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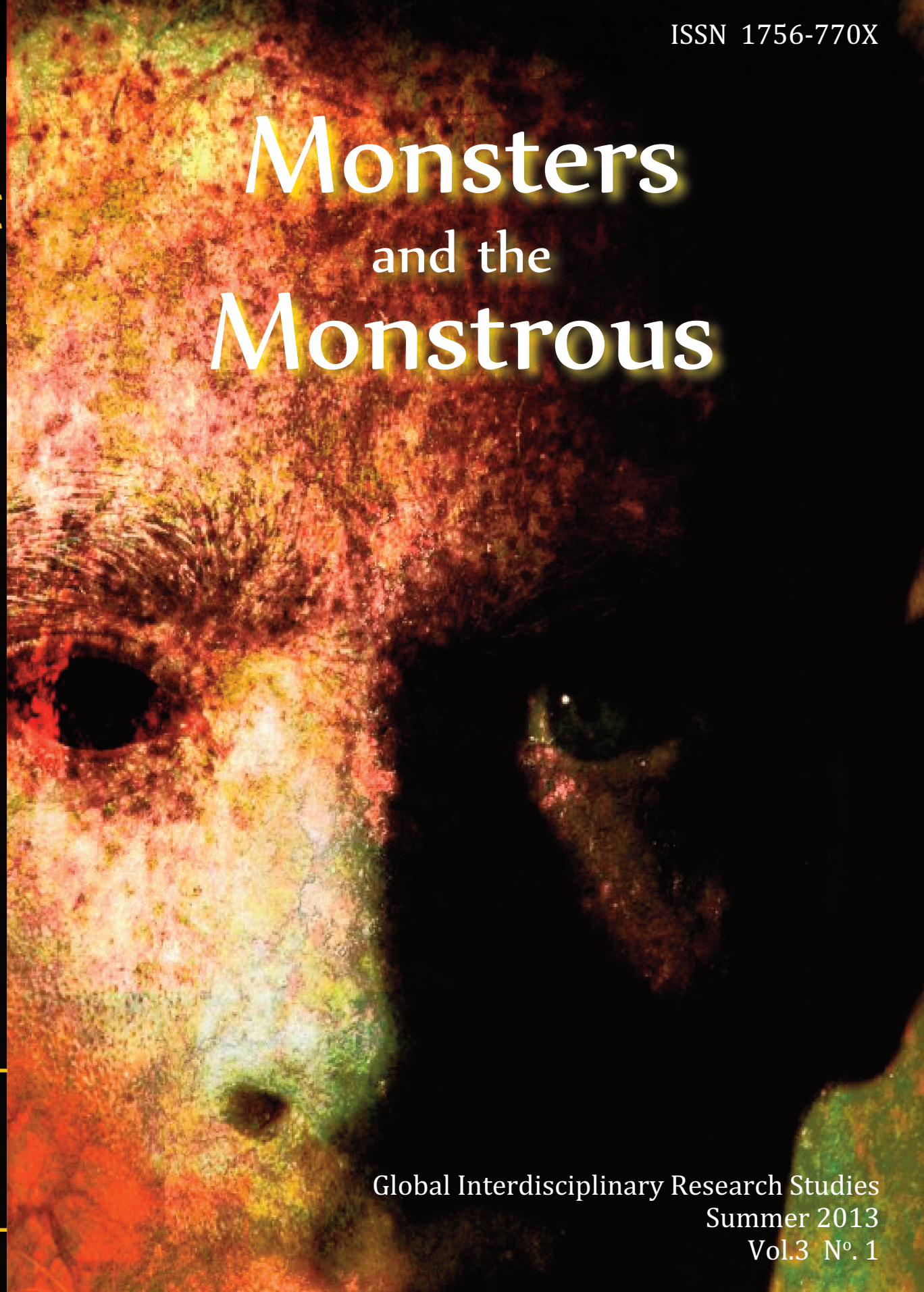

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The Patriarchal Construction of Hysteria: Examining the Possessed Woman in the *Paranormal Activity* Franchise

Stuart M. Joy

Abstract

This article contends that despite the resurrection recently seen among popular horror genres, a number of concerns arguably remain consistent including problematic notions about the home, marriage and the family. In these films, normality is invariably destabilized by the figure of the monster that is often coded as the Other.[1] In a more precise sense, the conflict between normality and the Other constitutes an expression of Western society's fear of difference. In the American horror film, it is often the case that this encounter between normality and the Other is communicated via the social and historical construction of gender identity within Western society. In particular, these films are frequently concerned with femininity's uncomfortable position within patriarchal structures of dominance.[2] This article will examine the *Paranormal Activity* (Oren Peli, 2007, on-going) franchise with reference to gendered representations within the horror genre (and ensuing subcategories of the genre) with specific focus on hysteria and the domestic space. Furthermore, I locate the female protagonists of the series as part of the horror genre's wider anxieties surrounding the position of women within the patriarchal order and psychological understandings of hysteria. The franchise came about as a result of the surprising success of the original made in 2007. Produced for $15,000, *Paranormal Activity* went on to gross over $107,000,000 worldwide. Since then, the films have become a regular part of the Halloween season with one released consecutively for the past two years and a fourth scheduled for 2012. Unlike many critics, I consider the *Paranormal Activity* franchise as a complex metaphor for Freud's theory of hysteria. In particular, I argue that the series engages with what Andrew Britton has labelled the 'Freudian-Feminist melodrama.'[3]

Key Words:

Horror, domestic space, *Paranormal Activity*, Freud, gender, hysteria.

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The horror genre's geographical shift from the European castles of the Carpathian Mountains to the suburban houses of America has been well documented as part of scholarly discourse.[4] The films discussed in this context include *The Last House on The Left* (Wes Craven, 1972), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974) and *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978), all of which eschewed the foreign space in favour of the unsettlingly familiar domestic space. Indeed, directors such as Wes Craven, George Romero and Tobe Hooper are perhaps responsible for the near inclusive transferal drawing upon an increasingly traumatised American society impacted by the atrocities of the Vietnam War, the escalating economic recession and a series of high-profile political scandals and assassinations. Such directors may have aimed to deconstruct the underlying failure of the post-World War II myth of the American dream by examining the disintegration of the family unit as a metaphor for the fragility of American society.[5] In these films, normality is invariably destabilised by the figure of the monster that is often

coded as the Other.[6] In a more precise sense, the conflict between normality and the Other, whether that may be social, political, sexual or repressed desires, constitutes an expression of Western society's fear of difference. In the American horror film, it is often the case that this encounter between normality and the Other is communicated via the social and historical construction of gender identity within Western society. In particular, these films are frequently concerned with femininity's uncomfortable position within patriarchy.[7]

Ranging from the commercially successful haunted-house trilogy, *Paranormal Activity* (Oren Peli, 2007 – on-going) to the occult based horror, *The House of the Devil* (Ti West, 2009), as well as child-possession in *Orphan* (Jaume Collet-Serra, 2009) and *Insidious* (James Wan, 2010), these recent explorations of the genre by means of the domestic space arguably reflect similar concerns represented by their cinematic predecessors about the problematic notions of the home, marriage, family and the child. Specifically, the genre's focus on challenging such complacencies can be seen to be directly associated with the postmodern inversion of authenticity, surrendering to various modes of ironic detachment invoking Jean-François Lyotard's notion of the 'postmodern condition.'[8]

This article will examine the *Paranormal Activity* franchise with specific reference to gendered representations within the context of hysteria and the domestic space. I locate the female protagonists of the series as part of the horror genre's wider anxieties surrounding the position of women within the patriarchal order and psychological understandings of hysteria. Specifically, I argue that the franchise critiques typical gender roles by exposing the familiar patriarchal and negative stereotypes of female gender identity within the domestic space that so often characterise texts produced as part of the horror genre. In addition, this article will build on James MacDowell's analysis of the series provided in a post to *The Lesser Feat Blog* arguing that these films engage with what Andrew Britton has labelled the 'Freudian-Feminist Melodrama.'[9]

The *Paranormal Activity* franchise came about as a result of the surprising success of the original made in 2007. Produced for $15,000, the film went on to gross over $107,000,000 worldwide.[10] Since then, the films have become a regular part of the Halloween season with one released consecutively for the past two years and a fourth scheduled for 2012.[11] A plot synopsis of the series fails to capture the unnerving treatment of the narrative and the shock of the events that unfold. However, a brief summary of the basic plot structure of the series with a few observations on spectatorial experience and cinematic style may be a helpful introduction.

To begin with, the three *Paranormal Activity* films comprise an interconnected and progressive narrative. The trilogy largely maintains a linear (albeit inverted) trajectory, beginning in 2006 and temporarily concluding in 1988. Each film is set within the confines of a suburban home and the premise centres on a couple (and subsequently a family) that become increasingly disturbed by a nightly demonic presence that threatens the safety of their house.

In terms of its visual and narrative elements, the *Paranormal Activity* series engages with the stylistic techniques of cinematic realism and purports to be documentary in nature blending the codes of realism and horror. Consequently, the series' particular stylistic approach constructs the franchise as a vehicle for visual horror powered by the blurred lines between fiction and documentary. Indeed, the series revels in a clear effort to engage with the spectator's imagination that is paradoxically framed by the text's position as an unmediated reality in the form of found footage. Without any form of conventional opening or closing credits, the footage is presented as if it had been discovered after the event. Consequently, the film sustains suspense with a minimal narrative emphasizing the

repetition and initial banality of the protagonists' days and nights in the house. The domestic setting (a split-level suburban home) is central to communicating the series' sense of terror and dread as the franchise is virtually stripped of the stylistic norms of both camera positioning and movement, lighting, and sound commonly associated with the many sub-divisions of the horror genre. However, the series remains entirely within the audience's genre-bound expectations of affective experience. While the series retains thematic principles that identify it as part of the horror genre (including a fear of the unknown and the return of the repressed), the *Paranormal Activity* franchise is generically hybrid fusing with the melodramatic themes of the classic Hollywood woman's film and the female gothic cycle. In particular, the series examines a complex understanding of gender identity that reflects the problematic position of women in relation to patriarchy, a theme that is commonly associated with both the melodrama and the female gothic cycle. As Robert Lang succinctly observes,

> The dominant ideology asserts that, whether or not a woman is at the centre of the narrative, what is at stake in the melodrama will be a question of identity – of a failure to be masculine, or a failure to accept the repressive, subjectivity-denying terms of patriarchal femininity. Patriarchy, it should be reiterated, understands femininity as a failure to be masculine.[12]

A number of critics have located the female gothic cycle within the broader context of melodrama.[13] Particularly, as Juliann Fleenor notes, the female gothic cycle is similarly characterised by the contradictory position of women in relation to the ideological exertion of patriarchal order. Fleenor comments that,

> The Gothic is a form created by dichotomies and the subsequent tensions caused by the dialectic between the patriarchal society, the woman's role, and the contradictions and limitations inherent in both.[14]

Clearly the problematic nature of patriarchal capitalist culture presented as part of these two genres raises significant concerns about the representation of women, specifically, in that the portrayal of female empowerment is frequently countered by the spectacle of the woman's victimization in response to male dominance. The two genres are thus paradoxically framed between the opposing extremes of female power and an equal display of physical vulnerability and psychological weakness.

It is within the generic boundaries of melodrama and the female gothic cycle that Andrew Britton articulates a comprehensive expression for both terms distinguished by a specific focus on a heterosexual relationship within the troubled domestic space. Building on critical frameworks outlined by Andrea S. Walsh (1986), Mary Anne Doane (1987), and Thomas Elsaessar (1987) Britton extends the scope of melodrama and the female gothic cycle to include an undercurrent of Freudian connotations. In categorising several of the structural themes of the cycle, Britton identifies films such as *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940), *Gaslight* (George Cukor, 1944) and *Secret beyond the Door* (Fritz Lang, 1947) as part of a 'Freudian-feminist cycle' located within the Freudian-Feminist Melodrama.[15] Although the visual style of the *Paranormal Activity* franchise is unmistakably different from those films that Britton identifies, it is possible to situate the franchise within the wider context of the Freudian-Feminist Melodrama. In particular, I argue the films' thematic focus on the couple's relationship within the domestic space indicates a conscious

commentary on issues surrounding gender identity rooted in Freudian theories of hysteria and repression.

Britton construes the Freudian-feminist melodrama as being primarily fixated on a female protagonist who is married to a domineering husband, and who (for reasons that vary dependent upon the film) comes to feel hysterical, endangered and imprisoned in both her relationship and the marital home. Britton remarks:

> From the heroine's point of view, the theme of the Freudian-feminist cycle can be expressed in the formula "compulsory heterosexuality as nightmare." The husband … aspires to impose the patriarchal organization of sexual difference around the phallus as the signifier of that difference, and the films use the metaphor of persecution to identify the husband's project with a process of systematic, socially organized, and socially legitimated disempowerment. The effect of the process is the heroine's confinement to the house, where a wife ought naturally to be and where her predicament is therefore invisible.[16]

The identification of women in relation to difference corresponds to the Freudian-feminist melodrama's emphasis on the oppression of female gender identity through male dominance. Masculinity, as seen in the Freudian-feminist melodrama, is driven by a process of domination motivated by lack and castration anxieties which underlies the narrative and mise-en-scene. Referring to the Freudian-feminist melodrama as the 'paranoid woman's film', Susan Hayward argues that a particular emphasis is placed on the woman's fear of her husband and the master bedroom.[17] The complex nature of this fear emerges from a male fantasy surrounding the continued subordination of women as a way of maintaining the patriarchal order of the household. She writes,

> The wife fears that her husband has murderous intentions … . However, because the actual narrative assumes that this fear is based in female frigidity, fear of sex or even rape, it is evidently a male fantasy that is up on screen.[18]

According to Hayward, these films exhibit the repression or removal of female desire as part of the patriarchal reassertion of the woman's role within the household.[19]

For Andrew Britton, the Freudian-feminist melodrama cycle is noteworthy for the representation of the marital bedroom. Significantly, then, the intimacy and privacy of the bedroom is signalled to be the site of unequal power relations and the assertion of masculine dominance. Britton states, 'in the Freudian-feminist melodrama, with magnificent symbolic logic, the marriage bed becomes the site of the heroine's ultimate terror and humiliation and of the displacement of her sexuality into hysteria.'[20] In *Paranormal Activity*, the recurring association of Katie's (Katie Featherstone) fear and hysteria is aligned with the house, specifically, the site of the aptly named master bedroom as the primary site of heterosexual male power. The underlying fear is generated perhaps as a result of the unequal power relations communicated via the threat of male domination within the bedroom. In accordance with Britton's notes on the Freudian-feminist melodrama, there is a conscious connection between male dominance and phallic power that is central to the subjugation of women in response to fears of castration and impotence. He comments:

> It rapidly transpires that the heroine, too, unbeknownst to herself, has been constructed as the object of a fantasy which bears no relation whatever to hers, and which requires her to expiate her husband's profound conviction of his impotence by submitting to a corresponding project of domination.[21]

In *Paranormal Activity*, Katie's partner Micah (Micah Sloat) is shown to be deeply threatened by his inability to control the events within the confines of the master bedroom and more widely, his own house. His inability to maintain control betrays assumptions of ownership and mastery that subsequently result in an extended process of domination over Katie that is putatively presented as attempts to resolve Katie's hysterical response. He remarks, 'This is my house, you're my girlfriend. I'm gonna fucking solve the problem.' Micah's excessive determination to discover the source of the haunting complies with the traditional masculine image of men as powerful providers and protectors. Subsequently, feminine subordination is a necessary and deliberate concession in response to an external threat. In her article, *The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State*, Iris Marion Young explores how protection and domination are linked concluding that,

> She happily looks up to him with gratitude for his manliness and admiration for his willingness to face the dangers of the world for her sake…It is only fitting that she should minister to his needs and obey his dictates.[22]

This notion is expressively demonstrated in one sequence that displays Katie's willingness to satisfy Micah's repeated requests for sex despite his lack of interest in her sexual desires.

During the sequence, Katie agrees to have sex with Micah on the condition that he turns the camera off. He reluctantly agrees stating that he'll switch it off for ten minutes leading Katie to sarcastically remark on what she considers to be the short duration of their planned intercourse. She remarks, 'Ten minutes, huh?' To which Micah responds, 'That's all I need, I don't know about you.' Despite Micah's somewhat selfish and ignorant attitude toward his partner's sexual desires and fulfilment, Katie dutifully has sex with him causing a temporary break in the footage.[23] When considered in the context of patriarchal power, Micah's statement aptly encapsulates women's internalised beliefs about the priority of male sexual gratification over female pleasure.[24] In this instance, Katie has sex with Micah despite his uncompromising position that the intercourse will finish when he is satisfied as opposed to when she achieved an orgasm. As the film progresses and Micah's failure to adequately protect his partner becomes more overt, Katie's fear of the master bedroom becomes increasingly explicit as the threat of domination becomes more tangible in response to Micah's fear of inadequacy. At this point, I believe a discussion of Freud's theory of hysteria is relevant to the depiction of women within the *Paranormal Activity* franchise. Although it will not be possible here to discuss the complexities of hysteria at length, I would like to give a brief outline of the disorder in so far as it is relevant to the *Paranormal Activity* franchise.

The primary association of hysteria with women has a documented history dating back to references from Hippocrates (b.460 BC) that described hysteria as a uterine disease caused by sexual deprivation.[25] The consensus that hysteria was largely a female disorder was connected to symptoms thought to define femininity, such as a lack of emotional

control and irrational behaviour, a common discourse during the Enlightenment period.[26] Despite the gradual rejection of the idea of the wandering womb as the source of hysteria physicians largely maintained that behaviour symptomatic of hysteria was linked to a pathological sexuality separated from the requirements of reproduction.[27] In either case, the cure for hysteria involved the intervention of a physician to treat the ailment through induced orgasms, the recommendation of pregnancy or invasive surgical operations.

Favouring a different approach, Sigmund Freud was inspired by Jean-Martin Charcot's study of hysterics at the Salpêtrière hospital in 1890. Charcot considered hysteria to be a form of mental deterioration emphasising the psychological nature of physical symptoms such as paralysis, fainting and convulsions.[28] Such symptoms, he argued, could be stimulated and treated with the aid of hypnotic suggestions.[29] Like Charcot, Freud employed hypnosis as a means of understanding hysterical illness. Alongside Josef Breuer, he used hypnosis in order to encourage patients to verbalise their dreams, memories and desires; a process that became referred to as the 'talking cure', or to use Freud's own terminology, 'the cathartic method.'[30] These investigations revealed a common pattern of prior traumatic experience with a particular emphasis on the role of sexuality in neurosis. As a result, Freud theorised that hysteria was a feminine configuration of madness due to repressed sexual desires or a similarly repressed sexual trauma in the patient's past.[31] Although he later revised these ideas, Freud's 'seduction theory' initially communicated a sexual aetiology of hysteria that would develop alongside his preliminary understanding of the unconscious and repression, or rather the return of the repressed.

For Freud, the return of the repressed can be understood as the intrusion of an unconscious element, upon consciousness, which has repeatedly resisted integration into existing mental schemes.[32] By virtue of repression, unconscious associations are displaced from pre-conscious and conscious thought due to a number of potential psychological factors such as denial and dissociation. However, during the return of the repressed, the unconscious element is unwillingly re-appropriated into conscious thought through a continuing process of irruption or in response to a particular external stimulus.[33]

In *Paranormal Activity*, the return of the repressed is demonstrated both symbolically and structurally in the form of the demonic presence. Explicitly, if we consider the demon as a literal manifestation of a repressed memory in line with Freud's early opinions about hysteria, the *Paranormal Activity* franchise can be reformulated to be understood as a metaphor for the two sisters attempting to deal with the repressed memories of childhood sexual abuse. For example, in the first and second film respectively, Katie and her sister Kristi (Sprague Grayden) are positioned as victims of adolescent sexual abuse through Kristi's inability to accurately remember the traumatic events that occurred as they were growing up together and Katie's reluctance to discuss them at all. In a conversation between the two, Kristi says, 'I don't remember anything; I just remember being scared all the time.' To which Katie responds:

> I remember you crying all the time, I remember you couldn't sleep and you got anxiety attacks, I remember you stopped talking for months…you need to leave this alone, you need to ignore it.

Debatably then, the franchise broadly adopts a Freudian understanding, linking childhood sexual abuse and repression to hysteria. Whilst such a theory may seem tenuous at best, consider, for example, the Freudian understanding of repression and hysteria in line with the sexual meaning of penetration in demonic possession.

According to Yoram Bilu, the significance of penetration in spiritual possession is more convincingly understood when the penetrator and penetrated are aligned with those in a standard heterosexual act.[34] In the first film, Katie and Micah initially label the entity 'it'. However, as the film progresses, references to 'it' increasingly become 'him' culminating in Katie's gender specific statement that, 'I just felt him breathing…He was right there.' Despite several similar references to the demon as a gendered entity in *Paranormal Activity 2* (Tod Williams, 2010), it is only in the third film that the demon is attributed the name Toby and revealed explicitly to be a male figure.[35] Indeed, throughout the franchise it is only the female figures that are possessed by the demon suggesting that it represents the oppressive power of patriarchal masculinity.[36] This revelation acquires particular significance when considered in relation to Freud's theory linking hysteria to child abuse. In particular, it is especially poignant when framed in the context of a plot point that sees Kristi, aged five, being forced into agreeing to marry Toby (and purportedly bear him a son) in order to temporarily protect her older sibling.[37]

In the *Paranormal Activity* franchise, the demon's ability to enter and manipulate the female body communicates hysteria in relation to a problem of difference in phallic terms. At once, both Katie and Kristi are positioned as liminal characters that embody a male and female identity as a result of the possession. In essence, these characters effectively cross traditional male/female gender boundaries. In this way, the narrative of the *Paranormal Activity* franchise positions the possessed woman as hysterical as she represents a threat to stable gender identities. More precisely, Katie is subject to possession by the demon due to 'woman's inherent weakness and susceptibility to evil' resulting in the expression of the internal gender conflict as external symptoms of hysteria.[38] Katie is able to adopt a fluid gender identity thus violating her prescribed gender role, the outcome of which resists patriarchal society as a form of oppression. For example, if we consider the traditional understandings of gender identity within the discourse of patriarchal society, it is possible to see how opposing genders are commonly defined in relation to a prescribed power dynamic that privileges the male over the female. As such, the fluidity of gender roles simultaneously undermines and poses a direct threat to patriarchal society.

In *The Monstrous Feminine*, Barbara Creed explores how gender, specifically the feminine, has been represented in relation to sexual difference and castration anxieties within the horror genre.[39] Contrary to Freud's theory of castration, Creed argues that the terror attributed to the representation of woman as monstrous can be understood in relation to man's fears of the woman as castrator, rather than as castrated. The image of the monstrous woman as castrator is coded as a threat to male power as she disrupts the masculine/feminine gender binary of active/passive associations. Creed comments, 'The presence of the monstrous-feminine in the popular horror film speaks to us more about male fears than about female desire or feminine subjectivity.'[40] According to Creed, any deviation from prescribed feminine gender performance is rendered monstrous.

The real threat to male identity emerges from the active association with masculinity that the figure of the castrating woman embodies. Endowed with imaginary powers of castration, she is devalued and despised within patriarchal structures as part of an effort to re-establish the active/passive binary of male/female dominance. In *Paranormal Activity*, the film makes the affinity between male anxiety and the castrating woman clear. Despite having been constructed largely as a victim throughout the film, in the final act, Katie's repressed female energy finally erupts as she visibly becomes the monstrous-feminine in order to punish the patriarchal male.

During the concluding sequence, Katie, who has acquired supernatural strength as a result of the possession, kills Micah and subsequently throws his corpse at the camera. As

she approaches his dead body, the gaze becomes overtly foregrounded as she acknowledges the presence of an implied spectator with a wry smile before attacking the camera causing an abrupt end to the film. In this instance, the cinematic representation of looking and being looked at is directly acknowledged. In particular, as the camera is not controlled by a character within the diegesis, the nature of the cinematic apparatus is exposed as primarily voyeuristic. Consequently, in this moment, the traditional relationship between the spectator and the cinematic screen is ruptured as the illusory nature of cinema is highlighted revealing the construction of the film as a text.

