wealth - afforded by the increased physical powers accompanying their condition. In short, for the vampire the corporeal monopolises the valuable.

4. Plato's Metaphysics and Soteriology

Plato's most basic metaphysical doctrine is the distinction between Forms and sensibles. The two most salient characteristics of Forms are intelligibility - which entails both incorporeality and inaccessibility to the senses - and stability - which entails that Forms never change in any respect in relation to themselves or to anything else. In complete contrast, the two most salient characteristics of sensibles are corporeality - which entails both physicality and accessibility to the senses - and instability - which entails constant change such that sensibles are never the same in any respect in relation to themselves or to anything else.[8] The relation between Forms and sensibles is not precisely specified but what is clear is that Forms account for the way that sensible particulars are. In short, if some sensible object X is red it is so because it instantiates or participates in the Form Redness; if X is beautiful it is so because it instantiates or participates in the Form Beauty; and

if X is a human being it is so because it participates in or instantiates the form Humanness.

This basic metaphysical division is the basis for Plato's description in the *Phaedo* of two lives and two deaths - that of the philosopher and that of the non-philosopher. In life, these two are separated by what they countenance as choiceworthy and what they countenance as real and true. As to what is choiceworthy, Plato says that the animating desire of philosophers is knowledge of the Forms. Such desire is contrasted with that of non-philosophers, whose overriding concern and pursuit is of the pleasures of food and drink, sex, luxuries, wealth, and reputation.[9] In *Republic* the same distinction is made as that between lovers of sights and sounds on the one hand, and lovers of truth on the other.[10] 'When someone's desires flow towards learning and everything of that sort,' Plato says there, 'he'd be concerned, I suppose, with the pleasures of the soul itself by itself, and he'd abandon those pleasures that come through the body - if indeed he is a true philosopher and not merely a counterfeit one.'[11] And again: 'philosophic natures love the sort of learning that makes clear to them some feature of the being that always is and does not wander around between coming to be and decaying.'[12]

As to what is real, it is clear that for Plato only the Forms - since they are always the same in relation to themselves and to everything else - are the only objects of knowledge and hence the only subjects of truth. Philosophers are able to recognise that such is the case and on that account they consider Forms to be more real and more choiceworthy than sensibles. Non-philosophers, on the other hand, are so preoccupied with the pleasures and pains associated with the senses that they come to 'believe that truth is what the body says it is.'[13]

In the *Republic*, Plato compares the difference in this regard between philosophers and non-philosophers to the difference between sleep and wakefulness.[14] The mistake of the dreamer is to countenance as real what is only an image. That is, in the dream state a person sees images of actually existing sensibles and countenances these images as real beings. It is only upon waking and recollecting his dream that the dreamer comes to realise that what last night he considered original and true objects were mere images and falsehoods. In a similar way the non-philosopher fails to recognise that the entire sensible world is a kind of image of the intelligible. The philosopher, by contrast, is 'awake' to the reality behind the appearances, the eternal and immutable and incorporeal Forms which ground the appearances and make them meaningful and significant.

In death, philosophers and non-philosophers are separated by the fate of their souls. The souls of philosophers are completely severed from their bodies at death and go to dwell with the gods and to contemplate Forms. The souls of non-philosophers, on the other hand, suffer the following fate:

> It is no doubt permeated by the physical, which constant intercourse and association with the body, as well as

> considerable practice, has caused to become ingrained in it … . Through it, such a soul has become heavy and is dragged back to the visible region in fear of the unseen and of Hades. It wanders, as we are told, around graves and monuments, where shadowy phantoms, images that souls produce, have been seen, souls that have not been freed and purified but share in the visible, and are therefore seen … these are not the souls of good but of inferior men, which are forced to wander there, paying the penalty for their previous bad upbringing. They wander until their longing for that which imprisons them, the physical, again imprisons them in a body.[15]

Why does the non-philosopher suffer this fate? Because of a commitment to (1) and (2), souls are of such a nature that they actually become like what they pursue as choiceworthy. Hence, if a soul countenances incorporeal Forms as real and valuable, then as that soul pursues Forms, it will start to become like them in terms of incorporeality and stability. On the other hand, the soul that countenances the corporeal as real and as choiceworthy will itself become more and more corporeal. So how does one become committed to (1) and (2)? Plato argues here that when a soul is excessively devoted to pursuing physical pleasures it comes to believe that only the physical exists and to actually fear the thought of anything incorporeal:

> Because every pleasure and every pain provides, as it were, another nail to rivet the soul to the body and to weld them together. It makes the soul corporeal, so that it believes that truth is what the body says it is. As it shares the beliefs and delights of the body, I think it inevitably comes to share its ways and manner of life and is unable ever to reach Hades in a pure state; it is always full of body when it departs, so that it soon falls back into another body and grows with it as if it had been sewn into it. Because of this, it can have no part in the company of the divine, the pure and uniform.[16]

It is not difficult to imagine how this is supposed to work. An important difference between the corporeal and the incorporeal is hinted at in this passage. Namely, the corporeal is clear, easy to detect, and intense. The incorporeal, on the other hand, is dim and hidden, transparent only to reason. It is very difficult for one to deny that his body exists while he is being kicked in the head or while savouring roast duck. Yet when one contemplates mathematical proofs or speculates about genera, species, and relations it is relatively easy to convince oneself that such things do not really exist but are simply ‘abstractions’ or ‘concepts.’

There is a second potential cause of countenancing the Corporeal as the Real and the Valuable. Throughout the *Phaedo* Plato emphasises what a difficult and painstaking process philosophy is and that the journey to knowledge is an arduous, painful, and dangerous one. Nevertheless, Plato perpetually argues that it is better to live a life of philosophy than one of pleasure or power. If that is the case then why is he so blunt about its difficulties? The answer lies in the second way that someone might come to endorse (1) and (2): misology.

Misology is the result of the following experience. One who is unskilled in philosophy places his trust in an argument as being true, especially in one where the conclusion is deemed important. A short time later the same argument appears false and the unskilled philosopher accordingly withdraws his trust in it. This experience is repeated many times, especially with important arguments, causing a great deal of stress. Initially the fledgling philosopher blames himself for lacking skill but after some time the distress grows so great that in order to relieve it, he must shift the blame from himself to argument itself. Hence, he comes to believe that there is nothing true or stable in philosophical argument and that insofar as argument follows reality, that there is nothing stable or true in reality 'but that all that exists simply fluctuates up and down as if it were in the Euripus and does not remain in the same place for any time at all.'[17] The language employed here makes it unmistakable that the misologist specifically denies the existence of things like the Forms, one of the defining characteristics of which is stability. The misologist thus loses faith not only in reason as a tool for discovering truth but in truth itself and in the existence of objects that could serve as the grounds of truth. In other words, the misologist comes to believe that only the corporeal exists and hence that only the corporeal is valuable.

But what exactly is the role of 'lack of skill' in this account? What does it mean to be skilled in argument and how would such skill save someone from the descent into misology? In the evaluation of arguments there are two extremes: acceptance and rejection. Between these two extremes are at least two intermediates: provisional acceptance/rejection and withholding of judgment. Many arguments are sometimes true and sometimes false and very few are always true. In the unskilled, however, there is a strong tendency to either accept or reject an argument outright rather than to suspend judgment until it has been sufficiently subjected to rigorous tests from all sides.[18] Yet it seems that what is required of the philosopher is either a withholding of judgment or a qualified acceptance or denial, realising that many arguments appear sometimes true and sometimes false. So the skilled philosopher is not quick to take sides in argument. Moreover, the skilled philosopher will only ever blame himself when stable arguments cannot be found. In this way, skill in argument prevents one from losing faith in reasoned discourse and its incorporeal objects.

5. Conclusion

I have argued that Plato countenances two kinds of existent - Forms and sensibles; that there are two summary characteristics of each - incorporeality and stability for the former, corporeality and instability for the latter; that there are two kinds of life - those of the philosopher and the non-philosopher; that there are two kinds of death - complete and incomplete separation from the body; that there are two kinds of resurrection - incorporeal and corporeal; that the corporeal resurrection is an inauthentic one and that it is the consequence of valuing and countenancing as real sensibles over Forms; and finally, that there are two kinds of experiences that can lead to the dual mistake of the non-philosopher: devotion to pleasure and misology. Both extreme pleasure and misology cause one to believe that reality is monopolised by the ephemeral sensible world, which if I am right in my first section, is a conviction shared by the vampire, the quintessential Goth. Insofar as the pleasure-lover, misologist, Goth, and vampire countenance the sensible but not the intelligible they mistake the image for the original. And insofar as the non-philosopher and the vampire are resurrected to a thoroughly corporeal life of consumption, they share the same fate.

Notes

[1] C. Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic*, Reaktion, London, 2006.
[2] Spooner, op. cit., p. 63.
[3] Ibid., p. 65
[4] Ibid., p. 65.
[5] Ibid., pp. 127-131; see also L. Goodlad and M. Bibby, 'Introduction', in *Goth: Undead Subculture*, L. Goodlad and M. Bibby (eds), Duke University Press, Durham, 2007, pp. 1-37.
[6] Spooner, op. cit., p. 131.
[7] Goodlad and Bibby, op. cit., p. 15.
[8] Plato, 'Republic', in *Plato: Complete Works*, J. Cooper and D. Hutchinson (eds), G. Grube (trans), Hackett, Indianapolis, 1997, pp. 477ff.
[9] Plato, 'Republic', in *Plato: Complete Works*, J. Cooper and D. Hutchinson (eds), G. Grube (trans), Hackett, Indianapolis, 1997, pp. 64d-e.
[10] Plato, 'Republic', pp. 475b-e-480a.
[11] Ibid., p. 485d.
[12] Ibid., p. 485b.
[13] Plato, 'Phaedo', in *Plato: Complete Works*, J. Cooper and D. Hutchinson (eds), G. Grube (trans), Hackett, Indianapolis, 1997, p. 83d.
[14] Plato, 'Republic', pp. 476c-d.
[15] Plato, 'Phaedo', pp. 81b-e.
[16] Ibid., pp. 83d-e.
[17] Ibid., p. 90c.

[18] See Plato, 'Republic', pp. 534b-c; Plato, 'Phaedo', pp. 97aff.

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Panic on the Streets of Stockholm: Sub/Urban Alienation in the Novels of John Ajvide Lindqvist

Kevin Corstorphine

Abstract
Let the Right One In and *Handling the Undead*, two recent novels by Swedish author John Ajvide Lindqvist, reinvent a stock Gothic character; the vampire and zombie. Both novels oscillate between hard-edged cynical realism and escapist fantasy, and both show a close engagement with popular culture, particularly music. *Let the Right One In* takes its title from a Morrissey song, and both novels include quotations from Morrissey and The Smiths. Morrisey's lyrics, at once misanthropic and yet possessed of a tentative hope, are suited to the tone of Lindqvist's novel, which is as much an existential tale of suburban alienation as a Gothic fairy tale. Its lonely twelve-year-old protagonist Oskar, however, finds his respite from torment in the overblown hard rock of KISS. Likewise, Elvy in *Handling the Undead* sees the world around her through the lens of Marilyn Manson and contextualises the zombie outbreak with reference to horror movies and videogames. This paper will examine these novels in the context of the notion that they endorse a nihilistic or solipsistic world view, and in the light of the cultural contexts that inform these works argue that they actually aim to create new ethical meaning in a post-ideological world.

Key Words: Gothic, vampire, zombie, Lindqvist, Smiths, Manson, Columbine, nihilism, revenge, postmodernism.

*****

> Let the right one slip in
> Slip in
> Slip in
> And when at last it does
> I'd say you were within your rights to bite
> The right one and say, 'what kept you so long?'
> 'What kept you so long?'[1]

John Ajvide Lindqvist's debut novel *Let the Right One In* sets itself out from the beginning as explicitly intertextual. Not only does the title come from the Morrissey song, but refers of course to the legend that vampires must be invited across the threshold before they can come in. Lindqvist scatters *Let the Right One In* and his second novel, *Handling the Undead*, with quotations from sources as diverse as Swedish mythology, literature, philosophy and music. In this paper I

argue that this intertextual borrowing comments on contemporary culture even as it allows creatures of myth to invade the urban and suburban landscape.