Throughout the film, the gaze is foregrounded through the use of the POV shot. The POV shot, which typically reflects the perspective of the protagonist, represents not only the gaze but the construction of the gaze, establishing subject and object. Micah's gaze at Katie, an objectified woman, is also the direct gaze of the camera and the gaze of the spectator. In the film's opening few scenes, the camera's gaze eroticises Katie on a number of occasions unmistakeably establishing Micah as the predominant purveyor of the look. Specifically, Micah indulges in a form of fetishization as he fragments her body using the camera's gaze to focus his sexual desire on both her feet and bottom. According to Freud, fetishization is a process whereby the male subject is able to allay castration anxieties by maintaining a sense of control and dominance through the act of displacement. The woman's body, lacking the penis, signifies the threat of castration; consequently the absent penis is substituted by another part of the body, an object that can be controlled by the male.[41] Aligned with the way women are framed within the context of the male gaze, the isolation of Micah's desires on specific parts of Katie's body works further to objectify her, thus positioning her as less of a threat allaying castration anxieties.

In their critique of patriarchal authority, several feminist theorists often focus on the gaze in relation to male systems of objectification and control.[42] According to Douglas E. Hall, such connotations of objectification, mastery, ownership, exploitation and voyeurism connected with the male gaze, relate to the inherent distribution of patriarchal power which inscribes women as passive objects. He states:

> The Freudian phallic gaze [which] works to fix its subject; it is one that pre-empts, encompasses, subsumes, and controls, enforcing and reinforcing male power by precluding all alternate visions, claiming insight and suggesting, indeed insisting upon mastery.[43]

From this perspective, the controlling aspects of the male gaze become even more apparent when considered in relation to Katie's pseudo-sexual comments upon first seeing the camera. She remarks, 'this is big and impressive.' Considered from this viewpoint, the camera's allegorical position as a phallic object, and thus the male gaze, takes on a different meaning when considered within the context of the final shot. In particular, the profilmic manipulation of Katie's mouth places a significant emphasis on her teeth as she lurches forward towards the screen, linking once again to male castration anxieties.

In this respect, after Micah's death, the act of attacking the camera can be symbolically understood as an act of male castration and female defiance directed toward the spectator, and thus, patriarchal structures of control and surveillance. Interestingly, another ending was also considered involving the camera as a weapon. In it, Katie bludgeons Micah to death while the audience watches from the camera's POV.[44] In this moment, by attacking the camera with the body of her slain partner, or, in one of the alternative endings, Katie co-opts both the gaze and the penetrative weapon attacking the male bearer of the look, and taking back power. Such transgressions of patriarchal order are

seen as sources of horror as she cannot be contained or repressed by the gaze or patriarchal constraints.[45]

If considered as an allegory of the woman and her threat, *Paranormal Activity* offers a complex understanding of Katie's position within the structures and organisation of a patriarchal culture. On one level, the film initially appears to suggest that Katie has internalised patriarchal values which lead her to be complicit in her own subordination and objectification. For instance, despite perfunctory gestures of defiance such as Katie's repeated refusals to perform a striptease and to allow Micah to film their lovemaking, she nevertheless accepts patriarchal ideology, remaining sexually passive and submissive. However, in contrast, Katie's symbolic position as a castrating woman who embodies a fluid gender identity seems to offer a potential critique of gender roles within patriarchal structures of dominance.

The film's fusion of horror and melodrama presents a fragmented female identity that oscillates between violent outbursts directed toward symbols of male power and an acceptance of a system of social structures in which women are submissive and subject to manipulation. For example, Katie's status as a dominated woman is established in the film through her obedience to the power of the male over the female. Particularly, Micah's place within the household as the couple's only source of income points towards a traditional understanding of gender order that is characteristic of the immediate post-Second World War era.[46] Katie's submissive position is similarly enforced by her engagement with beadwork and knitting, skills traditionally associated with domestic or passive female stereotypes.[47]

During the film's opening section, hegemonic traditional gender roles are established and affirmed conforming to underlying patriarchal conceptions of hetero-normativity. This compliance encompasses a number of attributes ranging from her position within the household as a tenant and her objectification by the camera. However, as the demonic possession becomes more evident, Katie's attitude increasingly fluctuates between aggressor and victim conflating fixed notions of gender identity aligned with traditional assumptions of dominance and submission. For example, in an exchange between the couple mid-way through the first film, Katie openly expresses her frustration with Micah and his efforts to observe and control the haunting. He remarks, 'I'm in control, I'm making progress.' To which Katie responds:

> You're *not* in control. *It* is in control, and if you think you're in control, then you're being an idiot. Not a single thing you've done has helped and I'm sorry, I don't mean to burst your bubble but…you are absolutely powerless.

This statement aptly encapsulates Katie's position at a crossroads between a repressed domestic existence and an unstable gender identity that threatens patriarchal power relations.

As the film develops, Katie arguably represents the anxiety of the heterosexual male confronted by the possibility of a fluid female gender identity that cannot be controlled. By emphasizing various levels of complicity with and resistance to patriarchal ideology, the franchise communicates female hysteria in relation to a problem of gender identity in phallic terms. At once, Katie is positioned as simultaneously resisting and accepting the given order encapsulating the oxymoronic nature of the horror genre. Clearly, there appears to be something paradoxical about the genre which simultaneously presents weak male power as a source of horror alongside transgressive sexualities which threaten the symbolic

order. This is best illustrated by the female figures of the franchise that, as we have established, are subject to male possession highlighting both the female's inherently 'weak and helpless state' and simultaneously, the threat that a fluid gender identity represents to the male.[48] Accordingly, at one level, the *Paranormal Activity* franchise appears to perpetuate the assertion of male power within the context of the horror genre at the expense of female gender identity which is conceived of as weak. However, at the same time, what is feared in the possessed woman, or the monster, is the threat that difference seems to pose to patriarchal order.

As the *Paranormal Activity* franchise illustrates, within the context of the horror genre therein exists a complex dynamic that on the one hand, attempts to re-affirm the heterosexual relationship within the domestic space as part of the wider construct of patriarchal order, thus providing a fixed source of gender identities. However, on the other hand, in keeping with the transgressive and often paradoxical nature of the genre, the home and the organising structures of patriarchal culture are shown to be remarkably weak and fragile notions. The idea of the home is, simply, an ideological space revealed to lack the security and safety once commonly associated with it and has therefore become uncanny.[49] Similarly, traditional gender identities are shown to be unstable. What has been viewed as a traditional male or female position has to a large extent eroded, provoking a tension between masculine and feminine extremes. Correspondingly, the franchise arguably draws attention to, and perpetuates, the horror genre's wider anxieties surrounding the position of female gender identity within the patriarchal order. This brings us back to Katie's hysteria and its function in determining the film's meaning.

As we have established, hysteria is usually considered to be a physical or somatic articulation of a psychological pain. In the *Paranormal Activity* franchise, Katie's internalisation of the demon and the resultant horror within the context of the household is perhaps an inevitable consequence of her gender's oppression by the laws of patriarchal society. Accordingly, the female body becomes the site of a hysterical vocalisation of disenfranchisement because other, more direct, routes of protest have been denied (because passivity is both the result and the cause of appropriate feminine gender performance). As such, the film itself can be considered just another way of demonising the (hysterical) female that the patriarchal social structures are guilty of producing to begin with.

The extent to which this discourse about the role of hysteria in the franchise is relevant depends largely on whether, as this article contends, the demon represents a deeper manifestation of patriarchal concerns surrounding the fluidity of gender identity. In any case, I argue that the franchise perpetuates these concerns transcending the conventional destruction of the female monster during the film's final moments. To elucidate this statement it is necessary to briefly discuss the implications of the film's production. It has been widely publicised that the film's original ending was changed at the suggestion of Steven Spielberg.[50] In its original form, the film offers a further assault on patriarchal institutions as Katie is killed by law enforcement officers. Additionally, in another edit available as an alternate ending, Katie kills Micah off-screen and then subsequently slits her own throat in front of the camera. Perhaps, in spectatorial terms, this action can be considered a critique of the social and moral implications of (largely male) desires to watch recorded acts of violence against women resulting in the ultimate visceral punishment of the voyeuristic gaze highlighted by Katie's suicide. In the theatrical version, by alerting the audience to Katie's on-going survival during the film's epilogue (thus providing the potential for further sequels) the film preserves the enduring threat of the monstrous woman. Unlike the standard destruction of the female monster which performs the task of affirming masculine dominance, Katie's survival in the franchise debatably points toward a

growing awareness of an on-going question surrounding the stability of gender identity. Whilst the decision to produce an alternative theatrical ending for the film may have been financially motivated, the various other endings arguably contribute more overtly to the horror genre's longstanding preoccupation with gender identity and patriarchal oppression.

The film's various endings seemingly critique the conventional representation of the female monster and correspondingly, the position of female gender identity in patriarchal society. Unfortunately, it is difficult to avoid viewing the theatrical release of the film and the subsequent sequels as anything but clear evidence of Hollywood's characteristic insistence on exploiting financially successful trends for as long as possible. Indeed, it is conceivable to argue that in its original forms, Katie's death in the franchise represents a clearer critique of the organizing structures of patriarchal society that effectively marginalise women as part of the logic of the patriarchal order. As an alternative then, it is more accurate to read Katie's survival in the theatrical release of the film alongside a variation of Carol Clover's 'final girl.'[51] For Clover, the final girl can be understood as a symbolic male who embodies masculine traits in order to prevail against the monster. Admittedly, in this instance, the demon survives but must inhabit a female body in order to do so. It is not accidental, then, that Katie is masculinised by the demon's presence. In this article I have chosen not to linger excessively on the idea that the horror genre is predicated on exploiting and objectifying women. Instead, although these ideas have informed my analysis of the *Paranormal Activity* franchise in that I argue that these films, whilst acknowledging these conventions, ultimately transcend them, articulating concerns about unstable gender identity. In this instance at least, the *Paranormal Activity* franchise arguably offers a critique of the dilemma of a strong female gender identity in a male-dominated world rather than a straightforward reassertion of heterosexual relations patriarchal culture and masculinity.[52]

Notes

[1] Robin Wood, 'An Introduction to the American Horror Film,' in *Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror* Film, ed. Barry Keith Grant (New Jersey, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1984), 164-200.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Andrew Britton, 'A New Servitude: Bette Davis, Now Voyager and the Radicalism of the Woman's film,' *CineAction* 6.27 (1992): 37.
[4] Robin Wood, 'An Introduction to the American Horror Film,' in *Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1984), 164-200.
[5] Philip Brophy, 'Horrality: The Textuality of Contemporary Horror Films,' *Screen* 27.1 (1986): 2-13.
[6] Wood, 'Introduction to the American Horror Film,' 164-200.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1984).
[9] *The Lesser Feat Blog*, 6 January 2012, viewed on 1 June 2013, http://thelesserfeat.blogspot.co.uk/2009/12/antichrist-paranormal-activity-and.html.
[10] '*Paranormal Activity* Box Office Stats.' Last modified 6 January 2012, viewed on 1 June 2013, http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=paranormalactivity.html.
[11] '*Paranormal Activity* Date Set,' Last modified 6 January 2012, viewed on 1 June 2013, http://www.deadline.com/2012/01/paranormal-activity-4-release-date-set.
[12] Robert Lang, *American Film Melodrama: Griffith, Vidor, Minnelli* (Princeton: Princeton UP 1989), 8.

[13] Diane Long Hoeveler, 'Mary Shelley and Gothic Feminism: The Case of "The Mortal Immortal",' in *Iconoclastic Departures: Mary Shelley after Frankenstein*, ed. Syndy M. Conger and Gregory O'Dea (Madison. NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), 150-166.
[14] Juliann E. Fleenor, *The Female Gothic* (Montral-London: Eden Press 1983), 16.
[15] Britton, 'A New Servitude,' 37.
[16] Ibid., 40.
[17] Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (Oxon: Routledge 1996), 215.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Interestingly, in the *Paranormal Activity* franchise, unlike many other films within the haunted-house sub-genre such as *The Changeling* (Medak, 1980) and *The Grudge* (Shimizu, 2004), the haunting is not directly attributed to the home. However, the presentation of some events occurring off-screen, beyond the gaze of the camera foregrounds the vulnerability of the suburban home. Rather than providing a safe domestic space, the trilogy's bedrooms, corridors and kitchens are subject to a power that is both dangerous and unknowable perhaps attracted to the home through the female figure. According to Reynold Humphries, horror within a domestic space subverts the notion of the house as sanctuary. He remarks, 'The notion of danger coming from anywhere is to be taken literally and is far more unnerving when it is located within the supposedly reassuring home' Reynold Humphries, *The American Horror Film: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 145-146. Indeed, the domestic space, endowed with a complex array of sensibilities, collapses all received notions of safety. Moreover, the centrality of the domestic setting with a particular emphasis on the master bedroom in the franchise is revealing when considered in relation to the Freudian-feminist melodrama.
[20] Britton, 'A New Servitude,' 40.
[21] Ibid., 31.
[22] Marion Iris Young, 'The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State,' in *Women and Citizenship*, ed. Marilyn Friedman (Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2005), 119.
[23] The break in the diegesis is significant as unlike many other horror films, the *Paranormal Activity* franchise avoids scenes of gratuitous sex commonly associated with the genre, Williams, Linda. 'Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess.' *Film Quarterly* 44.4 (1991): 2-13. This is perhaps even more impressive considering the personal nature of the film's presentation which could have easily succumbed to the temptation of reflecting the recent 'skyrocketing increase in true amateur porn' caused by the widespread access to means of low cost production with video cameras and mobile phones with video capability. Carmine Sarracino and K. Scott, *The Porning of America: The Rise of Porn Culture, What It Means, and Where We Go from Here* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008).
[24] J. Holland and R. Thomson 'Young Women and Safer (Hetero) Sex: Context, Constraints and Strategies,' in *Women and Health: Feminist Perspectives*, eds. Sue Wilkinson and Celia Kitzinger (London: Taylor and Francis, 1994), 13-32.
[25] During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the emphasis on dissatisfied sexuality as the primary cause of hysteria readily transferred to Christian notions of sexual deviance linked to female promiscuity and lust. As a result, the growing influence of Christianity led hysteria to become inextricably linked to witchcraft and demonic possession; Elizabeth Bronfen, *The Knotted Subject: Hysteria and Its Discontents* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). Accordingly, women were considered to be particularly prone to crimes of witchcraft due their supposed emotional weakness and inferiority to men; Paul Chodoff, 'Hysteria and Women.' *American Journal of Psychiatry* 139.5 (1982): 545-551. When considered in relation to the

franchise, the revelation that Katie's grandmother is the head of a satanic coven of witches in *Paranormal Activity 3* (Joost and Schulman, 2011) hints at the trilogy's consistent fascination with patriarchal fears of female empowerment rooted in masculine inadequacy.

[26] Robert Brudenell Carter, *On the Pathology and Treatment of Hysteria* (London: Churchill, 1853).

[27] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Hysterical Woman: Sex Roles and Role Conflict in 19th-Century America,' *Social Research* 39.4 (1972): 670.

[28] Kenneth Levy, 'Psychodynamic and Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy', in *Clinical Psychology: Assessment, Treatment, and Research*, eds. David C. S. Richard and Steven Ken Huprich (London: Elsevier Academic Press, 2009), 185.

[29] David Rowley, *Hypnosis and Hypnotherapy* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania, The Charles Press, 1986), 10.

[30] Sigmund Freud, 'Studies on Hysteria' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols., trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1974), 2:109.

[31] Sigmund Freud, 'Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses,' *Standard Edition*, 3:143-156.

[32] Freud, 'Repression', *Standard Edition*, 14:141-158.

[33] Freud, 'Moses and Monotheism', *Standard Edition*, 23:1-138.

[34] Yoram Bilu, 'The Taming of the Deviants and Beyond: An Analysis of Dybbuk Possession and Exorcism,' in *Judaism in Spirit Possession in Judaism: Cases and Contexts from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Matt Goldish (Detroit, Mich: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 46.

[35] By assigning a specific gender to the demon, the series implicitly draws on the mythological history of the incubus, a male demon who pursues sexual relations with women in order to father a child.

[36] In additional to explicit verbal references to the demon as a male figure, it is also possible to implicitly regard the demon as an alpha male in the context of ethology who not only seeks to penetrate the body of the female but also attack subordinate males including Micah, Daniel (Brian Boland) and Dennis (Chris Smith) who try to assert themselves.

[37] Set in 1988, *Paranormal Activity 3* continues the stylistic and thematic trend of the previous two instalments. However, the choice to set the film during this particular era leaves an indelible mark on the franchises' narrative understanding of hysterical illness. Specifically, the film's period setting appears to be overtly dominated by psychosexual problems that similarly marked several other horror films during the 1980's. Eighties horror cinema, after all, heralded the emergence of serial killers Michael Myers, Freddy Krueger, and Jason Voorhees. This new collection of monsters slaughtered the children of American suburbia at the expense of inept authority figures demonstrating that childhood no longer offered the safety and protection once associated with it. In particular, these films, and *Paranormal Activity 3* seem to accurately reflect social concerns regarding a loss of innocence associated with the increased reports of child related sexual abuse and satanic rituals during the McMartin preschool trial in the mid-1980s and early 1990s. P. Eberle and S. Eberle, *Abuse Of Innocence: The McMartin Preschool Trial* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993).

[38] Kristine M. Rankka, *Women and the Value of Suffering: An Aw(e)ful Rowing toward God* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1998), 66.

[39] Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London, Routledge, 1993), 44.

[40] Ibid., 7.

[41] Freud, 'Fetishism', *Standard Edition*, 21:152-157.

[42] Laura Mulvey, 'Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946),' in *Visual and Other Pleasures: Collected Writings*, ed. Laura Mulvey (Basingstoke and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 29-38; Donald E. Hall, *Fixing Patriarchy: Feminism and Mid-Victorian Male Novelists* (Basingstoke and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996).
[43] Donald E. Hall, *Fixing Patriarchy*, 112-113.
[44] '*Paranormal Activity*: Three Super-Scary Alternate Endings,' Last modified August 6, 2012, viewed on 1 June 2013, http://popwatch.ew.com/2009/10/30/paranormal-activity-three-super-scary-alternate-endings-spoiler-alert.
[45] Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1986).
[46] Michael Bittman, et al., 'When Does Gender Trump Money? Bargaining and Time in Household Work' in *American Journal of Sociology* 109.1 (2003): 186-214.
[47] Joanne Turney, *The Culture of Knitting* (Oxford: Berg, 2009).
[48] Karen Hollinger, 'The Monster as Woman: Two Generations of Cat People,' in *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 1996), 299.
[49] For a detailed account of The Uncanny, see Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *Standard Edition* (London: Hogarth, 1974), 17:217-256.
[50] 'Paranormal Activity: Three Super-Scary Alternate Endings'.
[51] Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 51.
[52] Special thanks to Dr. Jacqueline Furby, Sophie Cross, Uros Tomic and Trevor Joy.

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Come Hell or High Water, Part 3: Deluge

Stephen Morris

Abstract

One of two excerpts from the final instalment of the 3-part historical romance saga by acclaimed author, Stephen Morris. 1356: A witch burns! Prague is cursed! 2002: The curse threatens to destroy Prague with a mammoth flood. Can the professors find a way to defend and save the city? It is the winter of 1356-1357 and Nadezda, with the assistance of an elderly rabbi, confronts Lilith to discover the secret of the witch's curse. Meanwhile, in August 2002, George and Magdalena help carry out the witch's curse by conjuring the historic flood to wash away the Charles Bridge and its magical protection of the city, allowing them to unleash the devil Svetovit. Using the magic of tarot cards, the Evil Conference professors struggle to release the defensive magic buried deep beneath the streets of Prague. Finally confronting George, Magdalena, and Svetovit face-to-face, can the professors avert the doom that is engulfing the city?

*****

Excerpt 1

In this excerpt, the Kampa park along the riverbank of the Vltava becomes the feeding ground of Elizabeth, the Dearg-due (Irish vampire-like woman).

Elizabeth wandered the streets of the Little Town of Prague. She had said good night to Alessandro in the hotel lobby, having given him a quick kiss on the cheek. They had been flirting on the Charles Bridge when he seemed suddenly taken ill and had retreated to his room for the night. But she was awake. She was hungry.

She made her way back out into the night air. Prague was surprisingly lively. People filled the streets despite the hour. She stood in the darkness and breathed deeply. She knew the air at this time of year was humid but the city smelled remarkably fresh. She had never been to Prague and was eager to enjoy the delights it offered. She made her way back to the Charles Bridge.

Jazz was still playing at the other end of the bridge, the music swirling through the air. Couples walked along the bridge while small knots of tourists stopped to admire the views of the brightly illuminated castle from the causeway. Some people made their way to the base of St. John's statue to rub the brass plates for luck. Teenage boys whooped and hollered, darting between the more staid adults. Elizabeth stepped onto the bridge and into the happy stream of humanity making their way through the night.

She walked along the bridge a short distance and then made her way down a staircase leading to a cobblestone plaza spread out along the river. The plaza was less crowded than the bridge, but the doors to the taverns and restaurants all stood open, filling the plaza with laughter and chatter.

She strolled along the plaza, smiling at the people she passed. Several of the men paused and smiled in return, nodding their acknowledgement of her presence to the consternation of their girlfriends and wives.

"Interesting," she said to herself. "Several interesting possibilities here, but… No, none are quite right." She paused and closed her eyes. She breathed deeply and caught the fragrance

she was searching for. The whisper of a scent beckoned her and she followed it, continuing unhurriedly through the plaza and into the grassy park area beyond. The river was always beside her as she walked along the dark path. Fewer people were along the river here, all couples arm in arm in the moonlight. As she passed, nearly all the men turned their heads without even being aware there might be a choice to do otherwise.

Then she saw the one she sought ahead.

A man sat alone on a park bench, hunched forward with his elbows on his knees, leaning towards the water. He was in his mid-thirties, and swarthy. The sports jacket he wore was stretched tight across his broad shoulders. She made her way to his side and sat beside him. She put her elbows on her own knees. Their shoulders brushed.

Startled, the man looked up at Elizabeth. She could see his eyes glitter.

"Hello," she purred in her Irish accent. "Do you speak in English?"

"A bit," he acknowledged, smiling in return. The rough stubble on his cheeks was darkly etched in the stark light of the streetlamp beside them. This close to him and at this angle, Elizabeth could see that the top buttons of his shirt were undone. Elizabeth shook her long tresses to catch his attention.

"Where are you from?" she asked.

"Turkey," he answered, his English decorated with the ripple of an accent. "Istanbul. You?" He pulled a cigarette pack from a pocket and offered her one.

"Dublin," she replied, shaking her head gently to decline his offer. He took a cigarette from the pack and replaced the pack in his pocket. He lit the cigarette and turned towards her. He blew a stream of smoke up and away from Elizabeth's face. "Have you come to Prague before?" he asked.

"No," she admitted. "Have you?" She smiled again, resting the tip of her tongue against her teeth. She could feel the man's nervousness dissolving as tension of another sort built.

"Me?" he asked. "No, no. I have not been to here before." He glanced at his feet and then back into her eyes. He smiled.

"How long are you here for? You seem to be alone… Are you… sad?" Elizabeth leaned a bit closer and rested her hand on her new friend's forearm. She could feel his excitement at her touch ripple through him.

"A few days," he answered. "Alone? Yes, I came to see Prague myself. But sad? No… thinking. How do you say in English? Taking the night air." He chuckled.

"Are you here on business?" she purred in his ear, her lips brushing the nape of his neck. "Or pleasure?"

His eyes closed in delight, the cigarette dangling from his fingertips. Then, realizing she had asked a question, he shook his head slightly as if to clear his thoughts. He opened his eyes and smiled.

"Would you believe both?" His voice had gotten deeper, fuller, richer. He stood and she could see his erection through his trousers.

"I might believe that," she told him, standing too and taking the cigarette from him and tossing it into the river. "What kind of business?"

"Imports. Exports." He reached his arms around the back of her shoulders and pulled her towards him.

"And what kind of pleasure?" She laughed quietly, tipping her head back and exposing the skin of her throat to his gaze.

"What kind might you think?" he laughed gently, running his cheek along her throat.

Elizabeth relished the effect she had on men like this one. Confident, handsome, self-assured men who quickly forgot whatever they had been concerned about once she turned her attention to them.

"Shall we go someplace a little more private?" she whispered, nibbling his earlobe. She felt him shudder with delight, pressing himself more closely to her.

"Hotel?" he asked, pulling his head back just a bit. He seemed to struggle to focus his eyes on her face.

"Hotel? No… that would be too far. Here… beyond the lamplight." She gestured with her head. "Near those boulders."

She wasn't sure if he understood all the words but he understood the gesture. They slid out of the circle of lamplight and maneuvered into the shadows behind the boulders. She pressed him into a crevice between the great rocks and straddled his hips.

Her Turkish friend relaxed against the stone, leaned his head back, and closed his eyes, groaning softly in a language universally understood. Clasping his hands at the small of her back, his hips rose to meet hers as he pulled her down against him.

She slid her tongue along the taut muscles of his neck and then along his open shirtfront. She reached up to undo the rest of the buttons.

"There is no reason to maintain this mask now," she thought, glancing around them. No one was there and in the dark, no one could see them anyway. She pulled the unbuttoned shirt off the man's shoulders and drew her tongue along his collarbone.

His eyes jerked open. She knew the sensation of her tongue against his skin had become rough and sharp-edged. She knew he struggled to understand what was happening. She knew what he was seeing now that she had let her mask slip.

The Turk struggled, trying to push her away. Elizabeth knew her beautiful red hair and milk-white skin had melted away to reveal a leering skull, withered skin stretched taut across the ridges and valleys of bone. Ragged wisps of hair floated around what was hardly capable of being called her face. Her withered yet ponderous breasts hung out of the tattered red shroud draped around her. Her scrawny, almost skeletal hand reached out to stroke his cheek with grimy talons and her eyes were filled with desire and expectation, a sharp hiss escaping from between her razor-sharp teeth.

"No…" He strained to choke the syllable out.

Her talons raked his throat and shoulders. She pressed her face into the wounds, lapping up the blood as quickly as it spread across his skin. Her teeth frayed the edges of the wounds, the pain cutting deliciously through him—she knew—even as the blood flow into her mouth increased. She could still feel his erection against her and she pressed her hips into his.

Blood flowed down his chest as she cut the wounds deeper with one claw and clamped the other across his mouth, preventing him from calling out. Struggling against her, he mimicked the convulsions of sexual ecstasy despite himself. Elizabeth watched him swiftly sinking into unconsciousness from blood loss, and knew the last thing he would feel was his throbbing climax spewing onto her shroud.

When she had lapped up the last of the blood, she began to rip shards of flesh from the man's abdomen with her teeth and then reached into the wound with her talons to slice through his internal organs. She chewed and swallowed, especially relishing the Turk's liver and heart. What little blood there was left in her victim's internal organs was smeared across her face, dripped down her breasts, spattered on her shroud. She peered around the boulders. There was no one in the park now. Picking up the corpse, she heaved it into the river and watched it hover a moment before it was swallowed by the current.

Readjusting her mask so that no one would guess the foul reality beneath, Elizabeth walked back along to the river towards the plaza, the bridge, and the hotel, where she could rest now that she was no longer hungry.

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[Im]Migrating Witchcraft: Transatlantic Gothic Hybridity in *White is for Witching*

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Abstract

Helen Oyeyemi's third novel, *White is for Witching,* presents a multifaceted gothic tale of a girl struggling against disorderly eating and a haunting family history. Oyeyemi summarizes her tale as the story of a 'starving girl and a xenophobic house,' hinting at the opulence of a novel that blends the traditions of European gothic and fairy tale with African and Caribbean folklore and beliefs. Indeed, this novel stands as something new altogether. Based on the Yoruba, Caribbean, and European elements it has ingested, the integration of Gothic, fairy-tale, and tribal beliefs has produced a syncretic transatlantic text. This paper will illustrate how, despite the overt pessimism depicted through racism and purity discourses, the form itself of Oyeyemi's transatlantic gothic novel contests these exclusionary gestures by creating an affirmatively hybridized, transcultural narrative that reveals the resemblances and continuities among the transatlantic cultural traditions it invokes.

Key Words:

Gothic, transatlantic, fairy tale, monstrous spaces, postcolonial, disorderly eating, xenophobia.

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1. Oyeyemi and the Gothic

Helen Oyeyemi's third novel, *White is for Witching*, presents a multifaceted gothic tale of a girl struggling against disorderly eating and a haunting family history. Oyeyemi summarizes her tale as the story of a 'starving girl and a xenophobic house,' hinting at the opulence of a novel that blends the traditions of European gothic and fairy tale with African and Caribbean folklore and beliefs. Indeed, this novel stands as something new altogether. Until recently, few critics have acknowledged the ground-breaking originality of Oyeyemi's novel, and none have attested to the power of this text as a contestation of purity discourses through the creation of a uniquely hybridized gothic work. Based on the Yoruba, Caribbean, and European elements it has ingested, the integration of Gothic, fairy-tale, and tribal beliefs has produced a syncretic transatlantic text. Despite the overt pessimism depicted through racism and purity discourses, the form itself of Oyeyemi's transatlantic gothic novel contests these exclusionary gestures by creating an affirmatively hybridized, transcultural narrative that reveals the resemblances and continuities among the transatlantic cultural traditions it invokes.

White is for Witching recounts the events leading up to the disappearance of Miranda, an eccentric young British girl who struggles with her mother's recent murder during a work trip in Haiti. Through the narrations of Eliot, Miranda's twin brother; Ore, her Nigerian girlfriend; and the personified voice of the Silver house, which narrates most of the action in the novel, the reader discovers that Miranda's pica, a desire to eat non-nutritive substances, has plagued the women in her family for generations. Miranda attempts to 'manage consumption' in her life despite the strange events surrounding her: the xenophobic actions of the goodlady (a malicious presence conjured by her grandmother, Anna Good, to harm immigrants and minorities in the

house, and more broadly, in Dover); the haunting presence of three generations of female relatives that dwell within Miranda; the ghosts that inhabit the house; and a burning desire to consume something other than the chalk and plastic that persistently poison her.[1] Miranda also struggles with erotic feelings for her twin brother Eliot, and a strange sexual relationship with Ore, who she meets at Cambridge. Amidst these events, Luc, Miranda's French father, attempts to hold together the dwindling family and the Silver House bed-and-breakfast by hiring a Nigerian housekeeper and cooking feverishly for his guests and for Miranda. When Miranda disappears after a mysterious argument with Eliot, her friends and family can only guess at her whereabouts.

Emphasizing the preoccupation with boundary crossing through geopolitical, supernatural, and corporal boundaries, Oyeyemi clearly situates the novel amongst a long line of gothic tales. The European Gothic tradition began with Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, and reached dramatic popularity in Victorian times with *Dr. Jekyll and My. Hyde* and *Dracula.* Most Gothic stories share similar tropes, including an ancient, seemingly haunted space that holds 'hidden secrets from the past…that haunt the characters, psychologically, physically, or otherwise.'[2] Central characters in Gothic tales typically reveal a second haunting by an '"unconscious" of deep-seated social and historical dilemmas'[3] that grow more frightening the more the characters try to hide them. The Gothic also incorporates Freud's notion of 'the Uncanny,' or the external and unfamiliar appearance of the deeply internal and familiar.[4] Oyeyemi states that the novel, and the house, 'knew about other stories that had come before it that were like it,' naming *Dracula, The Woman in White,* and *Wuthering Heights* as predecessors of the story.[5] Indeed, the novel wastes no time in self-consciously situating itself as part of the Gothic tradition.

The supernatural peculiarity of the Silver house allows the novel to participate in the gothic tradition of a haunted space. Eliot calls the Silver house a 'wicked house,' with wide 'passageways on each floor' and a hidden shelter under a trap door beneath the sitting room that puts people to sleep.[6] Across from the house lies a cemetery filled with unmarked graves, the ghosts of which line the streets later in the novel. Miranda imagines that the house is like a castle, with a 'steep, winding staircase' and 'gnarled banister.'[7] When Azeri and Deme, the young daughters of the houses' Middle-Eastern keepers leave the house in a hurry, they give Miranda a note saying,

> This house is bigger than you know! There are extra floors, with lots of people on them. They are looking people. They look at you, and they never move. We do not like them. We do not like this house, and we are glad to be going away.[8]

The house itself muses, 'I suppose I am frightening,' but quickly informs the reader that one of the 'hidden secrets' from the past is the long line of women with disorderly eating and a history of vampirism, self-consumption and the uncontrollable desire for consumption of others. The house tells us of an unnamed woman related to Anna Good who was 'thought an animal.'[9]

> Her way was to slash at her flesh with the blind, frenzied concentration that a starved person might use to get at food that is buried. Her way was to drink off her blood, then bite and suck at the bobbled stubs of her meat.[10]

It soon becomes clear that the ancestral line of women preceding Miranda still dwells within her, and the more she attempts to repress the desires of these women, the sicker she becomes. Jerrold Hogle's description of the 'horror Gothic' seems appropriate in describing Miranda's

repeated confrontations with uncanny images of her female ancestors, of Lily's domiciliary ghosts, the spectres in the cemetery, the young couple with the woman who chokes on the winter apple, and other phantasmal visions Miranda has. However blurred these visions are between reality and dream, imagination, or psychosis, combined with the slow physical deterioration of her body through pica and eventually anorexia, the 'gross violence' of physical *and* psychological dissolution is disturbingly near the surface throughout the novel.

2. The Transatlantic Gothic

White is for Witching clearly situates itself as a participant in the gothic tradition, but it also intertwines the gothic with transatlantic cultural elements of ritual and witchcraft. Helen Cousins, in her discussion of *White is for Witching*, dubs the genre 'Yoruba Gothic' based on the Yoruba cultural and magical elements present in the novel. Cousins asserts that

> *White is for Witching* combines elements of the nineteenth-century gothic with a postmodern sensibility, and an attention to race which moves it into territory occupied by the postcolonial gothic,[11]

based on Fred Botting's description of the postmodern gothic as a 'hybrid mixing of forms and narratives' that

> has uncanny effects, effects which make narrative play and ambivalence another figure of horror, another duplicitous object to be expelled from proper orders of consciousness and representation.[12]

Botting also asserts that the Postmodern Gothic 'plays with the ways fairy tales, legends, and Gothic fictions construct identities, fantasies, fears and desires, particularly in terms of female sexuality and desire.'[13] The non-traditional construction of female desire, typical of the Gothic form, becomes apparent when Miranda meets Ore Lind, much of whose identity, fears and desires are constructed around legend and fairy tale, and the two become entangled in a peculiar sexual relationship articulated by queer desire – especially Miranda's desire to consume Ore's flesh. However, the novel extends beyond postmodern gothic, postcolonial gothic, and even beyond Yoruba gothic: the transcultural, transatlantic fusing of Caribbean lore, Yoruba culture, and European fairy tale in the novel merge to create a distinctively hybridized genre of neogothic, contesting the xenophobia it portrays *through* this uniquely hybridized form.

3. Sanguinary Creatures: Dracula and the Soucouyant

Appropriately, Oyeyemi's figuration of vampirism in the text allows it to participate in the specific gothic tradition of vampire tales. The most influential gothic vampire story, *Dracula*,[14] has attracted much critical analysis, but pertinent to this conversation, has been read as an articulation of a colonial anxiety toward colonialism and reverse colonization.[15] Cousins asserts that *White is for Witching* actualizes the fear of reverse colonization in a postmodern setting, utilizing ideas of the 'alien outsider' common in both gothic and postcolonial literature.[16] Indeed, the transatlantic elements present in the novel all originate from areas previously colonized by the British: the Yoruba tribe lies mostly in Nigeria's political borders, and the Soucouyant hails from English and French colonized Caribbean islands. Oyeyemi highlights the fear of reverse colonization as an articulation of the xenophobic attitudes towards England's colonies, in order to contest them through a hybridization of form in her novel. In an interview about the novel, Oyeyemi muses that the Soucouyant, a traditional Caribbean vampire

who sheds her skin at night and passes through walls to suck people's life-blood, is an 'interesting vampire' that she wanted to 'pit against Western vampires' in her novel.[17] Oyeyemi discusses Miranda's pica as cleverly-disguised disorderly consumption of the most monstrous kind: 'I started thinking that vampire stories were a lot to do with the fear of the outsider, because you've got this foreign count with this unnatural appetite,' she has said. 'I thought, what's an unnatural appetite? A girl who eats chalk, but probably with a desire to eat something else.'[18] This 'desire to eat something else' becomes central to the novel, as Miranda is tempted, but never actually consumes blood. Craft describes Count Dracula and his female minions as eerily similar to Miranda: a border being who communes with both the living and the dead, and who has the power to oscillate between the spirit and the flesh world.[19] Indeed, Bram Stoker's description of the 'weird sisters' also rings true for Miranda: 'All three had brilliant white teeth, that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips… I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips.'[20] Clearly, Miranda is characterized as analogous to Dracula's weird sisters. In this case though, Miranda is the protagonist of the novel, resisting the bloodthirsty xenophobic desires of her ancestral past.

Despite Miranda's lack of actual consumption of blood, her vampiric desires seem to be an undeniable aspect of her character. The text suggests multiple times that Miranda's pica is actually an attempt to repress her desire for the blood and flesh she craves to consume. When Miranda skips dinner, then decides on a 'midnight feast,'[21] the reader discovers parenthetically that Miranda desires human meat, particularly the non-British meat of her French father, over plastic: 'because plastic is not satisfying this night/As for beef, as for *his* [Luc's] Frenchie beef and fucking potatoes, haha.'[22] Miranda again considers 'tasting' Luc later when they both fall sleep outside, she in the hammock and he in a deck chair. 'He'd fallen asleep with his glasses on. He looked happy in his sleep. Miranda ran her tongue around the inside of her mouth—*what can I taste, what can I taste, what can I…*'[23] Similar textual clues appear without a specific person toward which to direct Miranda's desire. When Sade is cooking, 'the smell ma[kes] Miranda realise how hungry she [is]; not for chalk, not for plastic…'[24] Similarly, in a scene with her female ancestors around the food-filled table in the cellar, '

> Food steamed and sizzled and swam in juices and sauces hot and cold and rich and sweet, there were even sticks of chalk and strips of plastic, but all they did was make Miranda hungrier for *what was not there.*[25]

Despite these inherited vampiric tendencies from her female relatives, Miranda actively resists her desire to consume blood and instead eats chalk, or sucks on bits of plastic for oral satisfaction.

The haunting presence of the soucouyant, and ultimate suggestion that Miranda is in fact a soucouyant, not a more traditional European vampire, situates the novel as participating in a transatlantic hybridity. The story of the soucouyant is Ore's 'favorite story' in the book of Caribbean legends given to her by her parents. Ore describes the soucouyant as a 'wicked old woman who flies from her body and at night consumes her food, the souls of others…in a ball of flame.'[26] In a more detailed description, Giselle Anatol asserts,

> A woman by day, this "creature" slips out of her skin at night and can transform herself into a ball of fire to move from house to house. She creeps into homes through cracks and keyholes and sucks the blood or "life-blood" (human life essence, or soul) of unsuspecting neighbors.[27]

Ore also describes the soucouyant as an 'old woman whose only interaction with other people was consumption.'[28] When Miranda and Ore become romantically involved, Miranda seems increasingly unable to resist her desires for blood.

> Last night had been the fifth, perhaps the sixth night that Miranda had lain by Ore, smelling her, running her nose over the other girl's body, turning the beginning of a bite into a kiss whenever Ore stirred, laying a trail of glossy red lip prints. Ore's smell was raw and fungal as it tangled in the hair between her legs. It turned into a blandly sweet smell, like milk, at her navel, melted into spice in the creases of her elbows, then cocoa at her neck. Miranda had needed Ore open. Her head had spun with desire to taste. She lay her head against Ore's chest and heard Ore's heart. The beat was ponderous. Like an oyster, living quietly in its serving-dish shell, this heart barely moved. Miranda could have taken it, she knew she could. Ore would have hardly felt it.[29]

Ore's body and individual body parts are not only equated to food in this passage, but sexual and vampiric desires are blurred. Ore smells of 'raw and fungal' mushrooms between her legs, 'like milk' around her navel, spices at her elbows, and chocolate – perhaps the most tempting of these foods – around her neck, where Miranda becomes overwhelmed with a vampiric 'desire to taste.' Anatol connects blood fetishism with a Victorian 'nymphomaniacal' label – women in the 1890s were given this label along with the belief that they 'desire[d] to drain their sexual partners of all vital fluids.'[30] Later, despite Ore growing increasingly thinner in spite of her constant food intake, Ore struggles with coming to terms with the idea of Miranda being the soucouyant, considering the old woman and the young girl 'in each other's bodies' to be a 'great violation.'[31] Miranda's desire to escape the pressures of her embodied circumstances becomes clear when Ore tells Miranda the story about how the soucouyant is defeated and made to 'join her flame with that of the rising sun,' and Miranda is relieved that the soucouyant is allowed to escape from her seemingly inescapable circumstances.[32] Regardless of Miranda's resistance to a desire to consume *actual* blood, she clearly consumes Ore's 'life blood.' Ore recounts,

> As we kissed I became aware of something leaving me. It left me in a solid stream, heavy as rope. It left from a hurt in my side, and it went into Miranda, it went into the same place in her.[33]

Although Miranda does not take Ore's physical blood, she nonetheless contributes to Ore's bodily consumption. At Cambridge, Miranda writes in her notebook, '*Ore is not food. I think I am a monster*,' emphasizing Miranda's fear of and resistance to her desire for consuming the flesh of the woman she loves.[34] Miranda's situation is not only complicated by her resisting her ancestral vampiric desires, but also because all the 'old women' in her blood line quite literally inhabit her as haunting *abiku* spirits. In agreement, Cousins reads Miranda's struggle throughout the novel as not only a 'refusal to eat,' but a 'refusal to be, or only to be, the evil vampire of earlier gothic texts.'[35] Cousins comments,

> Miranda's multivalence is refracted through a disorienting range of dual and multiple forms which go beyond more typical gothic dualities. Thus, the vampire form – a soucouyant – that Miranda takes is itself amalgamated from various sources.[36]

Indeed, Miranda's multifaceted characterizations can be disorienting, but her multiple vampiric roles reflect the larger multivalence of the novel itself.

4. *Aje, Abiku* and the Yoruba

The traditional African and Caribbean elements of the novel reflect a hybridized Atlantic perspective, invoking English xenophobia and ambivalence toward 'aliens,' but also contesting fetishizations of purity through the hybridity of form in the novel. For example, the traditional Yoruba practices and lore presented through Sade and Ore are accompanied by fear of the other, but also introduce a whole new element of 'horror' by threatening English purity. Cousins asserts, 'Oyeyemi, as a Nigerian immigrant to England, embellishes her gothic novel with cultural aspects of her Yoruba heritage, introducing a different field of gothic horrors.'[37] For example, twinning hybridizes tropes of gothic and uncanny literature with traditional Yoruba beliefs: noted for having the highest birth-rate of twins in the world, the Yoruba believe that twins come from divine origin, and represent the twins-god called *orisa-ibeji*, which endows them with supernatural powers.[38] Twinning is used in the novel to hybridize tropes of the gothic and uncanny with a pronounced fear of the alien 'other,' problematizing the notion of purity by situating Miranda in the midst of this hybridization.

Not only are Yoruba beliefs present in the novel, but Nigerian women surround Miranda. Ore is Nigerian born, but adopted by white English parents, and considers herself English. Ore tells Miranda she doesn't necessarily care about her birthplace, and asserts proudly, 'I may be adopted, but I know exactly who I am,' suggesting her self-identification as English.[39] In contrast, Sade identifies completely as Nigerian, despite her status as a legal immigrant. The Nigerian housekeeper practices a benevolent form of Yoruba witchcraft called *aje*, which contains 'aspects symbolic of maternal protection.'[40] This practice is shown with the *juju* she creates out of Luc's old shirts that 'look[s] like two hanged men holding fast to each other' and hangs on the door to her room in the attic.[41] Cousins also points out that Sade's *aje* is manifest in the protective blanket she knits from white wool that she throws over Ore 'like a net to save her from the goodlady.'[42] Cousins asserts,

> Yoruba religious belief integrates sacrifice to ancestors as one of its ritual practices because the ancestors have the ability to directly intervene in daily life.[43]

She employs John Peel's explanation of Yoruba beliefs to explain the scene where Miranda encounters her ancestors in the cellar sitting around a table full of food, tightly corseted with their mouths padlocked by Lily.[44] Peel writes that in Yorubaland, 'a popular belief [was] that the deceased, in going to *Orun* [the otherworld of the ancestors], enter a spirit world rather like the earth, from which they revisit the living periodically.'[45] The Yoruba belief of *abiku*, described as 'evil spirits or demons, who suffer from hunger, thirst, or cold,' and who enter into the bodies of babies to 'improve their condition,' is also illustrated in this scene.[46] One of these spirits will establish itself in the body of a young child, taking sustenance for itself and for the other *abiku* spirits from the food consumed by the child, which results with the child wasting away and eventually dying.[47] Arguing that Jennifer, Anna, and Lily are like these parasitic spirits, Cousins asserts that Miranda has stopped eating partly because she does not want to nourish these spirits, also shown from the padlocks Lily has given them.[48] When Lily offers Miranda a padlock for herself,

> Miranda "gratefully" accepts the padlock, thankful that it will prevent her giving in to the temptation to eat what she, Anna, and Jennifer really crave.

> Framed through *abiku*, the pica is reconfigured from a self-harming eating disorder to a sacrificial act intended to protect others from these dangerous, possessing, vampire-like spirits who sustain themselves parasitically.[49]

Oyeyemi allows European witchcraft to prevail over Sade's Yoruba practices, situating the novel more than ever as part of the European Gothic tradition, but also creating the uncanny feeling that xenophobia overpowers any benevolent form of resistance against it. After slowly driving Sade mad,[50] the Silver house eventually electrocutes her via the kettle.

> Sade puts the kettle on and sparks fly out. Electric shocks say it's time to leave, bye bye…Juju is not enough to protect you. Everything you have I will turn against you…White is for witching, *so ti gbo?* Do you understand now? *White* is for witching, Sade goodbye.[51]

This Silver house's philosophy of white supremacy becomes the element of 'horror' in the novel, as Cousins asserts: 'The goodlady's actions are revealed as part of a reality in England; in the 'alien nation' the horror is enacted by "insiders" not "outsiders."'[52] Despite the apparently successful rejection of 'foreign' bodies by the Silver House, Yoruba elements in the novel serve as a way to heighten the uncanny sense of the supernatural; by utilizing African myth and religious beliefs, Oyeyemi also creates a hybridized sense of transatlantic magic and lore in her novel. Despite the novels pessimistic depiction of the power of xenophobia, the hybridization of Atlantic and English tradition, both within Miranda's body, and throughout the body politic of England, explicitly contests its own pessimism by remaining undeniably optimistic in its hybridity of form.

5. Crossing Cultures: Snow White

In addition to clearly establishing itself as participating in European and Caribbean vampire stories, *White is for Witching* heavily incorporates elements of European fairy tales. Jessica Tiffin compares the Gothic to fairy tale, asserting that 'the stylized, ritualistic repetitions of fairy tale structure are not dissimilar to the stylized, ritualistic repetitions of the vampire cliché,' and that the vampiric encoding as a 'figure of demonic power, deceptive passivity and potent eroticism' is echoed across well-known fairy tales, and 'across their own encoded treatments of life, death and the erotic.'[53] Fairy tales appear in the novel, both through their presence as texts *within* the novel, and through plot elements that strongly resemble some of the most well-known fairy tales. To emphasize the textual parallels of the novel to both the Gothic and European fairy tales, Gothic authors and fairy tales are scattered throughout the novel as a reflection of Miranda's fascination with them. Miranda discusses Poe with Eliot, and later Ore notices that Miranda's bookshelf is well stocked with '*Grimm's Fairy Tales*. Perrault, Andersen, Le Fanu, Wilkie Collins, E.T.A. Hoffman.'[54] Aside from this, Miranda delights in creating stories reminiscent of Grimms' tales that begin with 'Once upon a time' and end, rather expectedly, with children being eaten. Miranda finishes a story she makes up for Ore with,

> As soon as [the woman and the girl Eden] got home she strangled Eden and cooked her for supper. Then she went to bed all drowsy and full and she settled in to get ready for the next dream. The dreams were like a menu, you see, only someone else chose the courses for her.[55]

Miranda is clearly preoccupied with cannibalistic fairy tales and gothic vampire stories. Ore, on the other hand, is enchanted by a wider variety of stories and legend, consistently comparing events and circumstances surrounding Miranda to both European fairy tale, and transatlantic stories. When Ore muses about her previous sexual encounters, she explains, 'In Narnia a girl might ring a bell in a deserted temple and feel the chime in her eyes... Then when the sound dies out, the *White Witch* wakes.'[56] The clear overlap here of Narnia's White Witch and Anna Good, Miranda's great grandmother, a white-haired witch who resides within Miranda, illustrates Ore's ability to make sense of the supernatural occurring within and around Miranda through the use of fairy tale.