Let the Right One In tells the story of thirteen-year-old Oskar, who lives with his mother in the Blackeberg suburb of Stockholm. He is deeply unhappy through a mixture of crushing boredom and being bullied at school, neither of which help, and possibly cause, the incontinence that requires him to wear a piece of foam inside his underpants. Oskar's life changes when he meets Eli, a young girl that has been living nearby. It transpires that she is a vampire, turned by a predatory aristocrat two hundred years ago. She has become a pathetic creature, reduced to allowing herself to be fondled by a paedophile in exchange for the blood of his murder victims, siphoned off into a plastic jug. It is clear then, from the start, that this novel pulls no punches in describing what life might actually be like for someone trapped in the body of a child, allergic to sunlight and slavishly addicted to blood. Neither does it flinch in depicting the world of the bullied adolescent. Early in the novel Oskar has his head flushed down the toilet, and his tormenters force him to squeal like a pig, causing him to develop a spontaneous nosebleed:

> Oskar Eriksson perched there with a wad of paper in his hand and his pissball in the other. Got nosebleeds, wet his pants, talked too much. Leaked from every orifice. Soon he would probably start to shit his pants as well. Piggy.
> He got up and left the bathroom. Didn't wipe the drop of blood. Let someone see it, let them wonder. Let them think someone had been killed here, because someone *had* been killed here. And for the hundredth time.[2]

Oskar internalises his sense of shame and begins to despise himself as much as he does the bullies. He does have some outlets, however, including his love of the rock band KISS. It is perhaps little wonder that the theatrical personae of the band members appeal to Oskar as an imaginative escape from his bleak suburban existence. In fact, it transpires that Oskar does not actually listen to the band much, but enjoys looking at concert pictures because, 'Their made-up faces were cool. Like live horror figures.'[3] This theatrical aspect of the band, which takes its inspiration from Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Arthur Brown and Alice Cooper, and would later be seen in bands such as Marilyn Manson and Slipknot, allows the performers to project alternate personalities, and vicariously, so can their fans.

Rather than imitate the relatively harmless Gene 'the Demon' Simmons, however, Oskar begins to find inspiration in the deeds of a local serial killer from the news articles he cuts out and keeps in a scrapbook. The killer in question, Hakan, is Eli's aforementioned consort. He preys on young teenagers around the same age as Oskar's bullies, leading Oskar to fantasise that he himself is the killer. Pretending that a tree is his tormentor, he stabs it repeatedly with a knife:

> *One stab for what you did to me in the bathroom today. One for when you tricked me into playing knuckle poker. And I'm cutting your lips out for everything nasty you've ever said to me.*
> Jonny was bleeding from every orifice and could no longer say or do anything mean. He was long since dead. Oskar finished by puncturing his staring eyeballs, *whack whack*, then got up and regarded his work.[4]

Oskar channels his self-hatred into righteous rage and aggression. Once he develops a relationship with Eli, this develops into real action when he hits Jonny in the head with a hockey stick, causing him to bleed and vomit. The plot culminates when Jonny's brother and his friends attempt to drown Oskar and are slaughtered by Eli. Eli and Oskar leave together after this; a happy ending of sorts. Although the reader is led to empathise with the bullied Oskar, the nihilistic tone is more than a little troubling from a moral perspective. Oskar has progressed as a character, but through his association with Eli, has achieved this by becoming more monstrous than his enemies. This is the same kind of ethical cul-de-sac of self-justified rage that culminated in the 1999 Columbine High School shootings.

In the aftermath of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold's murder spree, media speculation went into overdrive, and suggested that the two boys were, 'members of a campus group of losers and Marilyn Manson-worshipping goths called the Trenchcoat Mafia, who had few friends and attracted only derision from the cool kids.'[5] In reality, the pair was not much interested in the band, and the bullying story was largely a myth; a story already written in the imaginations of the public and of the press at the time. Consequently, the blame was laid squarely at the door of Marilyn Manson, demonically themed video games such as *Doom* and *Quake*, and Goth culture in general. Marilyn Manson, the band's lead singer, defends himself in Michael Moore's anti-gun documentary, *Bowling for Columbine*. When asked what he would say to the teenagers, given the chance, he replies, 'I wouldn't say a single word to them. I would listen to what they have to say, and that's what no one did.'[6] This response is consistent with his critique in the song 'The Nobodies':

> Some children died the other day
> We fed machines and then we prayed
> Puked up and down in morbid faith
> You should have seen the ratings that day.[7]

Manson's criticism of the media response hinges on the idea that while news networks present a facade of appalled outrage, they actually display a prurient interest in the minutiae of the events that have unfolded, and glamorise what has occurred much more effectively than any shock rocker. There can be no easy

answers or one source of blame for events like these, yet it is clear that these killers wallowed in a broad sense of misanthropy and contempt for others. Oskar, in *Let the Right One In*, does not slip this far from his sense of humanity, yet the novel's climactic high school massacre presented as a moment of triumph cannot help but leave the reader with a sense of ambivalence about how to engage with what has occurred. Tellingly, in the closing scene Oskar is no longer the focaliser, but is observed by the train conductor as he sits with his luggage; a large suitcase with Eli hidden inside:

> Stefan pulled the door to the compartment shut, and walked to the next one. The boy seemed like he knew what he was doing. If Stefan had been sitting there with that much luggage he would hardly have looked so *happy*.
> But then, it's probably different when you're young.[8]

Morality here, is a question of perspective. Oskar has already killed in order that Eli might live, facing up to the essential ethical burden of the vampire's existence, of the predator. This is the dilemma avoided by many contemporary vampires, such as those of *Twilight* and *True Blood*, who choose to consume animal or synthetic blood in order to survive without causing harm to others. Oskar's acceptance of his new lifestyle with Eli, where presumable he will procure human blood for her, is in contrast a kind of Nietzschean affirmation of his new status as beyond the herd of everyday life.

The relationship between the alienated outsider and the mob stands out as a key distinction within Gothic fiction. Oskar's relationship with Eli constitutes a journey from innocence to experience that culminates with his throwing off conventional morality, even if his essentially optimistic vision of life tempers Eli's more nihilistic approach. The vampire, with notable exceptions, such as Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, tends to be individualistic, gloriously excessive, and though undead, displays a vitality lacking in the dull forces of conformity that oppose it. It is little wonder, then, that the vampire has become a somewhat aspirational figure, whether through the excitement of having superpowers (*Underworld*, *Blade*), or through the heady combination of sex appeal and existential angst (*Interview with the Vampire*, *Twilight*). In stark contrast, the subject of Lindqvist's second novel, *Handling the Undead*, is a very different kind of revenant: the zombie.

This division between the vampire and the zombie, between the outlook of *Let the Right One In* and *Handling the Undead*, can be illustrated well through a comparison of the song 'Rock N Roll Nigger,' released by Patti Smith in 1978 and Marilyn Manson's cover version from 1995. Both songs shift the word 'nigger' from its purely racial connotations and claim that anyone who criticises society becomes an outsider and is labelled as such, yet this is something that can be

embraced and made into something positive. Patti Smith's spoken word section from the song describes perfectly Oskar's acceptance of Eli, who has been outside of society for hundreds of years:

> Those who have suffered,
> Understand suffering,
> And thereby extend their hand.[9]

Smith's affirmation of this term as a byword for rock and roll rebellion could be viewed as somewhat naïve, ignoring as it does the majority of African Americans who would rather not be social pariahs given the choice, yet her association of the struggle against racism with feminism ('baby was a black sheep / baby was a whore') is a valid political statement. *Let the Right One In*, however, fully acknowledges the power of words to label and alienate. Eli does not consider herself to fall into the stereotypes associated with her condition and tells Oskar as much when he finally works it out and confronts her:

> 'Are you a vampire?'
> She wrapped her arms around her body, slowly shook her head.
> 'I ... live on blood. But I am not ... that.'
> 'What's the difference?'
> She looked him in the eyes and said somewhat more forcefully,
> 'There's a very big difference.'[10]

Vampirism here is presented as an illness, and one that causes intense loneliness and suffering. Eli has not embraced the powers of the beast that created her, but rather is forced to live with her physical and psychological scars for the rest of her unnaturally long life. This view of suffering, which contradicts Nietzsche's maxim that, 'what does not kill me, makes me stronger,'[11] is reflected in Marilyn Manson's sentiment that 'Whatever doesn't kill you is gonna leave a scar.'[12] Nonetheless, Eli does embrace her powers to save Oskar. This affirmation, by now a staple of the vampire story, cannot apply to the zombie.

Manson's version of 'Rock 'N' Roll Nigger' excises the reference to understanding suffering and substitutes hatred instead: 'This is your world in which we grow / And we will grow to hate you.'[13] This spurned underdog mentality, combined with the plural 'us,' evokes the image of the zombie much more than the vampire, rising from the grave in order to blindly attack. This is undoubtedly a Gothic image, but not one so easily co-opted by Goth culture or fashion. The zombie is not a role model, and is antithetical to one of the central tenets of Goth culture: individualism. The image of the rampaging mob was evoked by Edmund Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), where he suggests that ill treatment of the masses will lead to a dangerous

outpouring of violence. The zombie, lacking the voice of the vampire, is even more culturally malleable, and has been used for many different purposes. The most famous example, George A. Romero's *Dead* series, turns a cynical eye back on humanity. His zombies, or 'ghouls,' bring out the best or the worst in the living, with characters bringing about their own downfall by acting selfishly, or else forming their own kinds of mob and causing disaster by sheer stupidity. *Handling the Undead* takes this idea a step further and presents a world where the dead return, but do not hunger for human flesh, instead returning to their former homes and loved ones. The twist in this particular tale is that the zombies act as a kind of 'physic battery.'[14] People can hear each other's thoughts in the presence of the 'reliving' (the government's politically correct term for them) and the creatures only turn violent when they have negative emotions directed towards them. The novel is elegiac in tone and uses the reliving in a similar way to Hawthorne's story 'The Minister's Black Veil,' where the veil acts as an empty signifier, reflecting back guilt, fear, suspicion, or whatever is already present in the human mind.

Flora, one of the novel's main characters, listens to Marilyn Manson whenever she is not playing the videogame *Resident Evil*. While travelling on a bus, she switches on her copy of *Antichrist Superstar* in a scene that uses lyrics in an intertextual way:

> Flora curled up in the corner of one of the seats, pushed the earpieces in and pressed play, leaned her head against the window and closed her eyes.
> We hate love...we love hate...we hate love... .[15]

Handling the Undead uses postmodern allusions to pop culture throughout, acknowledging that its audience already knows, for example, how to kill a zombie. This is exactly why it avoids lapsing into gory action (although there is plenty of the macabre), but instead dwells on the emotional impact of the dead returning to life. The reliving are merely ciphers through which to view humanity. The lyrics Flora listens to, from 'Irresponsible Hate Anthem,' are more applicable to the living. The dead correspond more to the lyrics of 'The Beautiful People,' where Manson sings 'The more that you fear us, the bigger we get.'[16] Defying the usual lack of emotional engagement provided by zombies, *Handling the Undead* can in fact be seen as a moral progression from the bleak nihilism of *Let the Right One In*, moving from a vision of personal redemption through affirmation to one of social consciousness. In one scene Lindqvist has a group of teen boys attack the reliving with baseball bats and petrol tins as if they were merely playing a videogame. Flora, herself a fan, realises what is happening straight away: 'When she had caught it, other images linked to it. Zombies from movies, zombies from games. This is what the guys' excursion was about: they'd headed out to get a little live action.'[17] Scenes like this represent a serious attempt to grabble with morality in a

postmodern, post-ideological world, without the reactionary tactic of condemning a whole generation as it does so. In the tradition of the best horror, Lindqvist does not so much reinvent the vampire and zombie as re-examine the ways in which we relate to these creatures and in doing so give them a fresh relevance.