Perhaps the strongest element of fairy tale in the novel appears through the striking similarities to the story of 'Snow White'. Many early versions, and countless modernized versions of the story exist, but for this discussion, I will focus on the Grimms' rendering of 'Snow White', which was published originally in Germany.[57] Specifically, the triadic colour scheme of white, black and red, the poison winter apples, cannibalism, and the omnipresence of mirrors all situate the novel as strikingly suggestive of 'Snow White.' Miranda participates, perhaps knowingly, in the fairy tale trope of 'red on a white face, roses and menses' by her constant application of dark red lip stain and her copious use of attar of rose as perfume.[58] Both Ore and Eliot mistake Miranda's intense lip colour for blood; Eliot tells us,

> Miri didn't use lipstick, she used something in a little pot that was applied with a fingertip…The red on her mouth was so strong; maybe it was just the early morning but I'd never seen a red as startling, as odd. Maybe she'd bitten her lip.[59]

Miranda's blood red lip colour is also reminiscent of the 'weird sisters' in *Dracula*, whose blood red lips captivate men with a strange combination of lust and fear.

Black is symbolic in fairy tales and for Miranda, connoting 'enchantment as well as death. In fairy tales the two notions are intertwined. Enchantment is something like reversible death, and death itself appears in tones of enchantment.'[60] Miranda's parallel relationship with Snow White is again emphasized through her hair: the Queen in 'Snow White' attempts to kill Snow White by sticking a poisoned comb in her black hair.[61] Miranda's hair, like Lily's and Snow White's hair, is 'black as ebony,' so black it is almost blue.[62] In addition to this, Miranda contributes to her association with black by choosing to wear only black dresses, and sewing herself a black overcoat before she goes to Cambridge, which she always wears. Miranda's obsession with blackness can be seen as an attempt to counter the whiteness that so strongly pervades her life: the whiteness of the goodlady, Anna Good's obsession with white, the whiteness of the *Silver* house, England's obsession with white as a racially and nationally pure entity, and even her own racial position as white. Miranda even seeks out a black lover as an attempt to counter so much whiteness, sucking the 'life-blood' from Ore while she sleeps.

White is only important for Snow White and Miranda *insofar* as it is tinged with red.'[63] Da Silva comments that 'the purity of whiteness is there to be tinted' as is shown with Anna Good's fear that white will reveal her stains.[64] In addition to its purity, white represents 'supernatural intervention' and the 'otherworldly,' as is also seen in Anna Good's declaration that 'White is for witching.'[65] The red and white winter apples also have an element of enchantment in the novel: they appear in Miranda's vision of the choking woman; an apple appears from nowhere on Ore's bed when she visits the Silver house; and the pile of apples that no one seems to have picked appears on the counter, from which Eliot bakes the pie that leads to Miranda's disappearance.

> When she got home, all-season apples were heaped on one of the counters – the sheer number of them constituted a warning. Some kind of warning to her. The temperature in the kitchen felt well below zero, and the apples were turned so that their white sides were hidden and their red sides glowed like false fire.[66]

This strongly resembles the white and red-cheeked apple in Grimm's tale. The Queen tells Snow White, ''Look here, I'll cut the apple in two: you eat the red cheek and I'll eat the white one.'' But, Grimm explains, 'the apple was so cunningly made that only the red cheek was poisoned.'[67] Similarly, when Eliot bakes a pie out of the apples, Miranda panics, thinking, 'He mean[s] something by the pie. He mean[s] to poison her in some way, to disable her.'[68] After her disappearance, Ore explicitly compares Miranda to Snow White, guessing that 'her throat is blocked with a slice of apple (to stop her speaking words that may betray her).'[69] This mirrors the lump of apple on Snow White's throat that is shaken loose when the glass coffin is moved: The servants moving her 'gave the coffin such a jolt that the lump of poisoned apple which Snow-white had bitten off was jerked out of her throat.'[70] The Silver house seems to have a magical power over these poison apples, as it reveals:

> It was an all-season apple. I can make them grow. Do you know the all-season apples? They have a strange, dual coloring. If you pitied Snow White, then you know. One side of such an apple is always coma-white, and the other side is the waxiest red.[71]

In this passage, the apple falls into Eliot's room through the window, and rolls into Miranda's room, where the mannequin picks it up, carries it downstairs and offers it to Sade, whose heart stops beating, but who nevertheless bites at the poisonous white side of the apple, and 'chew[s], swallow[s], and open[s] her mouth for more.[72]' In this instance, Oyeyemi's tale differs from the Grimm brothers' version in that the white side of the apple, not the red, proves poisonous to Sade, a black Nigerian woman. This perhaps reflects the xenophobic power of the goodlady, the *white* witch, who focuses her racial discrimination on Sade and Ore, the black women in the novel.

The tricolour pattern in 'Snow White' and *White is for Witching* has been situated as a particular occurrence of a transcultural colour scheme, connecting African ritual and European fairy tale.[73] For Yoruba culture, red, black, and white hold significant influence: 'The color black represents perfection, vitality, and infinite depth. Red is often symbolic of blood, the fluid that holds and releases *ase*, the power to make things happen. The hue of spiritual transcendence is white.'[74] Together, these colours represent 'the totality of the cosmos' for Yoruba culture.[75] Oyeyemi gracefully weaves this triadic colour scheme from both traditional cultural Yoruba symbolism, and from European fairy tales representations of ideal womanhood,[76] calling upon the multivalent symbolism of these colours to create a hybridized representation of womanhood and beauty, purity and impurity (both through racial depictions and through uncleanliness of bodily fluids like milk, menses, and blood), as well as the power of vitality, life, and death.

6. Whiteness, Purity and Nationality

The symbolic power of white as a discourse for racial purity strongly suggests the novel's acknowledgement, and ultimate rejection of race and purity discourses. White, a historically powerful representation of the English race and English patriotism, signifies not only the purity of the English nation, but also its body politic, and more specifically, female

bodily 'purity'. Today, white, the colour traditionally associated with England, permeates its patriotic symbolism: the white St. George's dragon; the white cross on the British flag; white jerseys for sports teams; and the White Cliffs of Dover, clearly depicted in the novel as the symbol of Britishness and Britain's borders, all serve as markers for England's purity, cleanliness, and national pride. White is also the significant colour for Anna Good's power as a witch: the witchcraft practiced, however, is distinctly malevolent towards racial impurity and racial 'outsiders'. Before her husband dies in the war, 'White was a color Anna Good was afraid to wear' because 'her fear reflected her feeling that she was not clean.'[77] The house explains that Anna had worn white throughout her life, especially in the most frightening and unpleasant moments: during her baptism, in an unpleasant middle school filming for a British program, and when she first meets Andrew Good, her future husband. These moments serve to emphasize Anna's feeling of uncleanliness, her conviction that 'some vast stain had left her and entered the cloth.'[78] This suggests both her phobia of menstruation, a common characteristic of anorexia and disorderly eating, as well as her xenophobic fear of the 'stains' and 'uncleanliness' of foreigners. The house emphasizes, 'White is for witching, a colour to be worn so that all other colors can enter you, so that you may use them. At a pinch, cream will do.'[79] Following Andrew's death, Anna begins her witching as a means to seek revenge for her husband's death on those groups she finds responsible:

> Four years later Anna Good put the cream dress on again, and an expensive white coat that Andrew had bought her, and she did some witching…she gave [the house its] task. "I hate them," she said. "Blackies, Germans, killers, dirty…dirty killers."[80]

This passage suggests that the Silver house, bewitched by Anna Good, is behind the racist attacks occurring in Dover. Indeed, Cousins asserts that Anna 'brought about the house's sentience the day she hears her husband, Andrew Silver, has been killed.'[81] One problem with the idea of white as a point of ethnocentricism lies in the racial whiteness of Germans, who Anna Good also hates. Conveniently though, Germans are not present in the novel, facilitating the conception of racial whiteness as purity and racial 'otherness' as dirty. Later, Cousins points out, 'the novel strongly suggests that the goodlady is behind these attacks [on Dover's immigrant population], offering her racism as the real gothic 'monster' in the text.'[82] Miranda explains to Ore, 'We are the goodlady…the house and I.'[83] While the goodlady and the Silver house are sometimes differentiated and sometimes blurred as similar manifestations within Miranda, Cousins proposes that 'the house manifests the returning past as a dangerously xenophobic character called the goodlady,' suggesting that while the two characters are distinguished, they both are born from Anna Good's witchcraft.[84] Clearly, white plays an important role for the multiple gothic presences and monsters in the text: despite the frequent sightings of *white* ghosts, the use of 'white' magic and witchcraft, and uncanny visitations from Miranda's (racially white) female ancestors, the goodlady and the Silver house stand as the 'true' gothic monsters in the novel.

Yet another trope of the Gothic as well as a significant object in 'Snow White,' mirrors connect Miranda to a European tradition of Freud's Uncanny via doubling, to Lacanian psychoanalysis, and to questions of self-image and female agency. Like the Queen's brutally honest mirror in 'Snow White,' mirrors and reflections reveal unwanted truths in *White is for Witching*. On one of Miranda's sleepless nights, she finds Sade cooking in the kitchen, and spills water on the floor, where she sees her 'terrible face':

> Water makes a mirror of any surface. She'd sucked her cheeks in so far that the rest of her face emerged in a series of interconnected caves. Her eyes were small, wild globes. The skull was temporary, the skull collected the badness together and taught it discipline, that was all. Miranda wanted to say, *That is not my face.* No, it wasn't hers, she had to get away from it, peel it back.[85]

Later, after a vision of Miranda's female ancestors sitting around a table with padlocks over their opened mouths, Miranda receives a padlock for herself and 'pass[es] the hallway mirror and she was clean again. She looked at her reflection and saw a cube instead, four stiff faces in one.'[86] Through the mirror, Miranda sees Anna, Jennifer and Lily all dwelling inside of her, but also as an uncanny part of her. Her female ancestors are not only within her, they *are* her, and Miranda's attempts at avoiding them do her little good. Mirrors reveal the sides of Miranda that she does not want to admit have power, although these women are inseparable from her own identity.

Another intriguing similarity between 'Snow White' and *White is for Witching* lies in the cannibalism both stories suggest. Miranda's hunger for human flesh situates her 'evil desire' as analogous to the wicked Queen, who mistakenly thinks she is eating Snow White's lungs and liver in her first attempt to kill Snow White. 'The cook was ordered to stew [the lungs and liver] in salt, and the wicked woman devoured them, thinking she had eaten the liver and lungs of Snowwhite.'[87] In both stories, cannibalism never actually occurs, but is clearly desired. The Queen's cannibalism, however, does not actually occur, and her desire for Snow White's flesh is a product of her insecurity about her physical appearance, whereas the depiction of Miranda's preoccupation with cannibalism focuses on assuming control over her inherited desires (and, arguably, racism) by depriving her body of what it desperately craves: consumption of the 'other'. Miranda clearly struggles with the urge to please and feel acceptance from her repressed female ancestors who dwell within her, while simultaneously resisting their urgings to 'eat for [them],' and consume flesh as a way to participate in their desires for disorderly eating and to keep her ancestors 'alive' within her.[88] Miranda's struggle for individual agency is also articulated through her personal identification with the Caribbean soucouyant. Miranda's identification with the soucouyant as a character of potential female agency and freedom is however inverted through the paralysis her undeniable hunger creates—Miranda resists the temptation to consume flesh, but she also allows her body to slowly waste away in her refusal to consume nutritious food.

Oyeyemi creates a transatlantic hybridity of the gothic genre by situating her novel among multiple traditions of the return of the *unheimlich* – the uncanny and the repressed – through the use of magic and lore from around the Atlantic, suggesting that this transcultural legacy is also part of Britain's 'culture,' however repressed. Throughout the novel, Oyeyemi clearly invokes English xenophobia and ambivalence toward 'outsiders' and racially 'unclean' immigrants, but she also contests such fetishizations of purity through the hybridity of its form. When she swallows the batteries from her mother's watch and descends into the depths of the house, Miranda combines an act of her own free will (through pica) with an act of acceptance of her failure against the repressed gothic horror—xenophobia—she so strongly resists. Miranda's ultimate disappearance, in spite of her resistance to the house, the goodlady, and her ancestors, brings into question her fundamental power against them. The forces that subdue Miranda, the same forces that have for centuries in Europe and around the Atlantic maintained the racial 'other' as subordinate, ultimately overcome Miranda. Her defeat by these forces casts a bleak depiction on the contemporary progress of racial and cultural hybridity that continues to haunt us. Miranda exhibits a weakness against her ancestral ties to colonial prejudices, but despite this, the hybridity of the novel's form articulates a subversive outlook on purity discourses to

come: Oyeyemi's hybridization of traditional genre, perspective of narration, poetic narrative, in addition to syncretic traditional and cultural elements from postcolonial transatlantic regions, all contribute to the contestation of purity discourses, and despite the pessimism evident in the novel, offer a positive rendering of the possibility of a truly transcultural England.

Notes

[1] Oyoyemi, Helen. *White is for Witching* (New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 2009), 158.
[2] Jerrold E. Hogle, *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.
[3] Ibid., 3.
[4] Ibid., 6.
[5] Claire Armistead, 'Book of the Week: *White is for Witching* by Helen Oyeyemi,' *The Guardian*, 2009, 1 June 2013, http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/audio/2009/jun/18/helen-oyeyemi-white-is-for-witching.
[6] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 15-17.
[7] Ibid., 15.
[8] Ibid., 53.
[9] Ibid., 22.
[10] Ibid., 22.
[11] Helen Cousins, 'Helen Oyeyemi and the Yoruba Gothic: *White is for Witching*,' *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 47.1 (2012): 57.
[12] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), 169.
[13] Ibid., 169.
[14] Bram Stoker, 1897.
[15] For an in-depth discussion on reverse colonization and growing Victorian anxiety over the colonial system, see Stephen D. Arata's 'The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization,' *Victorian Studies* 33.4 (1990): 21.
[16] Cousins, 'Yoruba Gothic,' 57.
[17] Armistead, 'Book of the Week'.
[18] Ben Machall, 'Helen Oyeyemi: The Times Interview,' 2009, 1 June 2013, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/WoleSoyinkaSociety/message/3628.
[19] Christopher Craft, '"Kiss Me with those Red Lips": Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's Dracula,' *Representations* 8.1 (1984): 117. Craft offers a lengthy reading of gender and inversion, explicitly depicting 'Dracula's desire to fuse with a male,' where 'an implicitly homoerotic desire achieves representation as a monstrous homosexuality, as a demonic inversion of normal gender relations' (110).
[20] Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: NY, 1979), 51.
[21] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 70.
[22] Ibid., 74.
[23] Ibid., 120.
[24] Ibid., 89.
[25] Ibid., 118, emphasis added.
[26] Ibid., 137.
[27] Giselle Anatol, 'Transforming the Skin-Shedding Soucouyant: Using Folklore to Reclaim Female Agency in Caribbean Literature,' *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* (2000): 44-45. Anatol has written on reclaiming the soucouyant as a form of 'female agency in Caribbean literature'. Anatol claims that while the soucouyant has been used 'to socialize women according to patriarchal dictates,' she can also be a positive feminist figure of 'woman-

centred, woman-positive' independence and strength (46). While 'the soucouyant has been used to demonize female 'drive' – whether this be independence and ambition, sexual enthusiasm, or same-sex desire,' she can also be seen by feminists as a 'paragon of female agency' (52). Anatol's argument that the soucouyant can be seen as a model for female agency can also be considered in light of Miranda, who struggles to achieve autonomy through her resistance of her vampiric urges of the soucouyant.

[28] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 144.
[29] Ibid., 177.
[30] Ibid., 48.
[31] Ibid., 203.
[32] Ibid., 154.
[33] Ibid., 198.
[34] Ibid., 177.
[35] Cousins, 'Yoruba Gothic,' 51.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 49.
[38] Taiwo Oruene, 'Magical Powers of Twins in the Socio-Religious Beliefs of the Yoruba,' *Folklore* 96.2 (1985): 208-209.
[39] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 170, 145.
[40] Cousins, 'Yoruba Gothic,' 49.
[41] Ibid., 90.
[42] Ibid., 50.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 119.
[45] J. D. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 174, 1 June 2013, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.02652.0001.001.
[46] A. B Ellis, *The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa: Their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, Language, Etc.* (United States: Forgotten Books, 2007), 112.
[47] Cousins, 'Yoruba Gothic,' 51.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] An allusion to the Gothic 'madwoman in the attic' as well as Rhys' Caribbean retelling of *Jane Eyre* as Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.
[51] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 162.
[52] Cousins, 'Yoruba Gothic,' 57. For an in-depth conversation on notions of the outsider and the alien presence in the novel, see Cousins' article, as well as Cannon Schmitt, *Alien Nation: Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fictions and English Nationality* (Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).
[53] Jessica Tiffin, 'Blood on the Snow: Inverting Snow White in the Vampire Tales of Neil Gaiman and Tanith Lee,' In *Anti-Tales: The Uses of Disenchantment* (Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 222-223.
[54] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 149.
[55] Ibid., 160.
[56] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 143, (emphasis added).
[57] For more on the historical genesis of six independent versions of the story, including the Brothers Grimm tale, see Christine Shojaei Kawan, 'A Brief Literary History of *Snow White*', *Fabula* 49.4 (2008).

[58] Francisco Vaz Da Silva, 'Red as Blood, White as Snow, Black as Crow: Chromatic Symbolism of Womanhood in Fairy Tales,' *Marvels & Tales*, 21.2 (2007): 244.
[59] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 57.
[60] Da Silva, 'Red as Blood,' 247.
[61] Jacob Grimm, Wilhelm Grimm and David Luke, *Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm: Selected Tales* (London: Penguin, 1982), 78.
[62] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 149.
[63] Da Silva, 'Red as Blood,' 245.
[64] Ibid., 246.
[65] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 108.
[66] Ibid., 217.
[67] Grimm, *Selected Tales*, 80.
[68] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 220.
[69] Ibid., 1.
[70] Grimm, *Selected Tales*, 81.
[71] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 128.
[72] Ibid., 129.
[73] Da Silva, 'Red as Blood.'
[74] Theresa Washington, *Our Mothers, Our Powers, Our Texts: Manifestations of Ajé in Africana Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 29.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Da Silva, 'Red as Blood,' 250.
[77] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 107.
[78] Ibid., 108.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., 108-109.
[81] Cousins, 'Yoruba Gothic,' 50.
[82] Ibid., 56.
[83] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 202.
[84] Cousins, 'Yoruba Gothic,' 49.
[85] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 90.
[86] Ibid., 120.
[87] Grimm, *Selected Tales*, 75.
[88] Oyeyemi, *White is for Witching*, 119.

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Monstrous Labyrinths: Hellish Prisons, Liberated Language

John Conway

Abstract

As monstrous space, the labyrinth has been conceived by Michel Foucault as the home of the Minotaur, a beast who represents the unlikely fusion of words. Because of the rarity inherent within language, meaning is lost and recovered within the labyrinth. Deleuze viewed the labyrinth as a place of rhizomatic freedom and energetic transformation. The labyrinth is a place of fear, where the subject loses, and then regains, their identity. These processes that involve the morphing of language can be seen in Lovecraft's 'At the Mountain of Madness' as well as the 80's cult classic *Hellbound: Hellraisers II*. Both employ labyrinths to explain language, meaning, and identity.

Key Words:

Labyrinth, Foucault, Deleuze, Lovecraft, language, horror, monstrous.

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1. The Minotaur

Although monstrous spaces often take the form of labyrinths, the fact that the labyrinth has become a site for the monstrous is anything but predictable given the labyrinth's origin as sacred symbol. Labyrinths are very often rightly seen as the site of the monstrous – where death of the subject occurs – even though it is also a place for remediation and liberation. Ignoring the labyrinth's complicated genealogy and its dual function as place to get lost as well as place of rhizomatic transformation ignores the complicated relationship between the subject, identity, and language, making the labyrinth simply a horrific space which houses the dull, mute Minotaur. In a dual process the Minotaur and the journey through the labyrinth destroys the traveller's identity and reconstitutes it as something new in an ambiguous process that both imprisons and liberates. By examining Michel Foucault's use of the labyrinth in *Death and the Labyrinth* (1986), as well as Gilles Deleuze's use of the trope in a variety of texts (most notably *Dialogues* (1977)*, Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975)*, Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962), and *Thousand Plateaus* (1987)), the labyrinths in Lovecraft's 'At the Mountains of Madness' (1936) and the 80's cult classic *Hellbound: Hellraisers II* (1988) can be seen as 1) sites where language and meaning are set free through bifurcation, 2) extreme places of bondage, fear, and deep truth, and 3) mythic places of horror that undermine and subvert modern Realism as well as representation.

It has been argued that the concept of the labyrinth began as the path of a highly complicated dance whose visual representation (in unicursal form) was the path of that dance.[1] The labyrinth as image predates its textual manifestation by at least 1,000 years. The first images of the labyrinth are Cretan labyrinths (unicursal seven circuit) in the form of stone-inscribed petroglyphs that date back to the beginning of the Bronze Age (2500-2000 BC). Far from being the home of the Minotaur (although subterranean in nature), these Bronze Age petroglyphs actually represented Mother Earth and have been found above Bronze Age mines and tombs, assuring the subterranean traveller safe passage and a return to the surface.[2] These

labyrinths were unicursal, having only one entrance and one exit, bringing the walker along one path to the centre and out again.[3]

Although it is difficult to determine exactly when the labyrinth became the home for the Minotaur, it is safe to say it manifested once the labyrinth made the shift to textual sign, most likely a Greek import from the Minoans where it is possible the word became associated with a certain structure built by Daedalus.[4]

The labyrinth is most likely associated with a subterranean cave-like complex where the walker is easily lost even though the labyrinth is also a place for spiritual journey (see the floor of the Chartres Cathedral). There are a host of movies where the labyrinth serves as home to monsters, including *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *The Shining* (1980), *Alien* (1979), and *Hellraisers* (1988). The labyrinth has become a word to describe large – almost hellish in their complexity – bureaucratic organizations and buildings, and terrifying actions like torture. The labyrinthine is usually meant to conceal and hide the truth, just as the Minotaur was placed deep within the maze to hide the frightening fact of Pasiphae's bestiality, so we hide and torture men and women far from the surface. The labyrinth is home to many monsters.

The complexity of the labyrinth as a triple sign (kinetic, visual, textual) allowed literary theorists like Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze to explore the monstrous labyrinth, the home for complicated processes: the ambiguities and complexities inherent with the problems associated with the deferred meaning of language and its resulting impact on identity and reality. The monstrous labyrinth isn't simply a place where the subject is lost and murdered, it can be a subversive structure that undermines majoritarian narrative. The monstrous enables death and liberation by the hybridization of location and process.

Michel Foucault deployed the labyrinth in a variety of his works including *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972), 'Preface to Transgression' (1977), 'Language to Infinity' (1977)[5] but most notably *Death and the Labyrinth* (1986). For Foucault the labyrinth is a site where meaning is destroyed and reconstituted. It is the site for the horrifically fused Minotaur. The Minotaur is a symbol of metamorphosis in its fusion of two different beings (man and beast) who sits and watches the traveller from the centre:

> But it must be remembered that it's the Minotaur who watches within Daedalus' palace, and after the long corridors, he is the last challenge; on the return journey, the place which imprisons him, protects him, was built for him, manifests externally his mixed monstrous nature.[6]

The labyrinth, which acts as prison and protection for the Minotaur also becomes a symbol of his 'mixed monstrous nature.' Foucault exposes the duality of language (how the same words can mean multiple things) by merging the Minotaur and labyrinth, showing that the space one passes through and the process of doing so are the same. Merging tropes this way shifts perspectives until one is not sure if there are even one-to-one correspondences between the metaphor and the concept. He lets the metaphors slide over one another in a 'Minotaur-like' way, proving an important point: the monstrous – far from just killing or disabling meaning – actually enables language and meaning to 'be free,' to bifurcate, and to branch.

However, Foucault's ambivalence to the 'monstrous fruition' of the Minotaur demonstrates the danger and freedom inherent in what is at stake when considering the effects that language has on the subject's identity.[7] The Minotaur is a 'marvel and a trap.'[8] It is a fusion of man and beast, the 'entrapment of man, beast, and the gods, a knot of appetites and mute thoughts',[9] but the Minotaur, a product of fusion, is also itself fused to the labyrinth:

> The labyrinth is at the same time the truth and the nature of the Minotaur, that which encloses him externally and explains him from within. The labyrinth while hiding, reveals; it burrows into these joined beings it hides, and it leads to the splendour of their origins.[10]

The labyrinth is the truth (revelation of the centre) and the practice (difficult and fearful process of metamorphosis). The labyrinth encloses him, resides within him, and explains him – it conceals and reveals. Foucault believes the Minotaur to be a dangerous thing as well as a marvel because of its polymorphous and transformative nature. The Minotaur is also in part a victim. Its birth is also its imprisonment, which the labyrinth will reveal because the Minotaur 'is at the same time prisoner and protected, revealed and hidden.'[11]

Language, like the labyrinth, both reveals and conceals. Language duplicates itself (out of the necessity of its rarity), in a transforming process whose identity is recovered by 'joining them in a labyrinth of words.'[12] Language must repeat itself, go away from itself, so that something more can be said, this something only recovered in a labyrinthine process. The Minotaur and the labyrinth all serve to reveal complex communicative processes that explain the nature of language. It is only through the labyrinth and the encounter with the Minotaur that one communicates at all.

In case it isn't clear that fear is involved when entering the labyrinth, Foucault explains:

> What, do you imagine that I would take so much trouble and so much pleasure in my writing, do you think that I would keep so persistently to my task if I were not preparing – with a rather shaky hand – a labyrinth into which I can venture, in which I can move my discourse, opening up underground passages, forcing it to go far from itself, finding overhangs that reduce and deform its itinerary, in which I can lose myself and appear at last to eyes that I will never have to meet again. I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write.[13]

For Foucault the labyrinth is an unstable, unknown, underground place where open throughways force discourse and identity to reduce and deform its pre-planned, programmed itinerary (what we plan and want). It is a place to move, lose and change – a place of metamorphosis – a place to escape imposing and forced categories that are stamped upon us by government and institutions of power and discipline. It is the only place to lose ourselves, and in a manner, discover ourselves. For Foucault, it seems that a labyrinth is a place to escape identity and to transform. The reformation of identity is an ambiguous process. It can look like Buffalo Bill's hellish, basement-prison, or the centre of the alien ship in *Alien* where the face huggers wait, or the drive reactor in *Event Horizon* (1997) which reforms identities, or the labyrinthine hell in *Hellraisers*.

According to Foucault, language must refer away from itself to reclaim meaning in a circular process since there are 'fewer terms of designation than there are things to designate.' Language departs itself in a 'labyrinthine extension of corridors' to be 'brought together in a unique form: dual, ambiguous, Minotaur-like.'[14]

2. Losing One's Face

Gilles Deleuze also employs the use of the concept of the monstrous labyrinth to explicate complicated processes that seek to explain language, meaning, and identity. In

Dialogues II (1977)[15] Deleuze is concerned about pinioned identity, being labelled and pinned down by power apparatuses that manipulate binaries. This relates to the Foucaultian concern about police and politicians seeking to know our identities. Deleuze explores the freedom from these bonds (including the organism). One must learn to become a traitor, to become demonic, to trace a line between: 'This is also the "outsider": Moby Dick, or the Thing or Entity of Lovecraft terror.'[16] The demonic is praised as being liberatory; the outsider, the horror, that thing which is unnamed in Lovecraft and which is something you'd think one should avoid at all costs is called by Deleuze the 'Anomalous,' and is the very thing which allows a line of flight. It is a place of terror and freedom. This is the fear of 'losing one's face.'[17] This is the progression away from imprisonment by language. It appears to be painful, fearful, and joyful. Perhaps Deleuze inhabits horror in this way because he has detected our ambivalence.

Although there are multiple entrances to this discussion of the labyrinth, one entry way is how the labyrinth is used in conjunction with becoming and the eternal return. In 'The Overman: Against the Dialectic' chapter in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962)[18] Deleuze writes about the frequency of the labyrinth in Nietzsche's writing. Deleuze says that the labyrinth represents the unconscious self and the eternal return. Deleuze goes on to say that a labyrinth is not a place to get lost but the way back to the same point that is, was, and will be. But most importantly Deleuze says that 'the labyrinth is becoming, the affirmation of becoming.'[19] What does it mean to say that the labyrinth is becoming? To answer this, we must wind our way to *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975).

Like Foucault, Deleuze believes the labyrinth's primary function is that of transformation and metamorphosis, not entrapment and imprisonment. With becoming one is transformed. In the works of Deleuze 'becoming' is a concept related to networking and connection. It is a place and process of movement, devoid of stagnation. In *Toward a Minor Literature* Deleuze discusses animal-becoming in Kafka's stories. According to Deleuze, becoming-animal is to escape the world of 'pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds.'[20] To become-animal is never to be equivocated as a metaphor of representation. To become-animal is to be free of the labelling signifiers that bind one. It is no longer about the content as much as it is about the network, the connections which one makes, 'the particular underground tunnel in the rhizome or the burrow. Because these tunnels are underground intensities.'[21] The labyrinth is transformative as a becoming because it acts as a subterranean network through which one dodges the strata of the world 'above.' By taking a line of escape one finds intensities and is free from the problem of signification. The labyrinth is not a subterranean maze, a place to get lost, it is a rhizomatic machine where one is freed, where one can escape segmentarity, representation, and effect change.

Deleuze juxtaposes the labyrinth with the mediocre, the temperate, and the moderate. The labyrinth is an extreme place, a place of deep truth, and an escape from bondage.[22] Truth is not a temperate zone. One must find truth by taking a line of flight and burrowing into a labyrinth, a rhizomatic network. Escaping bondage comes with a price, usually an encounter with Foucault's Minotaur, Deleuze's concept of the Anamolous, or Lovecraft's 'Outsider.'

Deleuze explains that the Anomalous – which is a monstrous being – is not a humanized, Oedipal, familiar subject that we can identify with, who offers to lead us out of some fatherly instinct. It is better to say it is not human at all but something defined by its affects: 'Human tenderness is as foreign to it as human classifications. Lovecraft applies the term 'Outsider' to this thing or entity, the Thing, which arrives and passes at the edge, which is linear yet multiple.'[23] This is Lovecraft's nameless horror, the Anomalous. A 'becoming' is a rhizome is a subterranean network is a labyrinth a constellation of concepts combining horror,

transformation, and the labyrinth. Deleuze's use of Lovecraft is appropriate especially since Lovecraft himself used labyrinthine imagery to help explain terror and freedom.

3. The Anomalous

For Lovecraft the labyrinth is a site for the 'Other' or Anomalous that Deleuze writes about. It's the physical manifestation of the abstract entity that takes form only within the intricate structures of the maze or deep within a subterranean burrow. Lovecraft's stories focus more on the anticipation of the horror than the horror itself, and the labyrinth is the trope that helps him build anticipation through its windings and delays. For example, in 'The Beast in the Cave' (1905) the narrator finds himself '….lost, completely lost, hopelessly lost in the vast labyrinthine recess of the Mammoth Cave.'[24] Once lost, the narrator encounters a hideous thing deep within the vast, subterranean cave complex. The horror is derived more from the fact that the narrator encounters the beast in the dark without being able to see what it is, that he couldn't 'behold its form.'[25] Although the narrator does return to the site where the monster lies dead (after having been stabbed by the narrator in self defence), the horror is not derived from the campy description of the white haired, apish monster, it is from the moment before when the dreadful monster approached him. The fear is encountered without form and without representation. It transpires deep within the labyrinth where representation has no place.

In 'Pickman's Model' (1927) horror is represented in the form of a painting. The narrator navigates a narrow maze of alleyways in Boston's North End to reach a monstrous, horrific center. Here also the 'Other' is not ever truly seen, only described as a second hand account of the painting of the monstrous thing. The horror is derived from the fact that whatever the model was, it was a thing in 'real' life.[26]

Perhaps the best story where the labyrinth serves to show an encounter with the Outsider, where are previous notions of representation and reality are destroyed, is the story 'At the Mountains of Madness' (1936). In this story a group of explorers finds an impossibly large and ancient labyrinthine city that blows apart their conception of Earth's and mankind's history. In the story, two men fly a small plane into an uncharted mountain range in the remote Antarctic: 'I shuddered as the seething labyrinth of fabulous walls and towers and minarets loomed out of the troubled ice vapors above our heads.'[27] This image is compared to a 'mirage' and is described as being 'uncanny and fantastically vivid.'[28] The labyrinth is a place of the non-real. It is a mythic place of horror, a place that undermines and subverts modern realism and our notions of scientific progress.

To understand the reality of the labyrinth is arduous because the realization and the center is protected by mirage, mirrors, deferred meaning, and more corridor. The labyrinth actually can destroy one's conception of reality (and representation) as is seen by the narrator in 'At the Mountains of Madness:'

> Every incident of that four-and-a-half hour flight is burned into my recollection because of its crucial position in my life. It marked my loss, at the age of fifty-four, of all that peace and balance which the normal mind possesses through its accustomed conception of external nature and nature's laws. Thenceforward the ten of us…were to face a hideously amplified world of lurking horrors which nothing can erase from our emotions, and which we would refrain from sharing with mankind in general if we could.[29]

The narrator says the experience is so otherwordly and beyond the ken of what we know and see that even words cannot be used to represent the experience. The labyrinthine city that the men encounter breaks apart their previous set of assumptions and all of their stratified

notions of peace and order. The men encounter the same trepidation and fear that is encountered in the labyrinth when realism shatters. From the labyrinth comes a destruction of Realism. The city itself seems to fly in the face of natural law. The architecture is inhuman and comprised architecture that defied reason and geometric laws. Lovecraft describes the alien city:

> The nameless stone labyrinth consisted, for the most part, of walls from ten to one hundred and fifty feet in ice-clear height, and of a thickness varying from five to ten feet. It was composed mostly of prodigious blocks of dark primordial slate, schist, and sandstone – blocks in many cases as large as 4 x 6 x 8 feet – though in several places it seemed to be carved out of a solid, uneven bed rock of pre-Cambrian slate. The buildings were far from equal in size, there being innumerable honeycomb arrangements of enormous extent as well as smaller separate structures. The general shape of these things tended to be conical, pyramidal, or terraced; though there were many perfect cylinders, perfect cubes, clusters of cubes, and other rectangular forms, and a peculiar sprinkling of angled edifices whose five-pointed ground plan roughly suggested modern fortifications. The builders had made constant expert use of the principle of the arch, and domes had probably existed in the city's heyday.[30]

The whole seems to offend against clear-headed reason in the way it is described as feverish and dizzying. Like any complicated labyrinth seen from above there is a sense of terrifying oppression.

The ancient labyrinth was constructed and inhabited by alien things, terrible to contemplate. These things are only beheld in a kind of secondary way via the remnants of the vast labyrinth they left behind. The narrator and his partner Danforth enter into the labyrinth, giving the reader a first person perspective versus the third person perspective from above. They thread their 'dim way through the labyrinth with the aid of map and compass.' They encounter rooms and corridors; they climb up ramps, cross floors and bridges, encounter blocked passageways as well as false leads.[31] Although the narrator is not affected, Danforth becomes adversely affected by the strangeness of the labyrinth, its origins, and the possibility of something dark lurking within it. It causes him to become 'unstrung' and to sing a lightheaded, hysterical chant. The labyrinth causes Danforth to lose his mind, to become unhinged, to rebel against the realism of his stratified existence. The labyrinth enables this and in some ways destroys reason and realism. It does this through horror. In recounting the experience the narrator does recall the dream-like quality of the endless rooms and large, vaulted ceilings of the dead city: 'Yet these are purely dream fragments involving no memory of volition, details, or physical exertion. It was as if we floated in a nebulous world or dimension without time, causation, or orientation.'[32] Is this closer to what happens when one is transformed within the labyrinth? The labyrinth in Lovecraft operates in the way that Deleuze and Foucault are using it, affecting and transforming the subject.

Having said that, it does seem that Deleuze uses the Lovecraftian concepts a bit differently even though one can see what Deleuze means when reading Lovecraft against the grain. Mainly, Lovecraft didn't mean for the anomaly to bring any kind of freedom or liberation. It does seem to have that affect (if madness can be called a liberation from reason), but the narrator wishes those things to be kept hidden:

> It is absolutely necessary, for the peace and safety of mankind, that some of earth's dark, dead corners and unplumbed depths be let alone; lest sleeping

> abnormalities wake to resurgent life, and blasphemously surviving nightmares squirm and splash out of their black lairs to newer and wider conquests.[33]

The 'Anomalous' as Deleuze would call it is something that Lovecraft would say causes madness. This is most likely Deleuze's intent. The kind of unmooring he is writing about is full of fear and horror and is 'madness' since it runs counter to what we have known up to this point. It seems that Deleuze wants us to be 'mad' in that sense.

Does Lovecraft detail further what exactly it is like to encounter the alien or the anomalous, that thing that Danforth saw which drove him mad? It was not material; it was a mirage, a 'single fantastic, demoniac glimpse'[34] of something beyond the labyrinth that they had traversed (although the narrator admits it could still be a result of their journey into the labyrinth and its horrors itself). After much cajoling after the incident, the narrator is able to learn the following about what Danforth 'saw:'

> He has on rare occasions whispered disjointed and irresponsible things about "the black pit," "the carven rim," "the protoShoggoths," "the windowless solids with five dimensions," "the nameless cylinder," "the elder Pharos," "Yog-Sothoth," "the primal white jelly," "the color out of space," "the wings," "the eyes in the darkness," "the moon-ladder," "the original, the eternal, the undying," and other bizarre conceptions.[35]

The Deleuzean 'Other' via Lovecraft is more delusional than real. It is immaterial, yet it is spawned or it is a result of a labyrinthine encounter. It is not easily localized within one image, any more than the subject's position is localized easily within a labyrinth. It might be better to say that the Other operates 'behind the scenes' of meaning and that it can only be discerned in this case through a horrific encounter which detaches the subject from reality. This seems to be a powerful effect, and one can begin to see better why Deleuze leans so heavily on horror, the labyrinth, and Lovecraft.

4. The Terrible Place

Labyrinths abound in a variety of film genres, including horror and science fiction. One account of the labyrinth in horror film is the concept of the 'terrible place' written about by Carol J. Clover in her book *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (1992).[36] The labyrinth, whose genealogy can be seen within Western myth, is employed with great effect in a genre whose conventions seem suffused with the fantastic and the mythical.

According to Clover the 'Terrible Place' is a common and venerable convention in the horror film. Most often, the terrible place is a house or tunnel. Examples include the mansion in Psycho but also the houses in *Texas Chain Saw Massacre, Hell Night, Halloween, Rosemary's Baby as well as The Amityville Horror.*[37] There are a plethora of other horror/thriller/sci-fi movies which feature a labyrinthine terrible place including *The Shining* (1980), *The Name of the* Rose (1986)*, Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *Disturbia* (2007), *Vacancy* (2007), *Cube* (1997), and its sequel *Hypercube* (2002), the *Alien* franchise, the *Resident Evil* franchise, and the *Tomb Raider* franchise, not to mention both *Jim Henson's Labyrinth* (1986), *Pan's Labyrinth* (2007) and *Hellraisers* (1987). The labyrinth is a climactic plot device where protagonists flee or where they find themselves trapped. Clover explains that a typical convention is the close observation of a slow understanding of the victim as they view evidence of terrible crimes committed in the Terrible Place.[38] The labyrinth is the perfect place for this kind of understanding to occur.

Clover describes the terrible place in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre II* (1974) as a 'subterranean labyrinth connected to the world above by channels and a culvert.'[39] The house or tunnel may at first appear to be a safe place or haven, but the walls of the labyrinth have a dual function: the very walls that act as protection become, once the Minotaur enters, the very walls that hold the victim in.[40] The dual and ambiguous nature of the labyrinth allows the final encounter with the monster in most horror films to be a birthplace of transformation as well as a horrific, multicursal maze, due to its tradition as verbal and visual sign.

Another movie where the subject encounters the monstrous Outsider and the resulting fear and transformation is the horror film *Hellbound: Hellraisers II* (1988) where hell is envisioned as one mammoth labyrinth, a place of woe but also of energetic transformation. In *Hellbound* identity is reformed through the work of the demonic Cenebites, themselves the victims/beneficiaries of an encounter with the Anomolous which not only reforms their identity but also subverts the very nature of reality through a labyrinthine process.

Hellbound: Hellraiser II is best categorized as a 1980's slasher film. Like many of the 1980's films at that time (*Halloween*, *The Hills Have Eyes, The Texas Chain Saw Massacre, Psycho, A Nightmare on Elm Street, Friday the Thirteenth*), the Hellraisers franchise spawned multiple sequels: 8 films. The killers in *Hellbound* are demonic Cenebites who use all manner of sadistic weaponry to dispatch their victims, but these demons were once human.

The location for *Hellbound* is indeed a terrible place. The visual depiction of hell in *Hellbound* is a labyrinth akin to Escher's *Relativity*, a place with multiple layers, endless corridors, and innumerable stairways.[41] It is a place where the strange and grotesque Cenobites rule, once men and women, now horrifically deformed creatures possessed of demonic power. *Hellbound* is a warning of transformation gone awry, of creating a Deleuzean body without organs without caution. Similarly *Hellbound* is an example of Foucault's fear realized when meaning is deferred and one's autonomous, stable identity is sacrificed. It is the fear consequent of losing one's identity, or of losing one's face.

Hell is accessed via a puzzle box; the gates of hell are literally opened and the labyrinth reaches out into the 'real' world. Tiffany solves the puzzle in the middle of a room inside of the demented Doctor Channard's house, and the entire house itself begins to creak and reorganize itself to make way for the portal. In fact, the entire natural order is affected: the wind blows, the sun dims, lightning flashes. Light can be seen emanating from without, seemingly expanding the scope of what is outside and what is inside.[42] Glass breaks, books fly off the shelves, then passageways literally open up within the walls, opening up into space that is impossibly outside the house itself, exposing corridors which have burrowed into space which shouldn't be there. The passages are glaringly bright, and from these emerge the Cenebites. The Cenebites are the denizens of hell who are paradoxically liberators of others' identities through brutal transformations even as they are victims of the same. Their demonic identities harbour some aspect of their fallen, human selves. Desire summons the Cenebites, and they are the result after desire has gone awry. They offer both a liberatory as well as the prison-like dimension to transformation. Their identity transformation is the result of an encounter with the impersonal Other housed at the centre of the labyrinth.

Hell 'proper' is one (presumably) infinitely large multicursal, multi-leveled labyrinth. The viewer's first sight of the labyrinth is a 'top-down' that is meant to show the intricacy of the maze. Up to this point in the film it was a first person point of view meant to make the reader feel lost. Kirsty enters the labyrinth from the top and she and the viewer see that the labyrinth stands above what looks like an abyss. The labyrinth itself resembles a series of interconnected buildings, walkways, and arches with windows and stairs. It is a kind of labyrinthine city, resembling Lovecraft's alien city. The structure itself is chipped and worn, signifying age, and perhaps disrepair due to apathy or lack of a caretaker.

If there is a caretaker, it is 'Leviathan, Lord of the Labyrinth' which is an impersonal, gigantic pyramidal structure which floats above the whole of the labyrinth, emanating black light and a vaguely industrial sound like that of an approaching train. It is Deleuze's Anamolous, and it is a dangerous encounter because the creature is not 'fatherly.' Doctor Channard who entered hell to see all there is to see and know is transformed within a grotesque chamber that rises from the labyrinth. His body is punctured and pumped full of chemicals and his own limbs are replaced with what look like cyborgian implants of some kind. Chinard has now become a Cenebite, and although the process is quite (obviously) painful, he remarks, 'and to think I hesitated.'

Hellraisers shows in detail how the labyrinth as a trope operates the way that Foucault, Deleuze, and Lovecraft envisioned it. It is a place where the demonic Cenebites rule, denizens who have ultimately lost their face with a dangerous encounter with Lovecraft's Other and Deleuze's Anamolous. The labyrinth transforms old identities and creates new ones. It is a place to lose oneself and find oneself, and perhaps paradoxically, it demonstrates what we know as reality to be an illusion. In much the same way that the ancient city in Lovecraft's 'At the Mountains of Madness' exposes that mankind's history is a lie, the labyrinth in *Hellraisers* reveals itself to exist just beneath the surface of our own reality, opening up like portals within the walls of our own homes. The labyrinth exists as a kind of alternate reality underneath or next to where we normally live.

Hellbound seems to suggest that we are always already in the labyrinth in that we may think we have escaped when indeed we are still in it. When Kirsty and Tiffany think they have escaped from hell into Channard's hospital, they realize that it was indeed all a trick and that they are still in the hellish labyrinth. Is this really 'reality' or is that perhaps the point? They leave the hospital and enter a garden hedge maze, leaving the viewer to contemplate the fact that they perhaps will never escape, that they will move endlessly through a series of labyrinths, never reaching 'reality'. Much like the encounter with the labyrinthine, alien city of Lovecraft, we are left with a reality that has been reordered, leaving us a little less comfortable than when we began.

The labyrinth as monstrous space is a place where the subject is forgotten, and where identity is transformed. Whereas Deleuze and Foucault wished to lose themselves in labyrinths of language to escape control, our 21st century labyrinths seem to operate in the opposite way by hiding the subject and forcing control upon them. The labyrinth is indeed paradoxical space.

Notes

[1] Hermann Kern, *Through the Labyrinth* (New York: Prestel, 2000), 25-26.
[2] Ibid., 67.
[3] As opposed to a unicursal labyrinth that has one spiralling path to the centre, a multicursal labyrinth is best associated with a maze. It has no centre, has multiple entrances and exits, and exhibits branching corridors that cause the traveller to make choices. The multicursal labyrinth is younger than the unicursal form and most likely began first as a verbal sign before it became visual.
[4] Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, 25.
[5] Michel Foucault, 'Language to Infinity,' *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: University Press Ithaca, 1977), 53-67.
[6] Michel Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth*, trans, Charles Ruas (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1986), 80.
[7] Ibid., 87.

[8] Ibid., 87.
[9] Ibid., 87.
[10] Ibid., 87.
[11] Ibid., 91.
[12] Ibid., 94.
[13] Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 17.
[14] Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth*, 14.
[15] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomilson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
[16] Ibid., 42.
[17] 'Losing one's face' is a metaphor used by Foucault to explain the liberatory aspect of escaping an identity that controls the subject; Deleuze refers to it figuratively as 'losing one's skin,' in *Dialogues II* (a literal and messy affair in *Hellbound: Hellraisers II)* but it is also a common trope in horror films where the subject encounters the Outsider. Explorers' faces are covered by alien 'face huggers' before they are transformed. Young women are stripped of their skin for the gender bending purposes of Buffalo Bill in *Silence of the Lambs*. Whereas Foucault and Deleuze use the terms to escape identity, the effect is much different in horror films where the result of the escaped identity is a deadly encounter.
[18] Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomilson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).
[19] Ibid., 188.
[20] Gilles Deleuze, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 13.
[21] Ibid., 13.
[22] Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 110.
[23] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
[24] H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Beast in the Cave,' *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2008), 1.
[25] Ibid., 3.
[26] H. P. Lovecraft, 'Pickman's Model,' *H. P. Lovecraft: The Fiction* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2008).
[27] H. P. Lovecraft, 'At the Mountains of Madness,' *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Weird Tales* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2009). 155.
[28] Ibid., 155.
[29] Ibid., 200.
[30] Ibid., 212.
[31] Ibid., 214.
[32] Ibid., 229.
[33] Ibid., 230.
[34] Ibid., 236.
[35] Ibid., 240.
[36] Carol Clover, *Men, Women and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
[25] Ibid., 31.
[38] Ibid., 30-31.
[39] Ibid., 31.
[40] Ibid., 31.