Notes

[1] S. Morrissey, G. Day, A. Whyte, 'Let the Right One Slip In', *Viva Hate: Special Edition*, EMI, 1997.
[2] J. A. Lindqvist, *Let the Right One In*, E. Segerberg (trans), Quercus, London, 2007, p. 11.
[3] Lindqvist, p. 70.
[4] Lindqvist, p. 28.
[5] A. Gumbei, 'The Truth About Columbine', *The Guardian* 17/04/09, viewed on 10th April 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/apr/17/columbine-massacre-gun-crime-us>.
[6] Interview with Marilyn Manson, *Bowling for Columbine*, M. Moore (dir.), Alliance Atlantis, 2002.
[7] M. Manson and J. Lowery, 'The Nobodies', *Holy Wood (In the Shadow of the Valley of Death)*, Interscope, 2000.
[8] Lindqvist, op. cit., p. 519.
[9] P. Smith and L. Kaye, 'Rock N Roll Nigger', *Easter*, Arista Records, 1978.
[10] Lindqvist, op. cit., pp. 299-300.
[11] F. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols; And, The Anti-Christ*, M. Tanner (ed), R. J. Hollingdale (trans), London, Penguin, 1993, p. 33.
[12] M. Manson, T. Ramirez, C. Vrenna, 'Leave a Scar', *The High End of Low*, Interscope, 2009.
[13] M. Manson and T. Ramirez, 'Rock 'N' Roll Nigger', *Smells Like Children*, Interscope, 1995.
[14] Stephen King's description of haunted houses in *Danse Macabre*, Warner Books, London, 1993, p. 297.
[15] J. A. Lindqvist, *Handling the Undead*, E. Segerberg (trans), Quercus, London, 2009.
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Food, Blood, Body and Knowledge in *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*

Maria Parrino

Abstract
In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the monster becomes aware of his identity and of human understanding by means of his contact with the surrounding world. Within his *Bildung* emerges a significant relation with food. Once he is abandoned by his creator, the creature learns how to provide for his own nourishment and uses the products of nature for his survival. Gradually, he experiences different ways of eating and cooking, realises how important food is in the life of people, and how the scarcity causes physical and psychological dis/ease. Food, in its material and symbolic form, is a means to develop language. The food the monster eats is bloodless. Is the creature vegetarian? In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, food marks the difference between the species. The vampire eats no food, but his body needs and searches blood to preserve his identity. Blood is the only form of survival for the vampire who by using the human beings' bodies for his nourishment transforms their identity. Bloodsucking signifies a meaningful bond which is extended to other human beings.

Key Words: Frankenstein, Dracula, food, blood, body, knowledge, language, identity.

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1. Frankenstein

In search of food, Mary Shelley's monster acquires knowledge of his identity. The story the creature imposes on his creator, Victor Frankenstein, begins with his search for refuge in the woods.[1] Here the creature experiences the basic needs of a living being, sleep, cold, hunger and thirst, and soon realises that there is nobody to tell him what to do, since no fathering/mothering has been offered him. The creature instinctively turns to the products of the land:

> [A]nd I ate some berries which I found hanging on the trees, or lying on the ground. I slaked my thirst at the brook; and then lying down, was overcome by sleep.[2]

Despite the lack of help, the creature does not surrender and learns how to survive by adapting himself to the place.[3] In the accurate description of the various actions performed, what emerges is not only his ability to 'think,' 'examine,' 'watch' and 'reflect' but also his capacity to 'discover' how to satisfy his needs. The first impact with the external world is positive and shows that an interaction with nature is possible.

Food is a way to describe how the creature negotiates his body with the social and natural world. Endowed with special skills, not only does he learn how to provide food for himself, but also experiences different ways of cooking and eating.

> It was morning when I awoke, and my first care was to visit the fire. I uncovered it, and a gentle breeze quickly fanned it into a flame. I observed this also, and contrived a fan of branches, which roused the embers when they were nearly extinguished. When night came again, I found, with pleasure, that the fire gave light as well as heat; and that the discovery of this element was useful to me in my food; for I found some of the offals that the travellers had left had been roasted, and tasted much more savoury than the berries I gathered from the trees. I tried, therefore, to dress my food in the same manner, placing it on the live embers. I found that the berries were spoiled by this operation, and the nuts and roots much improved.[4]

It looks like cooking is the creature's first nurturing and cultural activity.[5] The episode represents a brief history of mankind's civilisation, the passing from the raw to the cooked which anthropologists have marked as an evolutionary stage for the human species.[6] When the creature understands that the knowledge acquired does not guarantee the permanent provision of food he moves away from the familiar location and looks for a place 'where the few wants I experienced would be more easily satisfied.'[7] Other than having been born, the creature has no native land, a place he belongs to.[8] In his 'emigration,' contact with the human beings is frustrating for everybody runs away from him. Luckily in one of the abandoned shelter he is left with food:

> I greedily devoured the remnants of the shepherd's breakfast, which consisted of bread, cheese, milk, and wine; the latter, however, I did not like.[9]

When he wakes up, he starts off for a new place 'depositing the remains of the peasant's breakfast in a wallet I found.' His wanderings in search of a place are marked by his search of food and when he reaches a new village, the creature is pleased because 'the vegetables in the gardens, the milk and cheese that I saw at the windows of some of some of the cottages, allured my appetite.'[10]

Unfortunately and inevitably, (the creature is *horribile visu*), when people see him they attack him. He finds refuge in a hut and survives with a 'loaf of coarse bread, which I purloined, and a cup with which I could drink.'[11] The following morning, from the 'imperceptible chink' he sees a young girl, carrying a pail of

milk. It is his first visual contact with the DeLaceys, the family in the nearby cottage whose life forms the material which the creature uses to learn about the human beings. Hidden in the hut, he understands how important food is.

> A considerable period elapsed before I discovered one of the causes of the uneasiness of this amiable family: it was poverty; and they suffered that evil in a very distressing degree. Their nourishment consisted entirely of the vegetables of their garden, and the milk of one cow, which gave very little during the winter, when its masters could scarcely procure food to support it. They often, I believe, suffered the pangs of hunger very poignantly, especially the two younger cottagers; for several times they placed food before the old man when they reserved none for themselves.[12]

The generous behaviour of the younger inhabitants of the cottage who are ready to renounce their food and offer it to the old man affects the creature who learns to be sensitive.

> This trait of kindness moved me sensibly. I had been accustomed, during the night, to steal a part of their store for my own consumption; but when I found that in doing this I inflicted pain on the cottagers, I abstained, and satisfied myself with berries, nuts, and roots, which I gathered from a neighbouring wood.[13]

The DeLaceys eat essentially the products of the land and drink the milk of their cow.

> Their food, as I afterwards found, was coarse, but it was wholesome; and they procured a sufficiency of it. Several new kinds of plants sprung up in the garden, which they dressed; and these signs of comfort increased daily as the season advanced.[14]

Is the creature vegetarian?[15] Mary Shelley was influenced by the ideas on vegetarianism of her time and was part of a group of intellectuals who declared their opposition towards the eating of meat and combined their position with a political stance, as Percy Shelley explained in his *A Vindication of Natural Diet*.[16] When later in the story the creature asks Victor to make a companion and promises that he will go to the 'vast wilds of South America' his project is both to overcome the exclusion and the rejection of the world, and eventually mark the difference with the carnivorous humans.

> My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment. My companion will be of the same nature as myself, and will be content with the same fare. We shall make our bed of dried leaves; the sun will shine on us as on man, and will ripen our food. The picture I present to you is peaceful and human, and you must feel that you could deny it only in the wantonness of power and cruelty.[17]

By asserting his inclusion of animals in his moral code and the assurance that he will not kill animals, the monster reminds his creator that human beings are not at the centre of the moral fabric and underlines that his vegetarian life is a 'peaceful' and 'human' alternative.[18]

Gradually the creature becomes aware of the relationships among humans, but the 'discovery of still greater moment' is language, 'the godlike science.' Significantly, among the first words the creature learns are terms referred to food and cooking.

> I found that these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds. I perceived that the words they spoke sometimes produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness, in the minds and countenances of the hearers. … I discovered the names that were given to some of the most familiar objects of discourse; I learned and applied the words, *fire*, *milk*, *bread*, and *wood*.[19]

Soon the creature understands that since sight judges the meanings of the phenomenal world, the only way he can be accepted is by hiding the vision of his body and manifesting his words instead.[20] His first interaction with the DeLaceys is friendly, thanks to the blind father who not only welcomes the traveller but also understands his words and feels sorry because 'unfortunately, my children are from home, and, as I am blind, I am afraid I shall find it difficult to procure food for you.'[21] The old man interprets the creature's needs and treats him as a human being, to whom food is an essential part of life. But the idyllic relationship ends as soon the other members of the family arrive and attack him. Aware that his reaction could cause serious damage to the family, the creature does not hit back, and only when he realises that nobody in the family is willing to understand who he is, does he take his revenge and destroys 'every vestige of cultivation in the garden.' Not only the shelter but also the provision of food is taken away from the people he believed would have accepted him.

2. Dracula

The relationship between food and blood marks the identity of the vampire, its distance and proximity to the human beings, whose bodies are threatened by the vampire's need to survive.

At the beginning of Stoker's novel, young Jonathan Harker seems to be interested in the foreign food he comes across while travelling to Eastern Europe. Whereas he complains about the delay of trains in the East, he is definitely pleased with the food he is given at the inns he stops by.

> We left in pretty good time, and came after nightfall to Klausenburgh. Here I stopped for the night at the Hotel Royale. I had for dinner, or rather supper, a chicken done up some way with red pepper, which was very good but thirsty. (*Mem*. get recipe for Mina.) I asked the waiter, and he said it was called "paprika hendl," and that, as it was a national dish, I should be able to get it anywhere along the Carpathians.[22]

Eating habits make Jonathan learn about the country he is visiting. When he falls asleep and has 'all sorts of queer dreams,' in a rather comic but realistic way Jonathan explains the possible reason for his own sleeplessness.

> There was a dog howling all night under my window, which may have had something to do with it; or it may have been the paprika, for I had to drink up all the water in my carafe, and was still thirsty. [In the morning] I had for breakfast more paprika, and a sort of porridge of maize flour which they said was "mamaliga", and egg-plant stuffed with forcemeat, a very excellent dish, which they call "impletata" (*Mem*., get recipe for this also).[23]

Once Jonathan reaches the castle, he is welcomed by Count Dracula who invites him to a generous dinner but does not eat the food he offers.[24] Significantly, Dracula first interest in his guest is because he is a native speaker and is willing to 'suck' out of his body (his voice) 'the English intonation' which will enable him not to be a 'stranger in a strange land.'[25]

Dracula's arrival in England is inevitably marked as a threat.[26] When his first victim, Lucy, is made a vampire her body is transformed into the one of a voracious woman who has 'an appetite like a cormorant' and is 'full of life.'[27] Female hunger is associated with female sexual desire which makes women monstrous.[28] Vampire women's voracious eating disrupts gender distinctions.[29] Lucy is against nature for she is the woman who feeds on children, thus inverting the maternal suckling. Lucy is a deviant and needs to be put to death. Her body is

destroyed, in a mixture of men's heroic and sexual enterprise, including the final stroke given by Arthur, her would-be husband.

Mina, the least traditional of the female characters, whose contribution to the tracing of Dracula is essential to the final defeat of the vampire, in Van Helsing's words, has 'man's brain ... and a woman's heart.'[30] In a very meaningful scene, Mina feeds on Dracula's blood, which she sucks form his chest. The symbolic implication of blood as milk (breastfeeding) and semen (fellatio) is evident.