[29] Randal, *Hellbound: Hellraisers II.*

[42] This is similar to Danielewski's *House of Leaves* whose labyrinth exists impossibly within the protagonist's home through a hallway that opens up space that cannot be there, confusing our ideas of interior and exterior space and suggesting that the labyrinth exists alongside our 'real' stratified existence. The labyrinth burrows underneath.

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Predatory Realms: To Admire and Desire the Child in Portal Fantasy

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Abstract

This article explores the spacial realm of the child predator in Clive Barker's children's novel, *The Thief of Always*. Informed by social discourse, the environment of the predator reveals not only the arrested psyche of the predator, but also the popular understanding of the techniques used to manipulate and retain children in his realm. *Thief* is a portal-quest fantasy, and the portal into the fantasy realm of the predator reveals much in terms of the type of child desired by the predator and the agency of the child. Via the entrance, the child gains privileged access to the realm of the predator, wherein a reversal of power allows for the child to experience a false autonomy and have his every desire fulfilled. Boredom and childhood innocence play a key role in the victimization of the child, while social discourses about the child and the child predator inform both representations in this narrative. The exclusion of the predator's realm from the rest of narrative reality is significant in that it creates a distinction between the predator and normative society, allowing for his exclusion while also facilitating his abduction and retention of children.

Key Words

Children's literature, child abduction, portal-quest narrative, boredom, innocence, criminal monstrosity

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1. Introduction

This article examines the environment of the child predator as depicted by Clive Barker in his children's fantasy novels, *The Thief of Always* (1992), a cautionary tale that warns against the desire to grow up too quickly. Inevitably, the environment of the story's villain, a child predator, is informed by social discourse, but Barker's take on what drives the child toward the predator and how the desires of the child are exploited and manipulated by the predator are striking in how they manifest spatially in the realm. The space of the predator, it seems, satisfies a troubling need for leisure in the child and the child predator, preying on the boredom of the child while simultaneously revealing the arrested psyche of the predator.

As a portal-quest narrative, *Thief* separates fantasy from reality. Farah Mendlesohn explains that, in the portal-quest form, the protagonist embarks on a journey into an unfamiliar realm that he or she must 'navigate' and master 'enough to change it.'[1] The reader journeys with Barker's reality-based child protagonist into a foreign fantasy realm of the child predator. Excluding the predator to the fantasy realm effectively segregates him from both humanity and society. Divided by the portal, the two realms of narrative reality and narrative fantasy exist in conjunction with each other, and placing the predator within the fantasy realm juxtaposes his existence with the rest of the characters in the reality realm, creating a sort of contrastive co-existence. The space of fantasy is differentiated from that of social reality, keeping 'the fantastic [...] on the other side'[2] and allowing for a metaphorical representation of the predator and his crimes, suitable for child consumption. However, this binary-forming structure affects not only the physical realm of the predator but also the social conceptualization of the child as ignorant and the predator as villainous, simultaneously affirming and problematizing these dichotomies.

The predator, represented by Barker as a fantastic monster, inhabits only the fantasy realms, leaving him unknown to reality-restricted characters and able to maintain a lifestyle that violates the social norms and laws of the reality realm. In 'The Erotics of Transgression,' Tim Dean explains that 'defying cultural prohibitions is always easier in fantasy than in reality.'[3] This segregation ensures that the predator is sheltered from reality (and vice versa), undeterred by 'the "threat" of punishment for prohibited acts.'[4] The demarcation between fantasy and reality (deviance and normality), created by the portal-quest, connects to the idea that fantasy grants as well as quarantines defiance.

Monstrous deviance, made separate from normative reality, is embraced by fantasy. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen affirms that the purpose of the monster is 'to call horrid attention to the borders that cannot – must not – be crossed.'[5] The monster amplifies these borders, strengthening the impervious binary distinction between monstrosity and normativity, and subsequently defining normality in contrast to monstrosity; his unfettered existence inside the fantasy realm secures the border from both sides. In this way, the fantasy realm serves as a monster zone, a region meant to encase and preserve monstrosity. Stephen Asma claims that the historical belief in such a defined space for monstrosity, 'a monster zone, articulated in the legend of Alexander's gates, is alive and well today.'[6] Housing the predator within a monster zone (the fantasy realm) normalizes monstrosity through its isolation from normative society,[7] creating a situation wherein the actions of the predator are uninhibited and unrestricted, segregated and allowed to flourish, yet also made invisible to the general public.

2. An Exploitative Entrance

In Barker's children's novel, *The Thief of Always*, ten-year-old Harvey Swick embarks on a non-traditional portal-quest fantasy. Harvey journeys into the fantasy land not to explore new terrain on a quest to his predetermined destination, as would normally be expected, but rather to experience endless leisure, a subversive narrative structure that removes the quest from the portal-quest form. Harvey is bored with the mundane realm of reality and seeks relief from the tediousness of childhood at Mr. Hood's Holiday House, a fantastic dwelling of magic that exists in a separate realm, hidden behind a shroud of fog. Within the fantasy realm, the adult-child hierarchy is seemingly inverted, granting child residents the power to have their wishes fulfilled. This power is an illusion, however, since the realm is manipulated and controlled by Mr. Hood, a vampirous entity who seeks to consume the children's souls.

Barker's portal marks a boundary between safety and threat, between family/community and the predator. Crossing the boundary implies danger and the sharing of adult secrets with children that inevitably leads to the loss of innocence. Neil Postman observes that children experience childhood as if

> immersed in a world of secrets, surrounded by mystery and awe; a world that will be made intelligible to them by adults who will teach them, in stages, how shame is transformed into a set of moral directives. [...] For adults know, whereas children do not, what words are shameful to use, what subjects are shameful to discuss, what acts are deemed necessary to privatize.[8]

Mendlesohn confirms that the portal is commonly interpreted as 'the transition between this world and another; from our time to another time; from youth to adulthood.'[9] For Dean, the portal is a 'fraught line [that] has something to do with sexuality.'[10] Allowing the child to cross the predator-boundary imposes adult knowledge upon him that he is likely not prepared to interpret or manage. Indeed, as I will show, the portal carries, what Dean calls, an 'erotic charge' that complicates the reading of this text.[11]

The portal is described as a wall of fog, uniquely reserved for children. When Harvey's parents attempt to find the house, even in Harvey's presence, the reader is informed that the house is 'hiding' because 'It wants children.'[12] The portal-quest form dictates that 'those travelling through a declared portal are expected to be ignorant.'[13] Hence, the portal determines firstly that only children – who are 'defined by ignorance'[14] – are allowed entrance, and secondly, that the children who enter Hood's realm are less knowledgeable than he. Such ignorance is necessary to the mandate of the predator since it predicates that the child characters are innocent – and thus alluring – and that the reader (both adult and child) mimics this characterization. Such rhetoric not only demonstrates the furtive nature of the predator's realm but also constructs a chosen child, special and desirable.

Only a privileged few may enter to explore and know the predator's realm. Indeed, Harvey's recruitment is testament to this idea. Rictus, Hood's agent sent into reality to find children for his quasi-sex ring,[15] knows Harvey and seeks him out specifically, marking him out by name: 'You are Harvey Swick, aren't you? [...] I thought for a moment I'd got the wrong house.'[16] Harvey is praised as 'a mir-a-cu-lous kid,'[17] but when he starts to ask too many questions, he is revealed as disposable. Here we see the reality of the predator's seemingly refined selection process. As gay literature scholar Gregory Woods makes clear, 'it is childhood itself that attracts, rather than the individual child.'[18] Allison James explains that each child, whose continuously developing body charts the passage of time, embodies childhood,[19] negating Harvey's uniqueness. Indeed, the plot confirms Woods's suspicion that 'if boyhood [and not the boy] is so important, age will be a crucial theme. And wherever age is important, the theme of time is inescapable.'[20] Harvey's age is repeatedly emphasized, and as the reader soon learns, the predator realm is one which controls and manipulates time, progressing through all the seasons in one day – for the children's enjoyment and continued compliance – while in reality, a year passes, robbing them of their childhood.

Taking a close look at the child's passage through the portal confirms Dean's erotic charge and the sexual nuance of the predator's desire for children. Harvey is welcomed into the fantasy realm by the open arms of the fog wall whose 'misty stones seemed to reach for him in their turn, wrapping their soft, gray arms around his shoulders and ushering him through.'[21] This romanticized depiction, when seen through an adult gaze, is a threatening image of a child willingly entering the realm of the predator. The fog acts as a passive receptor rather than an active abductor, evidenced by the accompanying illustration wherein no threatening arms grope or pull at Harvey; instead, the fog yields to his body. The text corroborates the sensuality of this transition, accenting it with 'a gust of balmy, flower-scented wind [that] *slipped between* the shimmering stones and *kissed his cheek*.'[22] The use of 'slipped between,' most commonly followed by *the sheets*, amplifies the sexual suggestion of Harvey's kissed cheek. Accommodating yet violating, the fog embodies the child predator who baits rather than forces children into his company.

This eroticism, combined with the numerous references to death throughout the novel, connects sexuality and death. During his second night, following the death of one of the house cats, Harvey

> dreamed that he was standing on the steps of his house, looking through the open door into its warm heart. Then the wind caught hold of him, turning him from the threshold, and carrying him away into a dreamless sleep.[23]

Harvey is on 'the threshold' of childhood (i.e., the precipice of his life), peering in at the 'warm heart' of his family only to be 'caught hold of,' trapped, by the same wind that kissed his cheek, which denies him his family as well as his childhood, and ushers him into a 'dreamless sleep' of

death. The later revealed consequences of entering the realm – that the children's souls are eventually consumed by Hood while their bodies are turned into fish who swim for eternity in his lake – affirms the connection with death and, according to Dean, 'evokes a long tradition of imagining sex as potentially fatal. From sexually undifferentiated innocence to deadly excess, the line that demarcates transgression bears an unmistakably erotic charge.'[24] Legal scholar David Gurnham elucidates that 'eroticism is linked to death because both events are a violent irruption of ordinary life that is special to human experience.'[25] If the journey to the fantasy realm is indeed a journey toward the experience of adulthood, as Mendlesohn claimed, then it is also a journey away from youthful ignorance or denial of one's mortality.

Opposing this notion is Hood's realm, wherein eternal childhood is maintained. The child predator insists upon this forced existence of perpetual childhood, a desire which, according James Kincaid, originates from Western society that teaches adults 'to adore and covet, to preserve and despoil' childhood innocence.[26] As Perry Nodelman describes, 'childhood, which inevitably passes, [is] agonizingly enticing to us [adults] – somehow better than, richer than, realer than the maturity we are stuck with. It forces us into a fruitless nostalgia – a lust for *something* we simply cannot have.'[27] Nodelman's 'something' is innocence. As Gurnham notes,

> In our own society it is the sexualisation of the innocent child that incites the greatest fear and dread. It is this dread that means that the very implication that a child might be viewed as an object of sexual pleasure causes such huge anxiety and must be met with fierce condemnation, but also that which continues to ensure that innocence [...] is placed on such a high pedestal.[28]

The very innocence that is cherished in the child affirms his or her desirability and vulnerability. Yet, the desires of the child predator for 'the boy who never grows up,' Woods avows, rather than embodying adult-predatory deviance, represent his 'only real chance of a lasting relationship.'[29] In Woods's reading, the predator attempts to secure a relationship that is both normative and impossible.

Further, this attempt at normativity reveals the disturbing psyche of the predator. Hood orchestrates 'a regressive world of perfect childhood innocence,'[30] a child-gratifying realm to which he also belongs: 'the man who chooses not to relate to adults, but seeks to return whether literally or not, to the playgrounds of boyhood and their pleasurable games.'[31] Social care scholars Pam Foley and Stephen Leverett elucidate that children and adults use 'places and spaces to explore and express their own and other's childhood and adulthood.'[32] Yet, as Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley remind us, 'the utopian fantasy is property of adults' and, in this case, a singular adult, who seeks to explore and express only childhood.[33] Hood's house is deliberately and diligently constructed, 'built for games, chases and adventures,' complete with an exterior replete with pastoral luxuries.[34] As an architect of fantasy, Hood orchestrates his version of a childhood world, without education or adult authority, that capitalizes on the children's vulnerability.[35]

The fog barrier acts as a shield, protecting what lies beyond in the realm of the predator, from the gaze of society. This ensures privacy and secrecy for the predator, keeping him 'safe behind the mists of his illusion,' 'safe from the awkward questions the outside world might provoke.'[36] Such isolation grants increased control to the predator, via the enhanced dependence of the child, leaving him untouchable by reality. This positioning shifts the power for interpretation to the narrator who frequently contradicts Harvey's interpretations, casting doubt on the overall depiction of events. The role of the narrator, as the only adult voice that transcends both realms of fantasy and reality, is troublesome. It seeks not to protect, nor to

clarify, but only to contradict.

This deceit is a rhetorical aspect of the portal-quest fantasy, which 'serves to divorce the protagonists from the world, and place them in a context in which they cannot question the primary narration.'[37] The narrator repeatedly refers to the fantasy realm as 'a place of illusions,' trickery, and mirage.[38] At times, magic is depicted as real and other times as imaginary, confusing reality with fantasy. This oscillation between artificiality and authenticity reinforces the magical powers within the realm and results in a surreal environment wherein consequences become irrelevant. This worldview reversal facilitates the false imprisonment of the children,[39] by emphasizing the supposed playfulness of the realm. However, Harvey faces devastating consequences after escaping from the House, revealing the reality of both Hood's crimes and magic's ability to create true change and loss in the real world.

To further conflate reality and fantasy, Hood places the children in pseudo-positions of power, encouraging the taboo fusion of childhood with adulthood by creating mutual desires. Postman explains the transgression of such a merger, saying that it is socially 'accepted that the child [does] not and could not share the language, the learning, the tastes, the appetites, the social life, of an adult.'[40] Yet, within the predator realm, these shared values are achieved and internalized by the children as a result of the imposition of Hood's realm of indulgence. In this way, Hood satisfies Mendlesohn's condition to enclose the fantasy realm, which 'must be sealed from within, not without,' by instilling the acceptance of taboo where 'the threat of punishment comes from inside rather than outside the self.'[41] The fog border demarcates a twofold realm wherein the threat of the predator can exist without contention and wherein Postman's adult-child, personified by Hood, flourishes.

3. An Insatiable Space

The fantasy realm is a reflection of not only the predator's desires for childhood, but also his conceptualization of childhood, which makes *Thief* 'a book not about children but about adult responses to them.'[42] Hood imposes his unique vision of childhood on the children he imprisons, which simultaneously denies them 'self-regulation and [...] agency,'[43] and problematizes Barker's representation of childhood. Consider the fulfilment of desire in this realm, which generally involves appetite, a veritable smorgasbord of excess:

> hamburgers, hotdogs and fried chicken; mounds of buttered potatoes; apple, cherry and mud pies; ice cream and whipped cream; grapes, tangerines and a plate of fruits he couldn't even name.[44]

Children's desires take the form of consumables, while the children themselves are equally consumable to Hood. This association can very easily be a projection of Hood's own desires – his own vampiric insatiability – and not necessarily an accurate representation of childhood desire. Hood's fantasy realm, his place of dwelling, is a matter of naturalized magic, leisure, and consumption.

The merger of adulthood and childhood, particularly when initiated by the adult, naturally draws comparisons between the two categories. Postman affirms that when constructing a conception of childhood, one cannot avoid a subsequently constructed concept of adulthood.[45] For Woods,

> the lover of boys is necessarily involved in the process of constant comparison between himself and the boys he makes love with – a comparison in which he is always notably the loser.[46]

In *Thief*, the reader experiences an interesting challenge to this idea since the adult-child comparison results in equivalence. Harvey comes to see Hood as a thief for having stolen thirty-one years from him, and Hood's immortality makes him the eponymous Thief of Always. However, upon his return to the fantasy realm to confront Hood and defeat two of his agents, Harvey is accused of being like him: 'We're both thieves, Harvey Swick. I take time. You take lives. But in the end, we're the same: both Thieves of Always.'[47] Hood expresses his admiration for and equivalence with Harvey. Yet, the portal-quest form dictates that the narrative be 'concluded with restoration rather than *instauration* (the making over of the world),'[48] which requires Hood's defeat and Harvey's return to childhood (but not necessarily a return to innocence). Paradoxically, this trajectory also makes a 'loser' of Harvey, but since his losses are not as great as Hood's (he is alive, after all), their distinction is maintained. Their difference reflects the modern ideal that children be 'strangers in our midst,' alien to adulthood.[49]

Barker claims that Harvey defeats Hood through his use of imagination; however, it is in fact Harvey's rejection of childhood innocence that makes him impervious to the predator-Hood. For Barker, Harvey 'uses every speck of imagination he possesses' to defeat Hood.[50] He epitomizes Barker's intellectual hero: 'the magician as wit and wonder-maker, the man who wins his battles with imagination rather than brute force.'[51] Yet, this claim cannot be entirely true, since Hood's villainy is facilitated by his own use of magic and not force. Thus, Harvey's power over Hood stems from a more complex source. Harvey defies the 'disabling and disarming discourse of innocence' and takes ownership of his corruption, congratulating himself by saying, 'I'm a good thief.'[52] Harvey embraces his inner monster.[53] He acquires Hood's vampire-like worldview: '*Maybe I don't need fangs to suck him dry [of magic],* Harvey thought, *maybe all I need is wishes*'[54] Enhanced by his earlier physical morphing into a vampire one Halloween night, Harvey's embrace of vampirism is a triumph, reflecting Asma's observation that 'Everyone has the potential to become monstrous'[55] A child embraces monstrosity through the negation of innocence.

The rejection of childhood innocence is significant because it denies both the portal-quest fantasy and the commonly held conceptions of the child predator, both 'narratives [that] are uninterruptable, unquestionable, and delivered absolutely'[56]. Furthermore, given that the protagonist inevitably becomes the hero of the portal-quest fantasy, Harvey's childhood innocence is then always debatable. As Mendlesohn informs us, 'portal-quest fantasies are structured around reward and the straight and narrow path,' meaning, in this case, that the path to be rewarded is a rejection of childlike innocence.[57] Gurnham agrees that it is innocence rather than childhood that threatens the child:

> Innocence and the cultural baggage attached to it is not only an unreasonable ideal for judging children but, ironically enough, it also sexualizes the child since the greater the social anxiety about protecting childhood innocence, the greater the emphasis on that very quality believed to arouse the sexual interest of paedophiles.[58]

Harvey's inquisitive nature, consistent throughout the narrative, is the first clue to his rejection of such an absolute worldview.

Harvey's lack of knowledge is emphasized repeatedly, if not by his age and inability to give consent,[59] then through his incessant questioning. Postman reveals this as a key characteristic of the transition from childhood to adulthood: 'children must seek entry, though their questions, into the adult world.'[60] Yet, the portal requires ignorance, which halts Harvey's attempt to access adulthood. When Rictus threatens to revoke the offer, saying that he is 'too inquisitive for [his] own good,' Harvey quickly recants, saying 'I'm sorry. I won't ask any more

questions.'[61] Harvey's entrance into the fantasy realm is contingent on the absence of questions. By denying Harvey the opportunity to metaphorically move into adulthood, in essence, to grow, which for Lisa Arai, entails 'movement across social and geographical spaces' as well as 'moving through time,'[62] the predator imposes an impossible restriction. Indeed, Harvey is unable to quell his thirst for knowledge and continues to ask questions while in the fantasy land, distinguishing himself from the other child victims within the realm and leading to his inevitable rise as the story's hero.

Another look at Harvey's passage through the portal reveals his ability to reject childhood innocence, present at the beginning of the narrative. Harvey is not strictly abducted in the most technical sense; he opts for the fantasy realm over mundane reality because of its promise of fun as well as its mystery. For Gurnham, this movement reveals Harvey's lack of innocence. He asserts that 'Immobility is a key idea in the etymology of innocence,' defining 'The innocent, in contrast to the experienced, [as] one who stays at home and does not go adventuring.'[63] Harvey's ownership of mobility is best exemplified by his unassisted passage through the portal: 'Half out of hunger, half out of curiosity,' Harvey walks through the fog of his own volition, claiming both desire ('hunger') and 'curiosity' as fuel for his mobility.[64] Naming the portal as a 'hidden way' into the fantasy realm, the realm of the predator, further increases its allure and hints at the adult secrets contained within.[65]

4. The Risks of Boredom

Problematically, the very sentiments that empower Harvey initiate his victimization. The novel begins with his rejection of childhood when he voices his affinity with adulthood, saying 'it's not like I'm a kid.'[66] However, Harvey's perceived kinship is more of a yearning for adulthood than an actual association with it. For Harvey, childhood is 'dire and dreary,'[67] and he longs for adult freedom: 'I am *ten*, [...] I don't have to tidy up because *she* [his mother] says so. It's boring.'[68] Undeniably, Harvey's boredom is the key to understanding his abduction. Barbara Pezze and Carlo Salzani illuminate Barker's use of boredom to establish Harvey as a victim in their article 'The Delicate Monster: Modernity and Boredom.' Indeed, Rictus flies into Harvey's bedroom almost immediately after he expresses boredom, as if boredom were a siren's call to the child predator.[69] Pezze and Salzani interpret boredom as a 'crisis of experience and desire,' one that inevitably leads to a 'sense of victimization.'[70] Pia Christensen iterates that 'Children are seen as archetypal victims.'[71] Moreover, boredom has three key effects relevant to Harvey's abduction and imprisonment: boredom 'trivialises the world, disempowers the individual and empties time.'[72] Hood's realm, which appears to offer relief from boredom with its games and adventures, imposes these boredom-induced effects onto the children in order to maintain their victimization.

Harvey and the other children, Wendell and Lulu, spend (in the time of reality) years in childhood leisure. Yet, Hood's effect on time is only apparent outside the realm; while inside, the repetitive and unchanging days meld together, resulting in a compromised sense of time. Lulu remarks, 'I've been here so long I don't even remember...'; trailing off, she is unable to recall any time before entering Hood's world.[73] This effect is a result of the perpetual leisure of Hood's realm, which replaces all developmental markers with endless 'sameness and repetition.'[74] This strategy reveals boredom's intimate connection to the concept of leisure,[75] an intimacy that is both exploited by and manifested in Hood. Joseph Boden links the experience of boredom, which is 'frequently followed by sensation-seeking,' to 'a wide range of impulsive and destructive behaviours.'[76] Boredom, predicated on and determined by the fantasy realm, ensures that the children remain forever in a dangerous state of want. Indeed, the world of fantasy, in that it presents an idealized version of childhood, not to mention a gross oversimplification of child abduction, abuse and the child predator, is as Pezze and Salzani

note: a trivialized version of reality, wherein the children are denied control and power, and in which the passage of time is made meaningless.

Harvey travels through two portals, the first being the entrance to the predator's fantasy realm, and the second taking him into his future adulthood. Harvey and Wendell escape through the fog into their futures. Since thirty-one years have passed, the world they enter is their own adult world – all the elements are there but the world is no longer familiar, 'Several times he wondered if he'd gone astray, because the streets he passed through were unfamiliar.'[77] Unable to navigate the streets of adulthood, Harvey becomes lost both literally and symbolically and, when reunited with his parents, finds that they have as much trouble identifying and believing in him as he has with them: ''It's not possible,' he [his father] said flatly. 'This can't be Harvey.''[78] Postman would define Harvey's experience as a child thrust into adulthood, which for him destroys childhood: 'We are left with children who are given answers to questions they never asked. We are left, in short, without children.'[79] This destruction of childhood – not childhood innocence – is a direct result of Harvey entering into the fantasy realm of the predator.