> Her white night-dress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare chest which was shown by his torn-open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink. … For a few seconds she lay in her helpless attitude and disarray. Her face was ghastly, with a pallor which was accentuated by the blood which smeared her lips and cheeks and chin; from her throat trickled a thin stream of blood. Her eyes were mad with terror.[31]

The men try to calm down the terrorised woman, but their attempt is hampered by Mina's reaction to the sight of blood and her awareness that her identity has been changed. 'Unclean, unclean! I must touch him or kiss him no more.'[32] In one of the few episodes when the actual words of the vampire are reported, while pointing at Jonathan who is sleeping (strange, in such an important moment!), Dracula explains his plans:

> And you, their best beloved one, are now to me, flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood, kin of my kin, my bountiful wine-press for a while, and shall be later on my companion and my helper![33]

It is worth noting that the friendship between the two scientists of the story is marked by a 'vampiric' bond. MD, DPh, D.LiT, Van Helsing clearly explains to his friend Dr Seward why he cannot refuse his request for help for he owes so much to him.

> I come to my friend when he call me to aid those he holds dear. Tell your friend that when that time you suck from my wound so swiftly the poison of the gangrene from that knife that our other friend, too nervous, let slip, you did more for him when he wants my aids and you call for them than all his great fortune could do. But it is pleasure added to do for him, your friend, it is to you that I come.[34]

Any conclusion to the issue of food in *Dracula* could not be drawn without mentioning the character Renfield, the 'zoophagous' patient in the asylum who, in the words of Dr Seward, only eats 'to absorb as many lives as he can, and he has laid himself out to achieve it in a cumulative way.'[35]

Notes

[1] The monster insistently asks his creator to listen to his story. Among the others, see A. Rauch, 'The Monstrous Body of Knowledge in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*', *Studies in Romanticism*, Vol. 34, 1995, pp. 227-253, and C. Beebe Tarantelli, '*Frankenstein*, Ovvero la Perdita del Soggetto Femminile', *Calibano*, No. 6, 1981, pp. 156-176.
[2] M. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, J. M. Smith (ed), Bedford Books and St Martin's Press, Boston, 1992, pp. 92-93.
[3] For a more detailed analysis on the influence of John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1690, see B. R. Pollin, 'Philosophical and Literary Sources of *Frankenstein*', *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1965, p. 107.
[4] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 94.
[5] T. Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste: The Body and the Natural World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 144.
[6] C. Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, 1969 [1964].
[7] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 94.
[8] For the difference between 'natality' and 'nativity,' see M. McLane, 'Literate Species: Populations, "Humanities," and the Specific Failure of Literature in *Frankenstein*', in *Romanticism and the Human Sciences. Poetry, Population and the Discourse of the Species*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 91.
[9] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 95.
[10] Ibid., p. 95.
[11] Ibid., p. 96.
[12] Ibid., p. 99.
[13] Ibid., p. 99.
[14] Ibid., p. 101.
[15] C. Adams, 'Frankenstein's Vegetarian Monster', in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Continuum, New York and London, 2006, pp. 120-131.
[16] K. Thomas, 'Meat or Mercy?', in *Man and the Natural World. Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, pp. 292-295.
[17] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, pp. 125-126.
[18] C. Adams, 'Frankenstein's Vegetarian Monster', in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Continuum, New York and London, 2006. The monster's body is bloodless, the result of Victor Frankenstein's collection of pieces of dead human bodies from the cemetery and parts of dead animals from the slaughterhouse.

[19] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, pp. 99-100.
[20] P. Brooks, 'What is a Monster? (According to *Frankenstein*)', in *Body Work. Objects of Desire in Modern Narratives*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1993, p. 218; and Rauch, p. 237.
[21] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 116.
[22] B. Stoker, *Dracula*, J. P. Riquelme (ed), Bedford/St Martin's Press, Boston and New York, 2002, p. 27.
[23] Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 28.
[24] Dracula eats no food and has no servants. See F. Moretti, 'The Dialectics of Fear', *New Left Review*, Vol. I, No. 136, November-December 1982, p. 68.
[25] Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 45.
[26] See S. Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: Dracula and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4, Summer 1990, pp. 621-645.
[27] Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 124.
[28] A. Krugovy Silver, 'Vampirism and the Anorexic Paradigm', in *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 120.
[29] See Lombroso and the idea of a savage as a fat human being, his ideas of prostitutes and their weight as a sign of perverseness, as quoted in A. Krugovy Silver, p. 122.
[30] Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 240.
[31] Ibid., p. 283.
[32] Ibid., p. 285.
[33] Ibid., p. 288
[34] Ibid., p. 130.
[35] Ibid., p. 92.

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Part 5

Death

Haunted Castles and Premature Burials: The Cure's *Faith,* Goth Subculture and the Gothic Literary Tradition

Anna Milione

Abstract
The aim of this paper is to explore the contiguity of gothic subcultures - in particular early Goth song lyrics of the 1980s - and the Gothic literary tradition. Focusing on The Cure, I will investigate the discourse of Gothic resurgence in Gothic rock. Goth has mainly been associated with visual style and aesthetic, yet the music, the lyrics and videos of Gothic subcultures, excluded from official Gothic Studies until recently, seem to offer one of the most promising areas of research in Gothic sub-cultural studies.[1] Graveyard elements, Romantic Gothicism and Poe-sque hints are particularly echoed in early albums by The Cure such as *Seventeen Seconds, Faith* and *Pornography*. *Faith,* on which I will focus, is an album that incorporates some of the paraphernalia of the Gothic: phantasms of death and a landscape of nightmare, empty rooms, death cells and night scenes. It expresses an analogous existential disorientation of the alienated being of the Gothic tradition. Death is its very object, together with the evocation of 'Doubt' and an anxiety about extinction. The funereal sensibility of the Graveyard School is overtly echoed in such songs as 'The Funeral Party' and 'The Holy Hour' and in the sounds of death-knells and the ethereal reverberation of ghostly voices from the underworld. Scenes of silence and desolation are also expressions of an apprehension that is typical of the modern age. This apprehension recalls Poe's representations of death: despite the desperate longing for 'Faith' in an afterlife, death is an oppressive presence that haunts *Faith* with spectral images of 'empty bodies' and 'other voices.' Like the graveyard poetry of late 18th century and Poe's later reflections on death, this early Goth textual production depicts a continuing manifestation of the crisis of secularisation. Its death imagery also has other and more recent sources, ranging across Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* trilogy, Truman Capote's 'Southern Gothic' and foundational Goth obsessions with funereal elements discernable in other contemporary artists, such as David Bowie, Joy Division, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Bauhaus and others.

Key Words: Graveyard school**,** Poe, *Gormenghast, Other Voices, Other Rooms,* Romantic Gothicism, secularisation, death, Nietzsche, Expressionism, Existentialism.

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1. Gothic Studies and Goth Subculture

Gothic literature has been a source of inspiration for the dark sounds and dark lyrics of the music of Gothic youth subcultures. It is in this common literary

interest that Gothic subcultures overlap with Gothic Studies. Despite this, academic research has avoided in-depth exploration of the Gothic background of Gothic subcultures until recently.[2] Although the debate on the subculture of Gothic music in the last years has already led some critics to see Goth as the latest manifestation of the Gothic literary, artistic and cultural tradition and to identify in Gothic subcultures the same cultural transgression, much remains to be done in relation to the texts associated with Goth subculture and the links to the broader Gothic tradition.[3]

The Cure, together with Joy Division, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and others, is one of the formative early Gothic bands of the first Goth generation.[4] Despite the band's seemingly apolitical stance, their lyrics and music show a rejection of the values of mainstream bourgeois culture. Even though all the bands could rebel against was the ordinary and wealthy life of the English middle class, this class had its own 'dead' values and beliefs, and institutional traditions such as family and the church are *Faith*'s concerns as well as Gothic narratives.[5]

Faith (1981) is one of The Cure's darkest albums. It was released one year before the subculture started to be popularised and established at the 'Goth nights' of the Batcave club in London.[6] It is in relation to *Faith* that Robert Smith recognised Mervyn Peake's gothic *Gormenghast* trilogy as a source of inspiration, a recognition that helped to form the cult of the band as a leading dark, Gothic or formative Goth band.[7] Moreover, Truman Capote's Southern Gothic novel, *Other Voices*, *Other Rooms*, gave the title to one of *Faith*'s songs, 'Other Voices.' In addition, *Faith*'s concerns with the search for Faith and faithlessness, the funereal sensibility of its sounds and lyrics, the use of death imagery, all suggest an association with Poe's representations of death, with the Graveyard School, and with the broader Gothic tradition's relation to the crisis of secularisation.

2. Embryonic Goth and the Death of God

The song lyrics on death and alienation of early bands like Bauhaus, Joy Division, The Cure and Siouxsie and the Banshees, are thus far recognised as part of a Goth aesthetic emulated by contemporary early and later Goths.[8] It was in the early 1980s that the romanticism of death, with the gloomy sounds of Siouxsie and The Cure's *Pornography* (1982), became a stereotyped landmark of the music played at the Batcave.[9] Death was also central to the Goth scene in the predominant death aesthetic of style, marked by dark make-up and whitened faces. Death also overtly loomed in the choice of names of influential early Goth bands such as Southern Death Cult and Christian Death. With Goth, death even became glamorous and fetishised in the service of art.[10] Otherwise, death appeared in the form of the death camps of the Nazi regime in Joy Division's lyrics, which depicted a world of 'no future' and decadence, where death objectifies 'the horror of our times.'[11] The song lyrics on alienation and death have their roots in the

fantasy world of David Bowie as well. It is said that, describing his album, *Diamond Dogs* (1974), he was one of the first to label his music 'Gothic.'[12]

In Goth aesthetics Death has often been interpreted as a desire for extinction or for some other world.[13] Lately, Siegel has more pointedly seen Goth's embrace of death as a critical reaction to the life-in-death demanded by conformity.[14] The death imagery in *Faith* has more precisely to do with the same crisis of secularisation of which the late 18th century Graveyard School was an early expression. Such a crisis of secularisation reflects an anxiety about extinction, rather than a desire for it. It also mirrors a social uneasiness about indoctrinations, symbolised by the allusions to the empty and dead rituals of the Catholic faith.[15]

By the late 1960s, the discourse on 'the Death of God' initiated by Nietzsche was revived thanks to the attention of the French Existentialists to the existence or non-existence of God. The famous cover of the 1966 edition of *Time* magazine, with the title 'IS God dead?,' also entered the realm of popular culture. In addition, Rubenstein, one of the protagonists of the movement known as 'The death of God,' believed that the death of God symbolically coincided with the Holocaust, a fact that is reminiscent of Joy Division's use of the Nazi past for the nihilistic depiction of the horrors of postmodern life.[16] Nietzsche is also by now a recognised source of inspiration for Goth together with other incorporated elements of pre-subcultural literary, philosophical and aesthetic traditions.[17]

In their early career, The Cure were often labeled as the new Existentialists, an association they did not discourage stating their indebtedness to Camus and to Kafka.[18] The search for God without new certainties was also an Expressionist theme, as well as the use of macabre images against dead traditions, fathers and education. The 'wordless scream at ancient power/ [that] breaks against stone' in *Faith*'s 'The Holy Hour,' the 'screaming' in 'Doubt' and the actual Scream at the beginning of 'Other Voices' also recall the suffocated expressionistic *Urschrei*.[19] The scream in *Faith* can also be seen as the exploration of the same funereal alienation of the bourgeois, capitalist, industrial world against which the Expressionists rebelled. It is a primordial scream that speaks about angst and the dead of the old world. Meaningful Expressionistic elements were a landmark of other embryonic Goth bands too. Siouxsie and the Banshees' 1978 album had the title *The Scream.* Bowie also defined his musical experimentation as expressionistic.[20] The name of the contemporary band Bauhaus was associated with the Expressionists and their German horror films as well.[21] In this, we are in the realm of the 'complex amalgam' Paul Hodkinson speaks about.[22] However, this amalgam brings the same signs of the crisis of authority and understanding that started to shake the Western world at the end of the eighteenth century and that gave birth to the 'Literature of Terror.'[23]

3. Hunted Castles and Premature Burials: The Cure's *Faith* and the Gothic Literary Tradition

When Joy Division's music was labeled 'Gothic' in a 1978 BBC interview, 'Gothic' was used to compare the musical spatiality 'to the looming, imposing spaces of the Gothic cathedrals' and to describe the sense of dread conveyed by the predominance of bass sounds.[24]

Similarly, the claustrophobic structure of the Gothic castle seems also reechoed in *Faith*'s hammering bass sounds, and the imposing spaces of castles and cathedrals in the spatiality of displaced sounds. We hear death-knell strikes and rising vocals, sounding distant and spectral. The limitless dimensions of the Gormenghast castle also find a parallel in the potential endless tunnel of sounds of songs like 'Primary' (*Faith*).[25]

However, the Gothic space of the haunted castle is also reflected in *Faith*'s texts. Through Peake's trilogy and Capote's novel, Smith could get acquainted with a series of Gothic images and motifs that had a long tradition, and likewise he could find in them relevant themes and sources of inspiration to his exploration of Faith. We might for instance note the parallels between the meaningless customs and rituals of the Gormenghast world, the frozen traditions of the decadent British Empire, and the dead and empty rites of Robert Smith's Catholic upbringing, with its faith, prayers and celebrations.[26] The description of Fuchsia's death (Chapter 75 of *Gormenghast*) in 'The Drowning Man' is also a central image in *Faith*. Robert has declared to have been obsessed by the image of the dying innocence represented by Fuchsia and innocence of children and death are recurring images in some of *Faith*'s other lyrics.[27]

In Truman Capote's novel, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*, all the inhabitants of the Skull mansion, whose secret passages associate the house with a Gothic castle, are presented like dead spirits. The story is intermingled with deathly images, reflections on death and the transience of childhood. Miss Wisteria cries, indeed thinking that children would grow old. At a certain point (Chapter 12, part 3), Joel is dead in a coffin. In addition, Capote's novel gives great attention to sounds, described as complex noises at the limits of silence that recall the silence of the grave. And *Faith* is indeed a site of death, dead, vulnerable children and premature burial, where we hear 'distant…other voices,' 'wordless scream[s],' and where shapes move 'in silence' and 'noiselessly' in a dreamlike, visionary setting.[28] Capote's novel also shares relevant themes to The Cure's *Faith*: alienation and the search for 'a father figure.'

The Gothic space of the haunted castle is recalled by the indefinite visionary setting of *Faith*'s song lyrics. Spectral 'empty bodies' appear and disappear 'into the night' ('The Holy Hour'); fluctuating images of 'memories of children's dreams' that 'stop all time' or fade away ('Primary,' 'The Funeral Party'); 'timeless' sepulchral 'pale figures' and 'shadows' at a 'Funeral Party.' Writhing figures unfold ('Doubt' and 'Faith'). Space has a phantasmagorical dimension in *Faith*: like the Gothic castle it is a site of specter, with no dimensions, where

ghosts flee down its darkened corridors, and like the gothic castle it figures forth a vulnerable childhood.[29]

Sometimes the claustrophobic space of the haunted castle reappears in *Faith* in the form of its later variations as enclosed space - 'an empty room' ('Other Voices'), a 'bed amongst the stones,' 'caves,' a 'death cell,' ('All Cats are Grey'). Sometimes, as is more typical of twentieth-century writing, it reappears in the form of a psychological prison. It can just be the body, the self, which like the castle becomes a place of incarceration ('Doubt').[30] Sometimes it might be the mind itself, expressing in a kind of interior monologue ('Faith'). The decay of a previous historical order and the loss of direction in an alien world suggested by the metaphor of the haunted castle are also embodied in figures of 'so many dead' and 'other voices' ('Other Voices') in *Faith.* Alienation, decay and death are also suggested by the choice of vocabulary in all the lyrics.[31]

The haunted castle is a metaphor for the weight of the past, potentially imprisoning inherited traditions, 'a physical manifestation of "The Law of the Father"' - of the 'systems of a society's cultural power,' which include the family and the church.[32] The Gothic space of the haunted castle, together with images of decay and death, provides *Faith* with an echoing imagery that deals with the mysteries and secrets of the Catholic faith, with family traditions and related values, with the doubts regarding their beliefs, clearly perceived as collapsing and imprisoning.

Indeed, death and the risk of dying not only concern other people but also the self. Here again the metaphor of the haunted castle comes to our help, for its imagery 'threatens us…with the most tomb-like claustrophobia, it enacts the hovering possibility of premature burial.'[33] Such premature inhumation actually takes place in 'All Cats are Grey.' The voice sings:

> I never thought that I would find myself
> In bed amongst the stones
> The columns are all men
> Begging to crash me…
>
> In the death cell
> A single note
> Rings on and on and on… .[34]

The 'bed amongst the stones' and 'the death cell,' with the single sound of the death-knell, suggest imprisonment and death in life among dead men. The point of view is that of one buried alive and the lyrics remind us of Poe's 'Premature Burial.'[35]

Faith's graveyard language also shows an interesting contiguity with late 18th century Graveyard School and the Romantics. The 'death cell' in 'All Cats are

Grey' reminds us of Parnell's 'prison,' 'the cell' of life, in 'Night - Piece on Death.' It also recalls Albion's state of eternal death and alienation from the divine, his 'black shoes of death' and 'death iron gloves' and his 'terror' of 'human footsteps' in Blake's *Jerusalem.*[36] Byron too made references to 'gloomy *cells.*'[37] And again Coleridge's Gothic scenario of psychological ghosts and specters and alienation finds a modern correlative in *Faith.* Coleridge's references to his '*night…pray[ers]* aloud/ in anguish' and the 'fiendish crowd/ of shapes and thoughts that tortured [him]' in 'The Pains of Sleep' recall 'The Holy Hour''s references to the spectral 'people [who] slip away/into the night…[and who] kiss the ground before they *pray*' and the 'wordless scream' of anguish. [38] Keats' dream world and fear of terrifying transience are also recalled by *Faith*'s recurring meditations on the passing of time. 'Kiss you once and see you writhe' in 'Doubt' has the same meaning as Keats's verse 'straight he seiz'd her wrist; it melted from his grasp' in *Endymion.* [39]

As in Shelley, echoes of cathedrals and castles in *Faith* 'remind us of the days of "faith and slavery."' Catholic faith, with its specific beliefs, can be linked to constricting institutions, which have 'a power of death,' and has the social and political associations of Christianity: for instance 'authoritarianism, dogmatism, sexism and racism.'[40] However, *Faith* does not embody an anti-Catholic statement as much as the search for a deeper dimension of faith. Though Robert often referred to his Catholic faith, in one interview he also made reference to this less strictly religious dimension of faith. He then concluded this interview by warning against ideas of race, sex, money, and suggesting instead that we should think about the fact that we all must die.[41] In other words, he is talking about the meditation on death and the levelling power of death, which will sweep away all the differences, like in Gray's famous 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.' Robert's meditation on death and his use of graveyard language to explore the mysteries of Catholic faith have some affinity with the graveyard poets' meditation on death to better learn the secrets of life. While writing his songs for *Faith,* Robert often went to church and meditated on death, knowing that believers were there because they aspired to eternal life. Suddenly, he felt he had no faith and was assailed by fear. [42]

The phantasms of death in *Faith* share with the Graveyard School and the broader 'Literature of Terror' the relation to a historical, intellectual and cultural crisis that already started to shake Western culture in the eighteenth century, with the introduction of changed conceptions of death and secularisation, finally culminating in the uncertainty and unrest of faithlessness and modern despair. Ghosts and castles came to objectify the constricting systems and collapsing orders in a landscape of nightmares, where loss of faith, existential disorientation, alienation and paralyzing dread took place. Castles and rooms or other enclosed spaces also started to evoke an anxiety about premature burial. The Gothic, beginning with the Graveyard School, first introduced the search for answers to the

mysteries of life as well as the evocation of doubt and anxiety about extinction, with dreams and fantasies about dying.[43] The Cure's *Faith* shows a continuing creative exploration of the same topics.

Notes

[1] D. Punter and G. Byron, 'Goths and Gothic Subcultures', in *The Gothic*, D. Punter and G. Byron (eds), Blackwell Publishing, Malden, Oxford and Carlton, 2004, p. 63.

[2] S. Martin, 'Gothic Scholars Don't Wear Black. Gothic Studies and Gothic Subcultures', *Gothic Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2002, pp. 28-43.

[3] See Punter and Byron, pp. 59-64. This chapter identifies a research potential not in Goth as visual style, which has tended to present itself as apolitical, but in the gothic sensibility of sounds and lyrics, above all, of early post-punk bands such as Joy Division. See also C. Siegel, *Goth's Dark Empire*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2005. This is one of the latest books which establish the links of Goth subcultures to their Gothic background. A recent collection is: L. M. E. Goodland and M. Bibby (eds), *Goth. Undead Subculture*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2007. This includes essays on The Cure and androgyny, Joy Division, David Bowie and the roots of Goth. Some subculture scholars have chosen textual analysis; others, notably Paul Hodkinson, have instead avoided this approach, on the basis that although Goth music and style have drawn upon elements of the Gothic literary tradition, they have additionally been influenced by a complex amalgam of cultural expressions, including contemporary popular music and youth culture. See P. Hodkinson, 'Goth Music and Subculture', in *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, C. Spooner and E. McEvoy (eds), Routledge, New York, 2007, pp. 260-269.

[4] There is a debate on what can and cannot be labelled Goth and also on whether the Cure actually belongs to the Goth scene. Although most Goths agree that the Cure was a formative gothic band that helped disseminate the gothic style, the band members do not consider themselves Goth. Yet Richard Davenport-Hines, in his book, *Gothic*, described Robert Smith as Goth's 'greatest singer-lyricist,' see R. Davenport-Hines, *Gothic*, North Point Press, New York, 2000, p. 366. See also G. Baddeley, *Goth Chic*, Plexus, London, 2002, p. 207, and L. M. E. Goodland and M. Bibby, 'Introduction'.

[5] See for instance the biography by Jeff Apter, who claims that the Cure was apolitical if compared to other punk bands like the Sex Pistols. J. Apter, *Never Enough. The Story of the Cure*, A. Salacone (trans), *The Cure. Disintegration. Una Favola Dark*, Arcana, Roma, 2006, Chapter 2, p. 58.

[6] See Baddeley, p. 204.

[7] See Apter, Chapter 6.