In both cases, Harvey remains a child; he does not 'transition,' as Mendlesohn claims the portal-quest form dictates, into adulthood at any point in the narrative. Indeed, he remains confined by adult society – either by the child predator or by his parents. Because Harvey rejects both portals, his journey is instead 'a rejection of the adult world that keeps [him] imprisoned in childhood.'[80] This rejection is not complete, however, since the reality he favours is the original reality in which he is a ten-year-old boy. Yet, even in this childhood reality, Harvey is granted the private space necessary for him to complete the intended transition into adulthood. Leverett concludes that children require 'special places' that they learn to control 'through resistance or negotiation,' whereby they are able to 'set boundaries to deny or allow others access.'[81] It hardly needs mentioning that Harvey is denied such a space in Hood's fantasy realm, but this space is also denied in the future-adult realm, wherein his parents 'had the decorators in' to remove the 'rocket ships and parrots' from his room.[82] The significance of Harvey's return to his original room, a room wherein he is able to maintain and define his own boundaries, is paramount to the portal-quest fantasy, which is contingent on the child's desire to cross boundaries. Compounded by his status 'as a figure of cultural reproduction' as well as his 'almost limitless potential,'[83] Harvey is metaphorical of a future vision of reality wherein the child is not subject to the impossible fantasies of adult nostalgia[84] but is instead (at least partially) granted the opportunity to define his own identity.

5. Conclusion

Thief presents a landscape of exclusion; the predator, who does not himself enter reality, is shunned to the realm of fantasy, and the child, who wilfully enters the realm, whether by deceit or desire, is the only reality based element granted access. Given such agency, Barker's child complicates the current notions of childhood innocence and offers up a critic of its valorization. The portal-quest form dictates a predator eternally denied integration into reality, but a child who is welcomed into both worlds. The child is desired by both worlds because adults prize childhood and childhood innocence, but as Barker has illustrated in his novel, this innocence is detrimental to the child.

The child's innocence makes him not only susceptible but also desirous for the enticements of the predator. The child, then, becomes doubly desirous. He is desired by the predator, but he is also filled with desire in equal measure. Similarly, the attraction is also doubled in the same way, leaving the child wanting and easily exploited by the predator. Yet, the predator is also left wanting, his desires for youth are insatiable because of his own looming mortality, and by this I mean that if the pursuit and acquirement of children is for the purpose of

possessing youth or retaining childlike innocence, then the goal can never be met because once lost, these characteristics can never be regained. Innocence is not in the physicality of child's body, as Harvey's case clearly demonstrates. Instead, innocence is a fantastic quality that adults retrospectively apply to children in an attempt to describe and understand their being, which is so utterly foreign yet greatly coveted by the adult world.

Social discourse, however, retains focus on the predator, understanding their desire for children as distinctive, excluding them from the rest of society and facilitating their representation as 'icons of evil.'[85] According to Jon Silverman and David Wilson, authors of *Innocence Betrayed: Paedophilia, Media and Society*, the predator has become a focal point of 'vilification that allows us to deny responsibility for them, rather than seeing them as a product of our own society'.[86] Kincaid would interpret this segregation as 'the exiling of the unclean,' and, in agreement with Silverman and Wilson, he concludes that 'Such banishings [...] act to increase dramatically the isolation and fantasy-supporting loneliness that may exacerbate the sexual desire causing the problems.'[87] Thus, the significance of the portal fantasy structure is that it reinforces the demonizing notion that the child predator is alien to normative reality, removing any hope of his being integrated into society because of a seemingly fundamental difference that predicates his exclusion. Problematically, the child suffers a similar exclusion from the adult world, being seen as irreconcilably foreign from adults in both body and mind. Following this most uncomfortable line of thinking perhaps offers a clue as to the attraction between the child and the child predator and the odd sort of kinship that Barker presents.

Notes

[1] Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2008), xix.
[2] Ibid., 1.
[3] Tim Dean, 'The Erotics of Transgression.' *Gay and Lesbian Writing*, ed. Hugh Stevens (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), 65-80, 69.
[4] Laura J. Zilney and Lisa Anne Zilney, *Perverts and Predators: The Making of Sexual Offending Laws* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 57.
[5] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1996), 13.
[6] Stephen T. Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), 283.
[7] Zilney and Zilney, 46.
[8] Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (New York: Delacorte, 1982), 86.
[9] Ibid., 1.
[10] Ibid., 65.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Clive Barker, *The Thief of Always: A Fable* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 132.
[13] Mendlesohn, 13.
[14] Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008), 35.
[15] Jean Graham Hall and Douglas F. Martin, *Crimes against Children* (West Sussex: Barry Rose Law, 1992), 165.
[16] Barker, *Thief*, 7.
[17] Ibid., 15.
[18] Gregory Woods, *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), 188.
[19] Allison James, 'Embodied Being(s): Understanding the Self and the Body in Childhood.'

Prout, *Body* (n.d.): 21.
[20] 333.
[21] Barker, *Thief*, 16.
[22] Ibid; emphasis added.
[23] Barker, *Thief*, 64.
[24] Ibid., 65.
[25] David Gurnham, *Memory, Imagination, Justice: Intersections of Law and Literature* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 101.
[26] James R. Kincaid, 'Producing Erotic Children;' Bruhm and Hurley, *Curiouser* 3-16, 10.
[27] Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008), 81; emphasis added.
[28] Ibid., 124.
[29] Ibid., 335.
[30] Perry Nodelman, 'Progressive Utopia: Or, How to Grow Up without Growing Up,' *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature*, ed. Sheila Egoff et al. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 74-82, 81.
[31] Woods, 335.
[32] Pam Foley and Steven Leverett, Introduction to *Children and Young* (n.d.): 1-8, 3.
[33] Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, 'Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children.' Bruhm and Hurley, *Curiouser* ix-xxxviii, xiii.
[34] Barker, *Thief*, 22.
[35] Pia Haudrup Christenson, 'Childhood and the Cultural Constitutions of Vulnerable Bodies.' Prout, *Body* (n.d.): 38-59, 41.
[36] Barker, *Thief*, 204.
[37] Mendlesohn, 7.
[38] Barker, *Thief*, 59.
[39] Hall and Martin, 82.
[40] Ibid., 50.
[41] Ibid., 32.
[42] Woods, 327.
[43] Stephen Leverett, 'Children's Spaces.' Foley and Leverett, *Children and Young* (n.d.): 9-24, 10.
[44] Barker, *Thief*, 22-23.
[45] Ibid., 50.
[46] Ibid., 334.
[47] Barker, *Thief*, 172.
[48] Mendlesohn, 3.
[49] Nodelman, 'Progressive,' 81.
[50] Barker, 'The Thief of Always,' 114.
[51] Barker, 'Razorline,' 198.
[52] Barker, *Thief*, 220.
[53] Asma, 183.
[54] Barker, *Thief*, 186.
[55] Ibid., 8.
[56] Mendlesohn, 13.
[57] Ibid., 5.
[58] Ibid., 93-94.
[59] Hall and Martin, 41.

[60] Ibid., 90.
[61] Barker, *Thief*, 8.
[62] Lisa Arai, 'Growing Up: Moving through Time, Place and Space from Babyhood to Adolescence.' *Children and Young* (n.d.): 116-30, 117.
[63] Ibid., 95.
[64] Barker, *Thief*, 16.
[65] Barker, *Thief*, 11.
[66] Barker, *Thief*, 6.
[67] Barker, *Thief*, 5.
[68] Barker, *Thief*, 6.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Barbara Dalle Pezze and Carlos Salzani, 'The Delicate Monster: Modernity and Boredom.' *Essays on Boredom* (n.d.): 5-33, 14.
[71] Pia Haudrup Christenson, 'Childhood and the Cultural Constitutions of Vulnerable Bodies.' Prout, *Body* (n.d.): 38-59, 42.
[72] Pezze and Salzani, 'Delicate Monsters,' 10.
[73] Barker, *Thief*, 104.
[74] Pezze and Salzani, 'Delicate Monsters,' 13.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Joseph Boden, 'The Devil Inside: Boredom Proneness and Impulsive Behaviour,' 203-26, 204.
[77] Barker, *Thief*, 119.
[78] Barker, *Thief*, 120.
[79] Ibid., 90.
[80] Nodelman, *Hidden*, 202.
[81] Ibid., 20.
[82] Barker, *Thief*, 127.
[83] Bruhm and Hurley, 'Curiouser,' xiii.
[84] Higonnet, 27, 38.
[85] Jon Silverman and David Wilson. *Innocence Betrayed: Paedophilia, Media and Society*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), 41.
[86] Ibid., 41-42.
[87] Kincaid, *Erotic*, 92.

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Nightmare

April Pitts

In nightmares, he still
remembered the
outline of its body against
the bedroom wall,
surreal and menacing,
as it leaned over his bed.
The monster's talons
caressed his thigh.
Excuse me. Excuse me.
The beast whispered, revealing
a glimpse of its yellowing fangs.
I was only trying to wake you up.
It was three a.m.
The boy glanced in horror at his sister,
peacefully sleeping in her nearby crib.
He prayed that she would awaken and,
with a cry, rescue him
from the beast's incestuous touch.
The child opened her eyes.
The beast, afraid of unleashing
the Angel's infantile cry
and hence the cry of
the bigger, Mother Angel,
backed away from the bed
like a vampire before an upheld crucifix.
She won't always be here to protect you.
The boy knelt trembling at the foot of his sister's crib,
waiting anxiously for the daylight.

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Come Hell or High Water, Part 3: Deluge

Stephen Morris

Abstract
The second of two excerpts from the final instalment of the 3-part historical romance saga by acclaimed author, Stephen Morris.

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Excerpt 2

In this excerpt, a group of Irish teens are attempting to build a cairn on the grave of the Dearg-due in Waterford, Ireland so as to pin her under the earth again. One possible location of the grave is in the Lady Chapel of the French Church in Waterford. The boys climb into the ruins of the chapel…. **SPOILER ALERT: DO NOT READ UNTIL YOU HAVE READ PART 2 OF THE TRILOGY!!!**

"It feels very dark here," Daria whispered. She wrapped her arms tightly around herself and shivered.

Everybody laughed.

"No, that's not what she meant, ya feckin' daft fools," Colm snarled. "Not dark like in no light. Dark. Like in wicked. Like when Grandad told some of the old stories when we were little. Remember, Donal?"

"Yeah, I remember, Colm. He did tell some grand tales, tales that would make the hair on the back o' your neck shiver," Donal agreed. "But them was tales when we was kids, Colm. Kids. The only dark sense here now is the one the ale back in the bar gave you three!" Donal turned his attention back to the window, examining the stone sill and iron fence posts.

"Well, I think it's more than just ale," Daria insisted. "Did your Grandad ever say how to protect yourself from the dark, Colm?" she asked.

A dim memory slowly crystallized in Colm's thoughts. "Yes. Yes, he did," Colm murmured. He spoke up, more confident as his memory became more certain. "He used to say that the Irish could protect themselves from the Sidhe and the witches or the faerie folk by wearing their clothes inside out. Or at least turning their jackets and coats inside out. That confuses the feckin' magic somehow and protects the people when the wicked faeries come to attack 'em."

Colm hadn't even finished speaking before Daria and Annabel had their jackets halfway off their shoulders, ready to turn inside out. Colm paused, considering. Then he took his jacket off too and pulled the sleeves inside out. The three of them put their jackets back on, labels and hems and linings exposed to the night air. Donal, Michael, and Eamonn looked at them and burst out laughing.

"Whatever makes you feel safer, babe." Eamonn kissed Annabel's forehead and joined Donal at the window. Colm also ventured to the window. Daria and Annabel huddled in the yard, near the stone wall of the nave rather than the wall of the chapel, but close enough that they could watch the men. Annabel shivered, and Daria hugged her tightly. The wind whispered around them again.

The four boys climbed aboard each other's backs and onto the sills of the windows looking into the chapel. Eamonn was the last to get onto the windowsill, and since there was no one left to climb up on, Donal and Michael helped him up by tugging and pulling on his jacket. Once up, the four of them stood there a moment, dark figures outlined in the windows.

Donal was the first to climb over the ironworks and jump down into the chapel. Eamonn and Michael quickly followed, their footfalls making quiet thumps and thuds. Colm hesitated but then took a deep breath and followed his brother and their friends. But when he landed in the chapel, he twisted his ankle and fell, knocking into a rusted chair.

"Bullocks! Shite!" he exclaimed, grabbing his ankle and wincing.

"Colm! Are you all right?" Daria called out. She and Annabel appeared at the windows to see what had happened.

Donal came to his brother, picking his way carefully through the grass and dirt and trash. He muttered a curse, too, though, when he kicked something accidently. He bent over and picked up one of the stones Annabel had tossed into the chapel.

"Maybe I should use this to knock your daft feckin' brains out with!" Donal threatened his brother. But he knelt and felt around Colm's foot with his other hand. Colm bit his lip and whined bitterly.

"Think you can walk later?" Donal asked.

Colm frantically shook his head.

"Well, then, we'll have to figure out some other way to get you home," Donal promised him. He stood. "But after we take our photos of this Dearg-due pinned in her grave." He took a few steps towards the wall Daria had pointed towards.

Michael and Eamonn moved towards the wall as well, stretching their hands out around them as if that would help them see in the dark and avoid an accident like Colm's. Michael did manage, though, to find the other two cobblestones Annabel had heaved through the windows. He swung his arms, a stone in each hand, and looked like a shadowy version of Frankenstein's monster lumbering through the dark.

Michael, Eamonn, and Donal reached the wall that had been built to close the chapel off from the nave. They spread out along it, scuffing at the ground with their feet. They reported nothing.

"Try again!" called out Daria. "It has to be there someplace. Maybe it's gotten buried since then!"

"All right, all right!" Eamonn called back. "We'll do it again!"

This time the boys walked parallel to each other, their line reaching across what would have been the chapel floor. They went slowly, poking at the earth with their shoes. A rat darted through the grass and vanished across the chapel in the dark. A plastic bag, caught on some other piece of trash, rustled somewhere in the breeze as it picked up strength.

"Here! Look at this!" Michael, in the middle between Donal and Eamonn, bent down and set the stones to one side. He scraped at the ground. Donal and Eamonn got down on their knees to join him.

"What is it? What did you find?" Annabel demanded.

"Is it the grave?" Colm asked, still holding his ankle and grimacing.

"Yeah, I think we found it!" "This is it!" "It's here!" called the three boys, scraping a thin layer of earth off a large flat stone.

"Is it hers? Is her name written on it?" asked Annabel.

"What are the dates on it?" Daria wanted to know.

"It's hard to tell in the dark," Eamonn admitted. He ran his hands over the portion of the stone they had uncovered.

"It's a grave marker, all right," announced Donal. "I can feel something like letters carved on it."

"But they're worn, nearly clean away," Michael added. "They're too faint to make out clearly. That, with the cracks and rough places, makes it really hard to read a name. Or dates."

"Well, I can make out some of it!" protested Donal. "I think this is an 'E' here. But then…" He paused. "There's a crack and some other dirt and… I'm not sure what the next few letters are. But I think there is a 'B' further on. Is this part of her name, do you think?" he asked Michael and Eamonn.

"Maybe you should close your eyes and concentrate!" suggested Daria. "Like a blind man. Focus on what it feels like and cut off one of your senses. Isn't that s'posed to make your other senses better?"

"Yeah, they could do that if we all really wanted to spend the night here in the feckin' dark tryin' to read the feckin' gravestone of a vampire-woman!" snorted Colm. "Me, I would just like to get meself back out those windows and on the way back home!"

"Wait!" Annabel exclaimed. "Maybe you should keep looking to make sure there's not another grave next to it. Just to make sure it's the right one!"

Eamonn stood. "Colm's right. I vote that this is the only grave here and that it's the feckin' grave Uncle Sean wanted Colm and Donal to find. So it'll do. Let's make the feckin' cairn on this one with the three stones and take the feckin' photo." He reached for the two stones he had set down and arranged them on the grave marker where Donal had been tracing the letters. Donal contributed the stone he had found, placing it across the other two.

"That's a grand cairn now, so it is," he announced, standing and brushing the dirt off his hands and knees. He took the camera out of his pocket and raised it to his eye. Eamonn and Michael stood back. There was a small click and flash of light as Donal took the photo. Donal took a few steps and took another photo from a different angle, the flash blinding them all for an instant. One more photo and he turned his back on the grave. Michael and Eamonn rubbed their eyes and took a few steps toward Colm, holding onto one another's elbows to avoid stumbling into each other.

"Leaving so quickly?" a raspy woman's voice came out of the dark corner of the chapel nearest the gravestone Donal and the others had unearthed. The girls at the windowsill clapped their hands over their mouths, stifling a squeal of shock. The boys froze in midstep, startled. Colm leaned forward, trying to make out who had spoken.

"Who is it?" Colm demanded. "Who's there?"

"Who is it? Who is there?" repeated the voice, a sharp edge of mockery mixing with the slightly more formal tone often associated with the conversations of the elderly. Something moved in the dark corner where the voice came from.

"Who are you? What do you want?" Colm's voice raised a pitch or two, the pain in his ankle and his nerves getting the best of him. He thought he recognized the voice. "Is that you, Jack O'Grady, hidin' there in the dark and tryin' to scare the feckin' shite outta us?"

The voice chuckled. "Jack O'Grady? Now, why would you think that it might be Jack O'Grady hiding here in the dark, trying to scare you brave young men on this fine summer night?" Something shifted in the shadows again and Colm thought he could see a figure lurking near the wall. Why hadn't they seen it before?

"Because it sounds like you, O'Grady!" Donal, recovered from his initial shock, turned to face the voice, as did Eamonn and Michael.

"It sounds like you when you make fun o' your grandmother, Jack! When she tells you to take the rubbish outta her feckin' kitchen!" Eamonn took a step toward the voice. "An' if you think you can pull a feckin' stunt like this and not get pounded into bloody hell when I get my

hands on you…!" He balled his hands into fists as he took another step toward the shadows in the corner.

Colm heard a snatch of a whispered conversation between Annabel and Daria. "Jack is much taller than that," Daria insisted.

"What a poor old woman she must be, the grandmother of that shameless Jack O'Grady, if he mocks his poor old granny in such a manner," chided the voice. An almost nauseating stench—a stench like very sour milk—assaulted Colm's nostrils just as a squeak and a rustle caught everyone's attention. One of the rats they had seen earlier darted out, away from the corner. Seeing the boys in front of it, though, it ran in frantic circles, as if caught between whoever was speaking in the dark and the boys standing in a row, blocking its escape. The wind rustled around them and clouds parted, allowing a sliver of moonlight to fall into the chapel. Michael lifted his head to look up at the sky, and the rat, sensing an opportunity, raced around the boys and into the shadows near the windowsill, where Annabel and Daria were still riveted by fear.

The speaker stepped into the sliver of light. Colm heard the girls' breath catch in their throat.

A short, elderly woman stood before them. She leaned on a stick that seemed to serve as a cane. She held it with one gnarled, arthritic hand as she rested the other on her hip. Tight sleeves came past her elbows and a loose skirt and wide apron swirled about her legs as she hobbled about. A light shawl was draped around her shoulders. A bonnet hid her hair, its large bow nestled under her chin. Details of her face were hard to make out, but Colm sensed dark, bright eyes and tight, narrow lips below what might have been described as a perky nose in the woman's youth. Deep lines creased her face.

"So, you come to disturb an old woman on this fine, fine night," she complained, looking at each of the boys in the chapel in turn. "'Tis boys like you that most often come disturb an old woman's rest, but not always. Not always. Sometimes it is older men, grown men that ought to know their manners better. Or even grown women, women who have no sympathy for kindred such as I, a woman already what they are likely to be someday. But each and every one of them—boys, men, women—are surprised to discover that they are disturbing me. They expect to find someone else here, and they all demand to know who I am and what I am doing here." She chuckled and the malicious undertone of it froze Colm's blood.

She stepped closer to the boys, carefully skirting the gravestone with its small cairn of cobblestones. "Was it you that asked my name, young man?" she asked Donal, who still seemed unsure how to answer her. She peered at the other boys. Noticing Colm sitting on the ground behind the others, she shook her cane at him. "Was it you?"

"Aye, 'twas me that asked that." Colm struggled to keep a *feckin'* or two from his answer.

"And 'tis not an unreasonable question," the old woman conceded, turning her back on the boys and taking a few labored steps toward the grave before she turned and continued. "Not an unreasonable question and one that deserves an answer."

"Then tell us plain," Donal snapped at last. "Who are you?"

"Well, well!" she laughed quietly again. "The young man finds his voice at last!" She looked past him to Colm. "A polite boy, one that asks a reasonable question and treats an old woman with respect, now that boy deserves an answer."

Colm held his breath, waiting for the old woman to continue.

"My name is Eva, Eva Brownestown, so it is and named I was for my cousin Eva, her that was ta'en and pilloried for serving in the coven of Dame Alice Kyteler, not so far from here, up in Kilkenny, in the year of our most gracious Lord 1324." The old woman bobbed her head several times in rapid succession as if agreeing with her own memories. "Ta'en she was in

1324 and I was born in 1650, the year that Cromwell's army—bah!—took Waterford from the Irish for them hateful Englishmen!" She spat on the ground.

"There's been an Eva in our family in every generation," she explained after calming herself, "an Eva named in honor of my cousin and 'twas that Eva in every generation that was taught the secrets and the skills which that first Eva was taught by Dame Alice herself. Skills and secrets best used for the defending of the Irish against them hateful English"— she spat on the ground again—"and for the defending of innocent women against the hateful men that persecute us so, that have no appreciation of a woman or manners to treat her as her fair and gentle sex deserves."

"What's she talkin' about?" Eamonn asked, just loud enough for Colm to hear. "Who's this feckin' Dame Alice and what skills and secrets is she talkin' of?"

"I… I think Dame Alice was a famous witch that *Grandad* used to tell us about," Donal whispered back. "But she ran off to England, he always said, and left her maid to be punished in her place."

"Bah!" The old woman whirled towards Donal, having heard his explanation, and spat at his feet. "That is the lie that be always told by the men that tells the tale of ol' Dame Alice!" she barked. "What they don't be sayin' in their lyin' words is that Dame Alice was hunted and persecuted so unfair, she was, by that hateful Englishman, the bishop Richard de Ledrede, so they called him. He hunted her and persecuted her and drove her to England finally, so he did, and then—because she had to flee in haste and could'na take her faithful coven members with her, he turned and persecuted them, so he did! He burned and pilloried and tortured and hung and did all manner of dreadful things to them poor innocents, so he did, before he finally learned his lessons, so he did, and died in disgrace and poverty, that hateful English bishop did!"

Michael stepped toward the woman. "Excuse me, ma'am," he said, reaching as if to take her arm. "But you say yourself that Dame Alice and Eva lived in 1324 and that you were born in 1650. Clearly you haven't been feeling well, and staying out in this night air cannot be good for you. Let us take you home and get you inside where there'll be folks to take good care of you."

Eva whirled at him and shook her fist. "Do not believe me, do you, young man? Don't believe that poor old Eva here is who she says she is, do you? Just because you and your silly friends don't expect to meet me, you think I must be daft and not know who I am. Well, you roused me and now the consequences must be faced!"

"Well, I'm sure we're sorry to have disturbed—roused—you here, but hiding in the corner of a ruined church is no place for an old woman like yourself," Michael protested. "But we had no idea that you would be sleeping here in the shadows. There must be folks that care for you and worry for your sake—even if they do let you go on about your long-dead ancestors and such. Let us take you back to them." He closed his hand around her free arm, the hand resting on her hip.

"Long-dead ancestors? Them's that care and worry for my sake?" she snapped, smacking his knuckles with the cane in her other hand. He cried out and dropped her arm, sucking on his knuckles and stepping back. "Them's that care and worry for my sake are long dead themselves, boy! It's the dead that you came here to deal with, is it not, and the long dead that you have disturbed, with your building a cairn on my grave and all!" She thrust her face and shoulders at him as if about to lunge at him. Michael stumbled back, away from her.

"That's what you came for, tell me true!" she ordered the rest, turning to look at them now. "You came here and built a cairn on the grave, thinking you would drive the *Dearg-due* back into her grave and pin her in the earth again, did you not?"

"Y-yes, it was," confessed Donal. "But how did you know that… ma'am?"

"Because I am part of her story and because of that, my grave is mista'en for hers by some, and so they come to build a cairn on my grave thinkin' that they be buildin' a cairn on hers, and the rumble and the noise of the cairn buildin' disturbs my rest, and so instead of driving the Dearg-due back into her grave, what they do instead is rouse me up from mine. And I, an old and frail woman, a woman who deserves her rest, a woman who resents bein' disturbed, so I do, am not happy to see those who come disturbin' me," she barked. "No more than I take kindly to those who would drive my Elizabeth back into her grave, where she deserves not to be!" She spat at Donal.