[8] See D. Shumway and H. Arnet, 'Playing Dress Up: David Bowie and the Roots of Goth', in *Goth. Undead subculture*, L. M. E. Goodland and M. Bibby (eds), Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2007, p. 136; and M. Bibby, 'Atrocity Exhibitions: Joy Division, Factory Records, and Goth', Ibid., pp. 234-235.
[9] Baddeley, pp. 204-206.
[10] J. Hannaham, 'Bela Lugosi's Dead and I Don't Feel So Good Either. Goth and the Glorification of Suffering in Rock Music', in *Gothic. Transmutations of Horror in Late Twentieth Century Art*, C. Grunenberg (ed), The MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1997, p. 95.
[11] Bibby, p. 238.
[12] See Shumway and Arnet, pp. 129-142; and Baddeley, p. 179 - *Diamond Dogs* is described as an obscure apocalyptic nightmare inspired by Orwell's dark political allegory *1984* and other dystopian and black science fiction, and whose sounds in 'We are the Dead' overtly recall a horror movie. Bowie's *Low* (1977), with its instrumental and introspective music, had a recognised influence on the Cure's *Seventeen Seconds* (1980). It was under the influence of Bowie's *Low*, together with Nick Drake and the composer Khachaturian, that The Cure's sounds got darker and slower, the atmosphere melancholic and crepuscular, the duration of music potentially limitless ('A Forest') and the sound landscape gothic like a horror movie sound-track ('The Final Sound') - See Apter, pp. 137-140. The roots of macabre music have further been traced back to classical music, the blues and up to modern popular music, see Baddeley; and A. Clayson, *Death Discs. An Account of Fatality in Popular Song*, Sanctuary Publishing Limited, London, 1997.
[13] Shumway and Arnet, p. 139.
[14] Siegel, p. 6.
[15] See also A. Powell, 'God's Own Medicine: Religion and Parareligion in UK Goth Culture', in *Goth.Undead Subculture*, L. M. E. Goodland and M. Bibby (eds), pp. 357-374.
[16] R. L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism*, 2nd Edition, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1996 [1992].
[17] See Goodland and Bibby, 'Introduction', p. 2.
[18] See Apter, Chapter 1, p. 36, 43; Ch. 2, p. 67; Ch. 3, p. 104; Ch. 5, p. 141.
[19] For all quotations from *Faith*'s lyrics see the Cure's official website: <http://www.thecure.com/words/1981-1982.aspx>. D. Cascella, *The Cure. The Edge of the World. I Testi Commentati*, Arcana, Roma, 2008, p. 111. Cascella has stated that if Edvard Munch's *The Scream* had a sound, it would be the one by Robert Smith at the beginning of 'Other Voices.' Tony Parson compared Robert's

vocals to a 'scream' referring to 'Killing an Arab' (1978), in *New Musical Express* - see Apter, p. 105.
[20] Baddeley, p. 181.
[21] In addition Bauhaus members meaningfully shared a strong Catholic upbringing with Robert Smith and used Catholic imagery in their lyrics, Ibid., p. 195.
[22] P. Hodkinson, 'Goth Music and Subculture', in *The Routledge Companion*, C. Spooner and E. McEvoy (eds), p. 263.
[23] It is also recognised that the emergence of a Goth subculture coincided with socioeconomic decline and Thatcherite politics of late 1970s Britain springing from the punk's rebellion (See Goodland and Bibby, 'Introduction').
[24] Bibby, p. 240. Bibby states that 'Gothic' was used by music presses mainly to refer to an introspective and moodier atmosphere in music and to the technical effects used to achieve it, such as echo effects and audio mixes that created effects of greater distance, of displaced vocalist sounds and guitars, thereby conveying a sense of spatiality that punk rock lacked.
[25] As previously in 'A Forest' (*Seventeen Seconds*, 1980). The style of the slow narrative prose, which served Peake to illustrate a static world of empty rituals in *Gormenghast*, has also been compared to the slow unfolding of sound in many of *Faith*'s songs (See Apter, p. 160). For the comparison between *Faith*'s musical structure and that of the gothic cathedrals see also Cascella, p. 112.
[26] 'The Holy Hour' and 'Other Voices.'
[27] See Cascella, p. 129; (see 'The Holy Hour,' 'Primary,' 'The Funeral Party,' 'Faith').
[28] Again, from now on, for all quotations from *Faith*'s lyrics see the Cure's official website: <http://www.thecure.com/words/1981-1982.aspx>.
[29] For the metaphor of the castle see Punter and Byron, 'The Haunted Castle', in *The Gothic*, pp. 259-262.
[30] This projects violent images of a body in struggle presumably with the other self.
[31] Alienation in a world of decadence lurks in the 'wordless scream' 'break[ing] against stone' and the impossibility to share 'the sacrifice of penance' of dead 'empty bodies' ('The Holy Hour'). It is a world where 'Christmas' means 'festive compromise,' a life of 'desertion,' and where 'eight million people' are 'distant voices' ('Other Voices'). Decay and death are further suggested by the choice of vocabulary in all the lyrics: ['older we grow,' 'the end,' 'the fall' ('Primary'); figures 'in age,' 'fading, lifeless' memories ('The Funeral Party'); 'die,' 'I see you fall… your body falls,' 'see you writhe' ('Doubt'); 'the memories fade,' 'rowns her,' 'the drowning man,' and again 'lifeless' ('The Drowning Man'); 'suddenly I see you change,' and finally particularly in the words 'your voice is dead/ And old/ And always empty… no one lifts their hands/ No one lifts their eyes/ Justified with empty words' ('Faith')]. When Cascella tries to question the dark cult of the band

in a linguistic game called 'ghost track' she nonetheless cannot deny that the words 'death' / 'dead' 'die/died' are among the most recurring ones in all of the band's albums. Cascella, pp. 511-512.
[32] Grunenberg, p. 127.
[33] Punter and Byron, p. 262.
[34] <http://www.thecure.com/words/1981-1982.aspx>.
[35] See also Daniela Cascella who identifies the similarity of the scene with Poe's tale 'Premature Burial;' Cascella, p. 116.
[36] Quotations from Parnell are taken from D. Punter, *The Literature of Terror. A History of Gothic Ficitions from 1765 to the Present day. Volume 1. The Gothic Tradition*, Longman, Harlow, 1996, pp. 32-33. The same for quotations from Blake, p. 101.
[37] Ibid., p. 95.
[38] Ibid., p. 92.
[39] Ibid., p. 99.
[40] Ibid., p. 94; and S. Bruce, *God is Dead. Secularization in the West*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford and Malden, 2002, p. 135.
[41] This piece of interview is reported in Cascella, p. 133. See also Apter, (chapter 6), for Robert's reference to Catholic faith.
[42] This interview is also reported in Cascella, p. 102.
[43] See J. G. Kennedy, 'Phantasms of Death in Poe's Fiction', in *The Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*, G. R. Thompson (ed), W. W. Norton & Co., New York and London, 2004, pp. 896-904.

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Pagan Death: Lovecraftian Horror and the Dream of Decadence

Jesse Norford

Abstract
In his essay 'Supernatural Horror in Literature,' H. P. Lovecraft remarks that established religion identifies itself with the 'beneficent aspects of the unknown,' suppressing the 'darker and more maleficent side of cosmic mystery.' This paper will trace the development of modern horror in Lovecraft's work, arguing that what is conventionally known as 'Lovecraftian horror' is rooted in late-nineteenth-century cultural fears and desires that arose in response to a renewed interest in paganism and the occult. Lovecraft's work will also be seen in the context of the magical revival's influence on the literary Gothic of the fin-de-siècle. For Lovecraft, the reality behind the material universe was meaningless, and possibly malevolent - an expression of what Victoria Nelson calls the '"sub-Zeitgeist" of our popular culture' that 'upholds the supernatural as a demonized realm.' Despite his rationalism, Lovecraft embraced Margaret Murray's witchcraft theory, which argues that an ancient pagan religion involving black magic and ritual sacrifice had existed and survived into modern times. In part drawn to the theory because it provided a scientific basis for similar speculations in Arthur Machen's horror fiction, Lovecraft shared Machen's fascination with the theme of lost knowledge. Both men flirted with irrationality and superstition, which I contend suggests a desire for an 'origin' or 'absolute,' albeit one demonised in their tales as a primordial manifestation of evil. Ronald Hutton sees both Lovecraft and Machen as painting a hostile picture of paganism, but my paper will emphasise their ambivalence towards the supernatural against the background of the Decadent movement, focusing especially on the ways in which paganism becomes linked with Satanism in J. K. Huysmans's novel *La-Bas.* As Huysmans's novel gestures towards Satanism, not so much as a horror of the primitive as an excrescence of modernity, a Gothic vision emerges of reality as a perpetual nightmare.

Key Words: Decadence, paganism, pessimism, artificial mythology.

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In 'A Confession of Unfaith,' H. P. Lovecraft remarked that he was a 'genuine pagan' in his youth, having acquired from his 'intoxication with the beauty of Greece' a 'half-sincere belief in the old gods and Nature-spirits.' His discovery of Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic tales darkened the mythological faith of his childhood with 'the miasmal exhalations of the tomb!'[1] He elsewhere declared his uncompromising aesthetic distaste for the 'humanocentric pose,' or the 'primitive myopia which magnifies the earth and ignores the background.'[2] This 'primitive myopia' for him was valueless in the cosmic scheme of things, referring to the

irrational superstitious tendency of all religions and mythologies to project human finitude and egotism onto the universe, animating it with a moral realm of supernatural agencies as protection from a meaningless existence. While religion was often Lovecraft's whipping boy, what he called his 'artificial pantheon and myth-background' of alien gods and the secret cults formed around their worship, which became conventionally known as the 'Cthulhu Mythos,' also uses imagery adapted from a Gothic iconography of surviving pagan religions emerging out of the nineteenth century. Lovecraft's work will be placed in relation to the decadent horror fiction of Arthur Machen who shared Lovecraft's ambivalence towards paganism. Central to my argument is that this Gothic image of paganism as something irrational, primitive, and atavistic is linked to fears regarding an evolving modern world of terrifying, existential realities.

Lovecraft scholars, like S. T. Joshi, emphasised how Lovecraft never intended to remythicise reality, the mythic background of his tales viewed instead as an 'anti-mythology.' Unlike the concern of most myths with the foundation of an ordered cosmos, which establish anthropomorphised or magical relations between nature, human, and the divine, an anti-mythology constantly disrupts any kind of vital connection with the cosmos. Lovecraft was an outspoken atheist and mechanical materialist, who viewed the universe as a mindless mechanism ruled by fixed laws having no inherent purpose, meaning, or destiny. According to Joshi, Lovecraft maintains an ironic, sceptical, and disinterested attitude towards his artificial mythology, which is viewed as a dramatisation of his philosophical pessimism. One could equally see this Enlightenment-based, reasonable outlook as an artificial literary device used in his fiction, fabricating a rational structure only to dismantle and hurl it into a world of horror and disorder. His fictional universe creates a paranoid and misanthropic vision of human life as a disease and the reality beneath the veil of ordinary life as a creeping, crawling chaos that would blight the mind if ever fully revealed. The opening of the tale 'Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family' epitomises this bleak vision, revealing how the light of reason, according to its own principles, becomes the darkness of unreason: 'Life is a hideous thing, and from the background behind what we know of it peer demoniacal hints of truth which make it sometimes a thousandfold more hideous.' Arthur Jermyn decides to terminate his existence after his genealogical investigations uncover the terrible truth that he was maternally descended from a white ape. This early tale illustrated how the impersonality of Lovecraft's cosmic perspective was grotesquely embodied in nightmarish projections of sexual dissolution, miscegenation, and the reversion to type-fears that are condensed into Jermyn's discovery of a monstrous, aboriginal self within a white body.

The fear that the search for knowledge, holding nature up to inspection and analysis, results in madness, annihilation, or some monstrous transformation is also a recurring theme in Machen's horror tales. For example, in 'The Great God Pan,' lifting the veil from reality does not raise the self to a transcendental realm, but

instead induces a horrible mutation of the human form, which disintegrates and passes through all the abject disorderly phases of its evolution before it finally dissolves back into the primordial slime. As with Lovecraft's tale of Arthur Jermyn, Machen's story reveals that 'when the house of life is thus thrown open, there may enter in that for which we have no name, and human flesh may become the veil of a horror one dare not express.'[3] This perennial quest for secret and forbidden knowledge is also linked to the excavation of mythic origins. Both Machen and Lovecraft created in their fantastic fiction a mythology involving a hidden and subterranean race that had existed and survived into the modern world. One can place this motif within the context of a cultural fascination in surviving pagan religions stimulated in part by late-nineteenth century and early twentieth-century anthropology.

Lovecraft's 'The Call of the Cthulhu' was the first in a series of tales which developed the mythology of the 'Old Ones,' an alien race who had once inhabited the earth, but were driven underground after their civilisation was destroyed, although traces of their existence survive in occult lore, Cyclopean ruins, and the hidden and subterranean cults formed around their worship in preparation for their return. One of the provocative elements of this celebrated tale is the inclusion of actual works among the mythical documents titled 'CTHULHU CULT,' which cites both Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Margaret Murray's *Witch-Cult in Western Europe* as 'anthropological source-books.' Published in 1921, Murray's work advanced the provocative theory of medieval witchcraft as the survival of an ancient pagan religion. According to Murray, the cult worshipped a horned god who embodied the generative forces in nature and which was later identified with the Christian Devil. Some of the rites included feasting, dancing in animal costumes, magic, flagellation, ritual sacrifice, and the unleashing of the driving instinctual forces in human nature through sexual orgy in order to promote fertility.

Lovecraft was attracted to Murray's theory partly because he had been reading Machen's tales about the 'Little People.' Machen similarly posited the existence of a pre-Aryan pygmy race that practiced black magic and human sacrifice, still secretly dwelling in the inmost recesses of the earth.[4] Like Murray, Machen identified these ancient pagan peoples with the fairies, dwarfs, and goblins of Celtic myth and folklore, who disguised their dark, brutish nature under 'charming forms,' although withering glimpses of the stark reality behind the myth live on in the 'dread of witch and wizard, the lurid evil of the Sabbath, and the hint of demons who mingled with the daughters of men.'[5] Ronald Hutton sees the popularisation of Murray's ideas as an extension of nineteenth-century primitivism; he shows how Victorian folklorists and anthropologists like Frazer constructed a discourse of pagan origins, unaware that their accounts of savage beliefs and customs may have encouraged the very paganism they purported to discover and explain:

> It appealed to so many of the emotional impulses of the age; to the notion of the English countryside as a timeless place full of ancient secrets, to the literary cult of Pan as its deity, to the belief that until comparatively recently Christianity had represented only a veneer of elite religion covering a persistence of paganism among the masses, and to the characterization of modern folk customs as survivals from that paganism.[6]

This rural nostalgia for a vanishing tradition-soaked past was expressed in Machen's belief that all fine literature aspires to the awakening of ecstasy, which should transform life into a hieroglyph or holy sacrament reproducing 'the primitive man before he was defiled, artistically, by the horrors of civilization.'[7] In his fiction, however, wonder and horror are never clearly distinguished. In 'The Great God Pan,' the horned god does not evoke a benevolent vision of pagan antiquity as a Golden Age of man's childhood restoring his lost intimacy with nature, but is a monstrous and devouring darkness, dismembering the self in a tormenting ecstasy. According to Hutton, the modern image of the Devil as 'a being with cloven hoofs, goat's horns, and pointed beard' is a product of nineteenth-century neopaganism - a conservative reaction to the growing literary cult of Pan started by the Romantics. The origins of this Satanic imagery of paganism are perhaps more difficult to determine when applied to Machen's Pan, who is never directly objectified or visibly present in the tale, an absence which intensifies his very ubiquity as a personification of the inescapable existential realities of sex and death. It is interesting that Murray also identified both Joan of Arc and Gilles de Rais as members of the witch-cult and interpreted their executions as human sacrifices according to Frazer's theory of divine kingship in *The Golden Bough*.

The Satanic imagery of paganism goes as far back as the Old Testament, but it is interesting how it resurfaces within a modern secular context to create a gothic iconography of paganism that was used by writers and scholars alike. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, published in 1890 - the period when Machen was writing his decadent horror fiction - exemplifies how this biblical tradition blended with reports by Victorian travellers and missionaries of the unruly, bestial nature of tribal peoples to paint a picture of pagan antiquity as a Hell on earth, an atavistic descent into a primitive world of filth, magic, grisly human sacrifices, and orgiastic devil-worship. Ironically, this may have been a more faithful representation of Christian Europe than ancient paganism. At one point, Frazer, sounding almost like Lovecraft, regards with horrified fascination the 'solid layer of savagery' hidden underneath modern civilisation which 'may at any moment be rent by the subterranean forces slumbering below.'[8] This grim undercurrent of barbarism pervading humanity's childhood introduces an element of gothic horror and tragedy to the primitive past that subverts the nostalgic religious yearning found in

Machen for a sense of order, orientation, and stability through a restoration of mythic origins.

Victorian and Edwardian projections of irrational, primitive savagery resurface in a letter Lovecraft wrote about prehistoric man, in which he makes the grotesque observation that 'it is not extravagant to imagine the existence of a sort of sadistic cult among such beasts, which might later develop into a formal Satanism.'[9] Lovecraft mentioned 'Gilles de Retz' in his tale 'The Rats in the Walls,' which involves an ancient, Satanic cult, a theme that he also associated with Huysmans and the Decadents, who 'liked to pretend that they belonged to all sorts of diabolic black mass cults & possessed all sorts of frightful occult information.'[10] Although Lovecraft mocked the Decadent Movement for its adolescent obsession with outmoded religious concepts of sin and evil, his attraction to Murray's theory can also be seen as a symptom of Decadence, for example when he speculates in a letter that the witch-cult 'would have virtually wrecked European civilization.'[11] His first explicit use of Murray's theory occurs in 'The Festival.' In this early tale, the protagonist travels to the ancient sea town of Kingsport on Christmas, answering the call of heredity to participate in a secret pagan ritual blindly perpetuated by his mysterious kinsmen throughout the centuries.[12] Near the end of the story, the narrator follows a nocturnal procession to a cave concealed beneath the crypt of a mouldering church in which he witnesses what he believes is a fertility ritual enacted on the edge of a vertiginous abyss: 'It was the Yule-rite, older than man and fated to survive him; the primal rite of the solstice and of spring's promise beyond the snows; the rite of fire and evergreen, light and music.'[13] Behind this subterranean Sabbat-orgy lurks a strange something radically opposed to fertility or renewal, which cares nothing for its human devotees; however, it may indulge their appetites or take on a human semblance. At the end of the tale, a nightmare so hideous is revealed that the narrator hurls himself into the void only to awaken in a hospital nearly insane. Unlike Machen, who borrowed from his native mythic traditions for his own dark folklore, Lovecraft creates gods who are not of the earth, but alien invaders from Beyond, their wider context of associations in mythology and tradition merely dark fictions maintained in order to keep humanity from awakening to the horrible truth. This begs the question whether this fabricated body of myth was merely an artificial symbolism.

Lovecraft's embrace of Murray's thesis is perhaps illuminated by Timothy K. Beal's argument that modern primitivism emerged out of nineteenth-century cultural anthropology, which disrupted the conventional hierarchy of 'civilised' and 'primitive' by projecting the latter into the prehistoric past as the origin of civilisation. As was earlier illustrated by Frazer, these colonial discourses of 'official' primitivism banished unacceptable, destructive forces within modern western culture in 'projections of monstrous otherness.'[14] He discusses elsewhere how this rejected monstrosity is 'resacralised' within popular horror culture, such as the Cthulhu Mythos, which, rather than restoring a lost intimacy with the

cosmos, is alienating, dehumanising, and disintegrative - a dislocation of both self and world through an 'ultimate experience of being unhomed, ungrounded.'[15]

Lovecraft never fully embraced those projections of monstrosity rejected by the official culture, which never lose their mysterious otherness in his fiction. Baron Levi St. Armand describes his creation of the Cthulhu Mythos as a 'horror-mysticism' and remarks that Lovecraft was 'always ready (if not physically prepared) to bring his sacrifices to the altars of alien gods,' similar to the Decadents of the fin-de-siècle who conjured up 'Byzantine images of slaughter and apocalypse to relieve their attenuated ennui.'[16] Lovecraft's decadent mythology reveals myth as a phenomenon of the 'twilight' as well as the 'dawn' of civilisation, engendering an alternative reality through horror, but only to revel in the painful spectacle of its apocalypse.

Notes

[1] S. T. Joshi, *H. P. Lovecraft: A Life*, Necronomicon Press, Rhode Island, 1996, pp. 25-27.
[2] H. P. Lovecraft, *Miscellaneous Writings*, S. T. Joshi (ed), Arkham House, Sauk City, WI, 1995, p. 155.
[3] A. Machen, *The Three Impostors and Other Stories*, S. T. Joshi (ed), Chaosium, Hayward, CA, 2001, p. 50.
[4] Machen's idea actually was not so original, and can be placed in a larger mythical context, as beliefs in monstrous races can be traced from Herodotus up to the 'pygmy-theories' popularised by Victorian folklorists. The difference in modern representations of the Little People was that they became racialised through their association with living 'savages,' viewed as evolutionary throwbacks repulsed by the official culture as dirty, atavistic, and impure. See C. G. Silver, *Strange and Secret Peoples*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.
[5] Machen, *The Three Impostors*, p. 165
[6] R. Hutton, *The Twilight of the Moon*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 199.
[7] A. Machen, *Hieroglyphics*, Martin Secker, London, 1910, p. 101.
[8] J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, MacMillan Press, New York, 1995, p. 55.
[9] B. L. St. Armand, *The Roots of Horror in the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft*, Dragon Press, New York, 1977, p. 13.
[10] D. Harms and J. W. Gonce III, *The Necronomicon Files*, Weiser Books, Boston, 2003, p. 77.
[11] S. T. Joshi, D. E. Schultz, R. Burke (eds), *A Means to Freedom: The Letters of H. P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard: 1930-1932*, Hippocampus, 2009, p. 71.
[12] In a letter, Lovecraft discusses the origin of the story: In intimating an alien race I had in mind the survival of some clan of pre-Aryan sorcerers who preserved

primitive rites like those of the witch-cult-I had just been reading Miss Murray's *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, *The Call of Cthulhu*, p. 385.
[13] *The Call of Cthulhu*, p. 115.
[14] T. K. Beal, *Religion and its Monsters*, Routledge, New York and London, 2002, p. 121.
[15] Ibid., p. 191.
[16] St. Armand, p. 75.

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Tell-Tale Deaths and Monstrous Quests: *Being Human* and Visions of Death in Millennial Gothic Fictions

Jacqueline de Giacomo

Abstract
In the British television series *Being Human* (BBC 3, 2008-?) a vampire (Mitchell), a werewolf (George) and a ghost (Annie) share a semi-detached house in Bristol; the show 'follows their struggle to fight both their curses and the enemies who want to bring them down' (BBC website). Mitchell wants to regain his humanity after having been a ferocious killer for more than 80 years, while George tries to avoid losing it by fighting his murderous wolf instincts once a month. Annie wants to find out the purpose of her ongoing spectral existence and her growing supernatural powers, but seems to be hampered by her inability to let go of her human existence. Though bonded together by their quests for the human, the other common denominator of their 'lives' is that death has defined the contingencies of their present situations: they have either died or should have died and thus turned into 'the flotsam and jetsam of death,' as Annie puts it. Although death has been the vanishing point of gothic horror since the early years of the genre and the scene alike, the 'king of terrors' (Burke) has received relatively little critical attention within the vast field of gothic studies. Nevertheless, the (un)dead keep coming back to tell stories where the end is almost always a beginning and where visions of death tell so much about our concepts of life. Taking *Being Human*'s triangle of monster narratives with its intimations of supernatural horror as a point of departure, the paper traces the central position of death as a prerequisite for prominent narrative structures and perspectives of millennial gothic fictions and, evaluates changing visions of death as they emerge beyond the (all too often) sanitised Eros/Thanatos images provided by the contemporary vampire romance or the zombiesque megadeath of apocalyptic texts.

Key Words: Millennial gothic, death, monsters, vampires, ghosts, werewolves, 20th century. gothic strategies.

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In the British television series *Being Human*[1] a vampire (Mitchell), a werewolf (George) and a ghost (Annie) share a semi-detached house in Bristol. The supernatural comedy/drama 'follows their struggle to fight both their curses and the enemies who want to bring them down.'[2] Thus, at the beginning of season 1, Mitchell wants to regain his humanity after having been hailed as a ferocious killer in the vampire community for more than 80 years, while George tries to avoid losing of what he deems to be the rest of his human identity by fighting his murderous wolf instincts after his horrifying transformations month after month.

Annie wants to find out the purpose of her ongoing spectral existence, but seems to be hampered by her inability to let go of the concepts and habits of her human life. However, bonded together by their quests for the human, the other common denominator of their existences is that death has defined the contingencies of their present situations: they all have been turned into 'the flotsam and jetsam of death.'[3]

'Tell me, what does it mean to be human in the 21st century?' asks Captain Jack Harkness, one of the protagonists in *Torchwood* - another recent BBC production reworking gothic strategies.[4] The answer in *Torchwood*: being human means having a story, a history - a story that must be told to perceive the human even in the monstrous in order to save the human from the monstrous. However, from the point of view of Mitchell the answer to this question seems much simpler: 'Being human means being mortal.'[5]

So, is mortality, respectively the equation between mortality and humanity, the whole story or is there more to tell? It would not take such an abundance and variety of undead monsters as we are facing them in millennial gothic fictions, if the answer were an easy one.

Death has been the vanishing point of gothic horror since the early years of the genre and the scene alike. Nevertheless, the 'king of terrors' - as Edmund Burke called what he saw as the prime trigger of sublime feelings - has received relatively little critical attention within the vast field of gothic studies. However, the rather liberal use of a huge variety of images of violent deaths has been noted now and then; as, for example, Anne B. Tracy puts it with regard to the traditional gothic novels:

> The very notion of mortality ... testifies to the nature of the Gothic world. Certainly the novels deal with death - sudden death, violent death, tragic death, death as punishment for villainy. This itself would scarcely be worth noting, as one might take it for granted in novels so high colored. But the accompanying obsession with putrification … does suggest an interest in death as something more than a lurid plot device … .[6]

But putting gothic's obsession with death down to the 'naturalness' of gothic worlds must seem strange considering the overall impact of the supernatural in gothic fictions; but then again, the supernatural has been neglected in gothic criticism as well for a while, although western societies' concepts of death have always placed the king of terrors exactly on the borderline between the natural and visions of the supernatural. For thousands of years death was the door between the sublunary world and the otherworldly, with its appertaining, changing and culturally highly productive images of the afterlife. So why neglect of one of the two prime sources of gothic's quintessential darkness? One important reason seems to be the dominance of 'sanctified' readings of the gothic, especially

psychoanalytic approaches. As Linda Badley points out, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud himself recognised one area where his psychoanalysis was profoundly lacking: it has offered no psychology of death and dying. He neglected Thanatos, the death drive, much as he neglected the feminine. Implicit in his stance was denial. [7]

From Elisabeth Bronfen's point of view, gothic fiction usually combines depictions of highly unnatural and weird instances of death with an intrinsic awareness of one of the most basic facts of human life, namely 'that the only thing we can be absolutely sure about is the fact of our mortality.'[8] Thus for her one of the most fascinating aspects of the gothic is that it enables us to confront death within the safe space of its narrative representations:

> We experience death by proxy, for it occurs at someone else's body and at another site, as a narrative or visual image. … The Gothic representations of exquisite corpses, revenants, spirits or monsters articulate both an anxiety about and a desire for death. In so doing they function as a symptom, giving the reader or viewer, in the guise of a cyphered message, the truth about his or her desire which he or she could not otherwise confront.[9]

But focusing on aspects of 'desire' can be slightly problematic as well when it comes to evaluating gothic representations of death: the Eros-Thanatos connection is without any doubt one of the central subjects of the contemporary gothic, but the danger here lies in narrowing it all down to the field of subjective psychological experience only, while neglecting important socio-cultural implications and perspectives that accompany the subject of death. Beyond cultural frontiers, dying and death has always influenced our perceptions and evaluations of life. Life cannot exist without death and death not without life. Consequently, death determines and indicates life, and has always been the centre of mythologies, social processes and cultural values.[10] So, our attitudes towards death and the dead always resonate with our concepts of life and the worth of human lives. In contemporary gothic fictions 'dark perspectives' - tales being told from the point of view of dead people - are extremely common, and it seems safe to say that in gothic fantasies' best moments these dead narrators are telling more about our millennial frames of mind than we dare to acknowledge in a lot of our realistic, strictly mimetic stories. With this in mind, let us return to *Being Human* and consider the interrelationship between death, evil, humanity, nature and the supernatural in the narratives of the amiable trinity of ex-human gothic monsters.

George is a highly sensitive and compassionate young man. He resents being a werewolf; he usually refers to it as 'that thing that happens to me once a month' and regards his full moon self as some other creature - not himself. After becoming a werewolf, he gave up his job and left his family, friends and even his fiancé,

afraid of killing them. Being barred from a career by his cyclic transformations, he works as a hospital porter, although he is extremely intelligent. He is wearing a 'Star of David' pendant, but in the pilot of the show we are told that he thinks of himself as a lapsed Jew because he believes that his faith frowns upon creatures like him. So, being a werewolf implies for him not only that he means potential death to other humans, but it also means his own social death - the end of the life he had; the end of his life within a spiritual community; the end of his aspirations. Consequently, his conclusion at the end of season one is: being human means to be willing to sacrifice your life and to accept death - however you define it - for the sake of others.

Having no physical body anymore, Annie is perhaps the most 'dead' member of this monstrous house share. Yet, she is clinging to her lost life with all her might, unable to accept the changes that death forced upon her. Consequently, she haunts the house where she and Owen, her fiancé, lived in and where she died. She does not want to go and she does not want to let go; she still loves him and daydreams of some kind of mystical reunion, she is still making tea, preparing cup after cup after cup although she cannot drink any of it, driving George crazy because all the tea they have is already been made- and she does it because it helps her 'to feel normal,' to pretend that she is still alive. The pointless ghostly repetition of human rituals ends when she finally discovers that she has not died by some accident but has been murdered by Owen. The realisation of her unnatural death affects her ghostly performance. She turns into a poltergeist and is now able to virtually shake the material, physical world. Annie's spectral evolution is defined as a constant transaction between human nature and the supernatural. Her strong emotions affect her supernatural powers - hanging and enhancing them; the more her human memories - the shocking awareness of something being totally, painfully wrong - control her state of mind, the stronger her supernatural powers get - and the more she moves away from being human. A ghost is primarily a medium, and Annie mediates visions of death that surpass the realms of the natural on the one hand and yet seem to complement perceptions of what it means to be human on the other. At various occasions, doors to death appear for people who died and are still lingering on, but what lies behind these doors seems to be deeply connected to the lives of these dead people, and - in her perfectly liminal existence - Annie seems to gain more and more knowledge about the mysteries of the other side. She tells Owen, her murderer, that she knows secrets that only the dead know and then whispers something into his ears that actually shatters his mind. Death is represented as a dark, inscrutable and unpredictable force reverberating with echoes of religious, spatial, and mythological concepts. It is a menacing spectrum of old and new fears and hopes revolving around the end of human life - and even humanity as such, because so often in the history of mankind death and evil have been bound together. Blessed or cursed with a preternatural life span, it is very often the vampire's narrative function to imbue the ethic implications of this dark

alliance with a sense of the relentless darkness of human history itself. In keeping with this tradition, the vampire Mitchell died his human death on a battlefield in the First World War, where he was expecting to die 'but not that death would smile upon' him, as he puts it.[11] The 'smiling death' is Herrick - a vampire leader and the main protagonist of season 1 - who picks through the piles of dead soldiers along with his cronies, looking for the living to prey upon. Mitchell's death as a human is actually an ambiguous sacrifice, for he becomes a vampire in exchange for Herrick leaving the rest of his men alone. He sacrifices himself for his comrades, dies as an unacknowledged hero and rises as a murderous monster.

The thorny coupling of 'monstrification' and 'salvation' that permeates *Being Human* has eventually become a kind of standard undercurrent in vampire fictions - given the vampire's status as the dark version of Jesus Christ the Saviour - and necessarily it is connected to concepts of death and definitions of being human. Hence, at various occasions Mitchell is confronted with the decision whether to save a dying person by turning him/her into a vampire, or to help - and thus 'save' the human in a totally different sense - by exactly not doing it. 'For a vampire death is not the end; it's the beginning,' says Mitchell,[12] but considering his constant struggling with the monstrous aspects of his vampiric identity, one has to ask of what precisely? The end is perhaps a story, a gothic story.

'Shall we begin like David Copperfield?' asks the vampire Louis at the beginning of Neil Jordan's movie version of *Interview with the Vampire*.[13] 'I am born, I grew up. Or shall we begin when I was born to darkness, as I call it. That's really where we should start, don't you think?' The phrasing, relating to the transformation of the human Louis into an undead, indicates a central strategy of gothic texts: their point of attack is the moment when the violent confrontation with death hurls the protagonist into its shadows and a journey starts, a quest set in a world enfolded by darkness. And the prime darkness of gothic fictions is defined by intimations of death and evil. For Louis this darkness signifies predominantly loss, anguish and loneliness, to be cut off from the human and the divine as well and, above all, it signifies death in all its different guises - death not only as the end of human lives, but especially death as a loss of humanity. Consequently, his resumé at the end of the novel is appropriately gloomy:

> I wanted love and goodness in this which is living death ... . It was impossible from the beginning, because you cannot have love and goodness when you do what you know to be evil, what you know to be wrong. … I knew the real answer to my quest … when I first took a human life to feed my craving. It was my death.[14]

Talking about 'millennial gothic fictions' implies the idea that these fictions are informed by an intense awareness of living in a time of transitions, in a state of

cultural liminality and of existing between two millennia. Our new millennium is only a decade old and the bulk of it lies in front of mankind with all its problems and dangers. To understand our fears and visions of the future we have to look back into the century preceding us, the one that Sir Isaiah Berlin called, 'the most terrible century in Western history' and that Eric Hobsbawn described as 'without doubt the most murderous century of which we have record.'[15]

'We are monsters,' says George in one of his many highly emotional moments when all the monstrous trinities' attempts at 'being human' seem to be thwarted again. 'We deserve to be cast out.' Western societies might share this sentiment for they have been 'cast out' of their intellectual paradises and utopias, i.e. the teleological philosophies of a universal history, political ideologies and revolutionary doctrines that helped us to believe that the progress of civilisation would entail a progress in becoming more 'human' - but especially the 20th century seemed to suggest otherwise. With the horrible images of the mass graves of two world wars, the Shoa and Hiroshima haunting our memories, we learned to live under the atomic shadow, accepting the possibility of the extinction of our own species in the form of a man-made multiple apocalypse as the natural outcome of the power politics of the 20th century.

Gothic is always about loss - and humanity has lost so much in the course of the last century. *Being Human* is about retrograde humanisation, a subject of so many contemporary gothic fictions: stories to be told to perceive the human even in the monstrous in order to save the human from the monstrous. Our monsters help us to re-negotiate and redefine what it might mean to be human after the experiences of the 20th century.

At some point Mitchell is reflecting upon his different identities - the brave young soldier who sacrificed his life for the good of his comrades, the monster he became afterwards, the bloodthirsty lover and deadly fiend for some people, the romantic lover, friend or guardian angel for others - and he muses: 'It's when you worked out who you are, you can really start to live.'[16] It seems that now more than ever, we need our fictional visions of death precisely for that reason: to work out who we are and - to live in the 21st century.

Notes

[1] *Being Human* (BBC 3, 2008-?).
[2] 'About *Being Human*', viewed on 13th April 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/beinghuman/about/>.
[3] *Being Human*, season 1, episode 1.
[4] *Torchwood* (BBC Wales,2006-?), season 1, episode 2.
[5] *Being Human*, season 1, episode 2.

[6] A. B. Tracy, *The Gothic Novel 1790-1830*, The University Press of Kentucky, 1981. p. 4.
[7] L. Badley, *Film, Horror, and the Body Fantastic*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1995, p. 21.
[8] 'Death', in *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*, M. Mulvey-Roberts (ed), Macmillan, London, 1998.
[9] Ibid.
[10] C. von Barloewen (ed), *Der Tod in den Weltkulturen und Weltreligionen*, Diedrichs, Munich, 1996, p. 23.
[11] *Being Human*, season 1, episode 1.
[12] Ibid.
[13] *Interview with the Vampire*, Neil Jordan (dir.), Warner Bros, 1994.
[14] A. Rice, *Interview with the Vampire*, Warner Books, London, 1995 [1976], p. 362.
[15] M. Benjamin, *Living at the End of the World*, Picador, London, 1998, p. 8.
[16] *Being Human.*

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