"H-how is it that you are part of the story of the Dearg-due?" Donal asked.

"How is it that I am a part of my Elizabeth's story? Is that what you be wantin' to know now, is it?" She leaned closer to him. "Because I made her to be the Dearg-due!"

Colm and his friends were dumbstruck. This was not part of any story Colm and his brother had ever heard from their grandfather or uncle. He looked at Michael, who had known something about the Dearg-due, to see if he was familiar with the old woman's claim.

"What do you mean, made her to be the Dearg-due?" Michael wanted to know. "No one made her to be the Dearg-due. She just is the Dearg-due!"

"Thinking that she was born that way, are you?" Old Eva shook her fist at Michael as she hobbled around the gravestone in the dirt. "No, she was born a fair young thing, but destroyed she was by her wicked father who gave her to that hateful Englishman of a husband, so he did!" She swung her cane at the cairn of stones they had erected on the gravestone, knocking the top one off the others. "Killed her, killed that sweet young Elizabeth he did, that husband of hers! So I gave her the chance to avenge herself against him and her father!"

She turned to peer at them again from the other side of the gravestone. "It took all the skills and secrets passed down from one Eva in my family to the next, so it did! E'en so, I needed help, so I did. So I called on the great power of the queens of the Otherworld. The queens I called on as I stood there at Elizabeth's grave—Morríghan, Nemain and Badb, she who guides and guards the folk of Waterford in particular—all great queens of the Otherworld, so they are, came and shared their power with me, with old Eva, in order to raise that poor, downtrod girl and give her the means of avenging herself against the men—against all men—that ha' destroyed her and ta'en her life from her."

Eva stood and smiled, apparently relishing the memory of remaking Elizabeth into the creature that would come to be known as the Dearg-due. "And so," the old witch continued, "I do not look kindly on those who attempt to drive my poor Elizabeth back into the earth, and when they come and wake me instead, I stop them, so I do! I stop them from punishing my poor Elizabeth and stop them from ever causing harm to gentle girls again!"

Eva raised her free hand toward the boys and the night breeze stirred again, ruffling the boys' hair. Her outstretched hand, palm up, was pale in the sliver of moonlight, which was extinguished as the moon vanished again behind a bank of clouds.

"The queens of the Otherworld came to share their power, so they thought, for the making of Elizabeth's vengeance," smirked Eva in the near-dark. "But I tricked them, so I did! Just as all the Sidhe and faerie folk come to earth for naught but the destruction and trickery of mortals, so I called on them and tricked them, so I did! The queens lent me their power and then—not expecting poor old Eva to be so clever, no they were not!—their power was forever bound to me, their power tied up with me and with my will for as long as moons shall wax and wane or tides shall rise and fall or men do battle with one another upon the field. The queens' power is my power, and I have no need of tools and suchlike now to avenge myself against those who disturb my rest while seekin' to imprison Elizabeth within her grave!"

The boys standing before her looked at each other, and seemingly with a single thought, turned to run back toward the windowsill where the girls still watched and listened. Donal

grabbed Colm's hand as he passed his brother still sitting on the ground. He wrenched Colm up onto his feet and Colm cried out with pain, unable to put any weight at all on his injured foot. Michael and Eamonn reached the wall and scrabbled at the rocks with their feet, their hands wrapped around the wrought-iron window guards as they tried to pull themselves over the iron rods and out of the chapel ruins.

"Try to run away from poor old Eva, do you?" Her voice rang out in the darkness behind them. "Try to run, but never escape me, so you shall! Try to put Elizabeth back into the grave, did you? So rest forever in your own graves, you shall, bound to serve at the beck and call of the Otherworld queens—and poor old Eva, as well!" She rapped her cane on her gravestone. "*Beir orthu!* Seize them! Seize them all and hold them with you!"

The earth beneath their feet shook and rocked, clods of earth pushed aside and shaken off as wraiths and shadows of men clambered out and over each other in their haste to escape whatever torments held them below. Skeletal fingers and hands covered with little more than shards of flesh grasped Donal's feet so forcefully that he and Colm were instantly yanked to a stop. Arms and torsos rose and wrapped themselves around Eamonn and Michael, who were halfway to the windowsill. The screams of the boys inside the chapel and the screams of the girls outside—pushing their hands through the window guards and trying to hold onto Eamonn and Michael—mingled in the air with the hacking cough-like laughter of Eva. Large black crows swooped out of the night sky over the girls, their sharp beaks snapping at both the girls in the yard and the boys on the other side of the windows. Colm was sure some of the crows flew up from the ground beside him, attacking Donal as well as Eamonn's and Michael's backsides.

Donal dropped his brother's hand, clutching at his own face to protect himself from the attack of the crows. Colm fell back onto the ground, helpless as the crows darted and snapped at his brother's face and shoulders and the shadow figures clutching Donal's legs and feet grew more substantial and seemingly stronger. With a powerful tug, they pulled Donal onto the ground, and he screamed and cried as he fell.

The wraiths grasping at Eamonn and Michael seemed to congeal into more substantial form, too. The figures wrapped around Eamonn pulled him back into the chapel, and he screamed as the crows pecked at his face. Daria grabbed at Michael's pants and managed to hold him for an instant before he also toppled from the window back into the chapel.

The fallen boys flailed wildly, kicking at their attackers as they continued to shield their faces from the crows' rampage. More crows flew in and struck Colm's face while Annabel and Daria were forced to swing their arms to drive away the crows striking the back of their heads. Shadowy hands reached through the stonework of the windows, attempting to grab hold of the girls. More wraiths pulled themselves up from the earth and threw themselves toward Colm, who began to kick at them as the other boys were.

As the wraiths touched Colm, though, they screamed and scrambled to extricate themselves from the tangled mass of attackers falling on Colm's torso. The shadow figures seizing the girls also screamed as if in great pain, dropping the girls' arms and falling back into the chapel with the boys. The crows, as if on cue, swirled up and away from the girls and over the ruins' walls to join the attack on the three boys trapped by the specters. The crows darting at Colm also abandoned that effort, some flying into the night and others circling back toward Eva.

"*Beir orthu! Beir orthu!* Seize them!" she repeated, striking her cane repeatedly on the gravestone, knocking askew the remaining two cobblestones of the cairn the boys had built.

More attackers threw themselves at Colm and the girls, shrieking and falling back away from them even as the teens screamed and struck at their attackers. Colm swung around and kicked at the shadow men attacking Donal, and the shadows he kicked cried out and tried to scramble out of his reach while not losing their grasp of Donal.

Unable to understand what he were seeing, Colm watched the forms of Eamonn and Michael fade and seemingly grow more wraithlike even as the wraiths continued to seemingly grow more solid. The boys' voices faded, and suddenly their attackers slipped back beneath the earth, dragging the boys with them. Eamonn's and Michael's voices were cut off, replaced by a momentary choking and gasping, as if earth were falling into their mouths, in turn replaced by horrific silence.

Donal's voice likewise faded as his form become more indistinct in the night. The same terrible choking sounds came from his throat that had come from Eamonn and Michael as Donal also seemed to sink into the earth under the weight of his attackers. Colm, his eyes stinging with tears and his ankle in more pain than he could have imagined, screamed and kicked again at the ghostly thugs. He managed to pull himself around and threw himself at Donal in one last attempt to hold his brother and save him. But Colm fell through empty air, landing where he had seen Donal an instant before, his breath knocked out of his lungs.

Eva hobbled over to Colm's gasping, crying figure. She prodded his shoulder with her cane and peered down at the boy.

"Ah, your jacket's turned inside out," she snarled. She looked up at the girls. "An' no doubt yours are turned out as well, young ladies," she chided them harshly, shaking a bony finger in their direction. "Jackets turned inside out is a precaution few have thought of when they came to disturb poor Eva or build the cairn on Elizabeth's grave. Clever boy!" she congratulated Colm, her voice dripping sarcasm and fury, prodding his shoulder again with her walking stick.

With a ferocious, thunderous cry, Colm rolled over and threw himself at Eva, intending to seize her and torment her as the wraiths had been tormented by his touch, a mere boy with the inside-out clothing. But for the second time that night, he found himself lunging through empty air, his arms wrapped only around himself and not around the witch, who had faded from sight as quickly as Colm could move. He sobbed, huddled on the floor of the chapel ruins.

The girls at the window who had watched that concluding act of the night's horror in shocked silence finally reacted to their experience. Unending shrieks burst from their throats, over and over, as they shook the stone window frames, as if by pulling them down, the girls could restore their friends to the world of the living.

The banshee-like screams of the girls finally came to the attention of the people across the street and around the chapel. Light flooded the area at last as people poured toward the Lady Chapel, no doubt thinking to drive off a gang of thugs attacking the screaming girls. Instead, they found the two girls clutching the stone wall of the Lady Chapel while Colm continued to sob uncontrollably on the ground inside.

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Black Metal and the Rebirth of the 'Monstrous' in Norway

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Abstract

In the early 'nineties a sub-genre of Metal music called Black Metal rapidly arose from out of Norway's musical underground into the country's public consciousness, as a consequence of a number of heinous crimes associated with the movement, which were enthusiastically seized upon by the media. While typical of youth subcultures in general in some ways, such as in its hostility to authority, it was also uniquely Norwegian in others. Most obviously, it involved fearsome and unsettling set of visual and musical conventions, seemingly aimed at presenting a fearsome allure to followers while discomfiting the mainstream. But above all, it was remarkable in its invocation of netherworldly or elemental themes and symbols, most notably Satan and the gods and monsters of ancient and medieval Scandinavia, as guiding principles. Scholars of the movement have been hard-pressed to explain why, for all the movement's burgeoning international profile in the meantime, it was Norway of all places that gave rise to it, the chief problem, it seems, being how to square such a rampantly antisocial and supernaturally-fixated subculture with a parent culture commonly regarded as characteristically pious (in both Christian and liberal senses) and notably affluent. This article is an attempt to consider Black Metal in sociological terms, and in particular, to ascertain why the phenomenon came about where it did. To achieve this, it commences with a look at the deeper historical manifestations of the type of monstrous themes from Norwegian culture that the phenomenon revived, and follows this with a more sociological discussion based around the notions of Romanticism and the Gothic, and Campbell's notion of the cultic milieu, culminating in the proposal that Black Metal can be regarded as constituting, potentially at least, a valid form of 'seekership.'

Key Words

Black Metal, Norway, Monstrous, Cultic, Satan, Netherworld, Trolls, Gothic, Modernity.

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1. Introduction

To see the world
through a troll's eye
is to discover
that everything wrong
seems right,
and everything right
seems wrong.
Beware,
And never try it![1]

Carving a giant
Carving the eye of a god
Create ME[2]

In the early 'nineties a series of shocking events transpired in Norway that had the effect of propelling into the country's public consciousness a small group of young and disaffected individuals who had dedicated themselves to the wholesale destruction of mainstream mores via the extremes of action, rhetoric, and – above all – music. In the words of Bård 'Faust' Eithun, one of this movement's most influential (and notorious) figures, these were youths '"dedicated to the core to a vital and subcultural underground world of harsh and devilish-inspired metal"'.[3] Taking in suicide, arson (of a markedly sacrilegious sort[4]) and murder, the crimes perpetrated by core members of this group (and generally condoned by those within the milieu) caused an immediate, not to mention unprecedented, media and cultural furore within Norway. The gravity of the crimes aside, what seemed particularly shocking was how out of character they seemed for a country that stands as 'one of the best places in the world to live according to several international lists', and whose population has traditionally regarded itself as somewhat conservative and undemonstrative (which is to say, as subject to a pervasive 'pressure for equality and conformity').[5]

In effect, these events served as a sort of perverse 'foundation myth' for this movement. Since then, however, the phenomenon in question, Black Metal (which was so named in misplaced homage to the irreverent British proto-Extreme Metal band Venom, who coined the term in the early 'eighties), has transcended the simple 'moral panic' status conferred upon it initially (when it was labelled a '"national disgrace"'[6]) to become Norway's 'biggest musical export' and 'claim to international fame in popular music'.[7]

Nevertheless, it is not simply the stark emotional and attitudinal disjunction between extremity and conformity so vividly epitomised in the rise of Black Metal within Norway that makes the phenomenon so remarkable, but also its markedly anomalous thematic and ideological aspects. But before going any further, it is important to stress that this applies not just to Black Metal's vocal Satanic and anti-Christian tendencies, unorthodox as these may be, as it appears to stand as much in contradistinction to Norway's secular and modernising impetus – manifesting in its present-day status as an affluent and incomparably comfortable place to live – as to its more traditional, Lutheran aspects.

However, while in some ways Black Metal might appear like so many other youth cults that have arisen around music, accounting for its uniqueness – its musical ferocity, underpinned by an apparently sincerely held and darkly elemental supernaturalist cosmology – is not so straightforward, particularly considering the seeming inhospitality of its parent culture to such sensibilities. Thus, even Moynihan and Søderlind, in their authoritative work on the subject, *Lords of Chaos*, felt compelled to write that there 'is no one satisfactory reason why the music reached such an epidemic proportion in Norway and was taken to such extremes', and moreover that '[those] who have attempted to understand Black Metal generally agree upon this.'[8]

This discussion will look at the development of Black Metal within this seemingly anomalous context, and will focus in particular upon the importance of its defining aesthetic – a preoccupation with the monstrous and otherworldly – in understanding the conditions that enabled this emergence. It will proceed with a brief introduction to Norwegian Black Metal itself, before going on to look at the cultural and historical themes that are perhaps most pertinent to a consideration of this relationship. And finally, it will attempt address Moynihan and Søderlind's concerns in order to show how Black Metal not only fits within, but can even help make sense of, the broader national cultural landscape by virtue (so to speak) of the very same unearthly sensibilities – the 'pummelling ferocity and ghostly fervour'[9] – that underpin the phenomenon.

2. What Do We Mean By 'Black Metal'?

Black Metal is a sub-branch of Extreme Metal characterised by a dark and fierce set of musical conventions, lyrical themes and visual trappings which came to the world's attention in the early 'nineties. It should also be noted, as Keith Kahn-Harris does in his seminal academic study of Extreme Metal, that followers tend to be 'young' and 'white,' and from the 'more affluent working classes and lower middle classes'.[10] As a genre, it is most readily identifiable by its hyper-kinetic rhythms and discordant guitars, combined with a ghoulish and netherworldy aesthetic, and an ethic of imperious individualism[11] and strident anti-Christianity. But in order appreciate these core aspects in their proper perspective it is useful to compare the phenomenon with its most immediate stylistic point of contact (not to mention departure), namely Death Metal, which succeeded Thrash Metal (and proceeded Black Metal) as the *de rigueur* choice of Metal's more leftfield fans. Brutally dissonant sonically, and luridly unpleasant lyrically, this clearly influenced Black Metal's Norwegian pioneers in many ways, not least in its ethos of unadulterated extremity (Mayhem's *Deathcrush* EP of 1987 being a prime example of this). On the other hand, they also took great offence at certain other aspects of Death Metal culture, and reacted accordingly. Chiefly, their perception was that it was merely a soundtrack to more or less conventional lifestyles, and pre-occupied with what they saw as prosaic, 'social and political' matters.[12]

In contrast, these early protagonists – who included members of the bands Mayhem, Burzum and Emperor – regarded their genre as a serious and radical way of life, basing this around a dark and seemingly literalist interpretation of some of the staple themes of Heavy Metal, namely myth and fantasy, warfare and Satan. In particular, rather than just singing about Satan, it was common for exponents to claim, not only to believe in the Devil, but also to revere him. Moynihan and Søderlind aver that this tended more towards what they dismissively term '"medieval" Devil worship' than to the more sophisticated approaches of modern-day groups like the Church of Satan and Temple of Set, although there were exemptions, such as Ihsahn from Emperor.[13] Moreover, in direct contrast to Death Metal, Black Metal practitioners were inclined to combine their musical output with an intensely image-conscious attitude, and (in publicity shots at least) were typically to be seen parading around like spectral warriors, often bandying all-too-real looking weapons, with the aim of presenting an aura of nightmarish abandon. Whether as image-mongering or as symbolic confirmation of actual misdeeds (as in the case of Varg Vikernes from Burzum and Faust from Emperor), the intention was to pay homage to a time when war was regarded as a noble form of blood ritual, so to speak, rather than a defensive or peacekeeping exercise. Richardson writes that this 'is partly a sonic thing: the clash of sword on sword suits the music's eviscerating force', but also because such imagery harks back to when its now enfeebled 'traditional enemy', the Christian Church, was a foe 'worth fighting'.[14]

By extension, Black Metal philosophy and aesthetics tended to align themselves with an almost febrile sense of place. Thus, whereas earlier Metal bands were content merely to sing about ancient and medieval Europe, the pioneer Black Metal bands seemed to be steeped in those cultures, or rather, in a delinquent (and, in some cases, such as bands like Burzum and, more recently, Taake, politically unsavoury) semblance of these. For Richardson, this sense of 'ancient-ness' is seen as desirable because it 'confers intellectual respectability and occludes meaning,' thus satisfying the genre's 'desire for gravitas'[15].

Since its chaotic emergence, the Black Metal phenomenon has burgeoned internationally, with strong-to-strongish national scenes now functioning within numerous countries, including Greece, France, the USA, and the UK, and while it might seem that Norwegian Black Metal no longer has quite the *cachet* that it used to, its critical, catalytic

role should not be overlooked, having, as Karl Jones has suggested, something of an 'archetypal' significance[16]. Furthermore, despite the phenomenon's far greater international profile, a sense of profound identification with the Old World has long prevailed, more or less. Thus, for instance, some fifteen years or so after the genre's advent a special report in *Terrorizer* magazine declared, '[s]pecifically European themes, ancestral concerns and definitive European imagery (that remains inherently so, varying only superficially per country) have been the rock on which post-'90s black metal has built itself',[17] although there are signs that scenes outside Europe are starting to break away from this influence to some extent.[18]

Moreover, the working out of this core aspect of the phenomenon led to an upsurge of bands – such as Enslaved, Ulver, In The Woods, Falkenbach, Solefald, and Kampfar, to name but a few – espousing overtly heathen or pagan influences. Indeed, according to Keith Kahn-Harris, so rapid was this trend that by the mid-'noughties 'various versions of paganism' were '[m]ore common' within the phenomenon than 'outright diabolism'[19], although whether or not this is still the case is difficult to say[20]. As suggested above, though, given the governing themes of Black Metal's advent, it is unwise to make too much of this distinction. As Richardson puts it, the 'paganisation of Metal – a fetishisation of Viking culture and its signs and symbols: Odinism, runes, nature cults – represents an ulterior blackening' in its innate hostility to Christian religion, and '[allegiance] with non-human, aggressively anti-human, natural forces'.[21]

3. Context: Myth, Folklore and Secularisation

As is commonly the case amongst the cultures of Western Europe, Norway's has its origins, albeit distantly perhaps, in the bloody yet evocative world of pagan tradition, although as with the rest of Scandinavia it succumbed to Christianity comparatively late in the day (between the 10th and 11th centuries, according to Davidson).[22] Written records in Norway and Scandinavia from heathen times are scarce (although archaeological studies continue to pay dividends).[23] Nevertheless, clues towards the nature and customs of that era are provided by numerous documents that appeared not long after the advent of Christianity, courtesy of ecclesiasts who 'rejoiced in the old stories and poems', [24] and other Christians – like Snorri Sturlsson – whose strong faith actually prompted 'new stirrings of affection' for such tales.[25]

The cosmos portrayed in these stories centred on a colossal ash tree called Yggdrasill, and teamed with outlandish, supernatural beings. These included gods (Aesir and Vanir primarily, but by no means solely), elves (Light and Dark), dwarves, frost thurzes, fire etins, mountain trolls, forest giants, and countless others, who forged enmities and alliances amongst themselves, and performed acts of treachery and bravery, magic, violence and seduction, the doomy prospect of Ragnarok (the destruction and renewal of the Nine Worlds) looming over them the whole while.[26] Cosmology aside, heathen tradition seems to have placed far greater store in notions of 'reputation' than in those of 'redemption', although archaeological findings also indicate a strong belief in life after death.[27]

Moreover, remnants of the old heathen ways continued to haunt the Norwegian imagination for some time after. Surprisingly, perhaps, this seems to have been in no small part due to the population's reluctance to let go of their 'beliefs in hidden spirits', a process that actually 'took several hundred years', according to O'Leary. Evidence for this *de facto* co-mingling can be seen in the ornate decoration of a number of the country's beautiful wooden stave churches, which feature 'both crosses and dragon heads'. Ultimately, then, it seems that throughout this prolonged transition the new(er) religion was regarded more as a means of containing the old powers – that is, of acquiring 'protection over the evil creatures that still existed' – than a wholesale substitution, cosmologically speaking.[28]

Such creatures included seductive spirits of female appearance call the *hulder*, who sported 'cow's tails' and harboured malign plans for those unable to resist their charms; *oskerei*, a cavalcade of spectral entities most likely to be observed around Yuletide; and the *draug*, a terrifying being which was thought to '[sail] in half a boat on the sea', presaging death for any who saw it. But by far the most prominent of these surviving entities were the *trolls*. These were 'large, stupid and ugly creatures who are believed to be found in the mountains and forests'[29], thus somewhat akin to the giants of heathen lore, it seems. Being evil, trolls were particularly vulnerable to daylight,[30] and could not bear the 'sound of church bells', although it appears that their narrative function was also to be outwitted by stereotypically unassuming (albeit canny) Norwegian everyman characters like Butter Ball and the Ash Lad.[31]

However, while the thought of these netherworldy beings could still unnerve the greater population through much of the 1700s,[32] belief in them began to erode steadily thereafter. Nevertheless, monsters from folklore would go on to feature periodically as picaresque characters in music, art and literature via Norway's contribution to Romanticism. Most significant perhaps is Henrik Ibsen's drama *Peer Gynt* (1867), which was famously put to music by Edvard Grieg in his eponymous tone poem (1875). Also significant are the pictures of Theodor Kittelsen, and in particular *The Troll on Karl Johan Street* (1892), which could be seen as a rather neat and whimsical illustration of the incompatibility of urbane nineteenth century lifestyles with the spirit of primal dread once engendered by such figures.

It is possible to see this historical trajectory as a national shift in orientation regarding otherworldly and monstrous notions away from encompassing religious worldview, through uneasy co-existence and gradual detachment, then bourgeois dilettantism and sentimentalisation from a 'safe distance', and culminating in virtual or *de facto* abandonment. In her overview of Norwegian culture and customs, Margaret Hayford O'Leary provides a succinct example of this development by way of references to customs concerning the *nisse* or *haugbonde*, which translates as 'the farmer from the burial mound'. She writes,

> [The *nisse*'s] main duty is to watch over the farm and ascertain that the animals are well cared for. This was part of ancestor worship that continued even after the coming of Christianity to Norway, as one can see in some thirteenth-century laws forbidding the practice. Until the nineteenth century it was the custom in some places to leave the table covered with food all night long on Christmas Eve so that the spirits could come and eat.[33]

O'Leary goes on to say that such practices are still popular, such that 'even in 2009 some 350,000 Norwegians reported leaving porridge for the *nisse* every Christmas Eve'. Importantly, however, she adds, 'no one beyond childhood actually believes in the existence of the *nisser* anymore'.[34]

This, then, is the context for the emergence of Black Metal specifically in terms of Norwegian attitudes towards monstrous and otherworldy notions from within its own national culture. More broadly, in the light of recent studies on religious behaviour showing that only a tiny percentage of Norway's nominally Christian majority could be described as regular churchgoers,[35] this shift in attitudes might at first glance be interpreted as testament to exactly the sort of prolonged 'disenchantment' process outlined by Weber in his seminal secularisation model.[36] On the other hand, as latter-day secularisation studies tend to show, church attendance is by no means a precise indicator of religiosity *per se* within populations, even amongst the supposedly secular nations of Western Europe, since what has actually happened here is a dramatic upsurge in more fluid, personalised religious forms.[37] This too is a development notably borne out by Norwegian trends. Thus, '[while] traditional religious faith and practice

have declined… there seems to be a growing spirituality and an increase in private and individualistic religion', writes O'Leary.[38]

All this begs two interrelated questions in regard to understanding the rise of Black Metal in Norway. Firstly, how did a phenomenon preoccupied with the 'monstrous' to such a pronounced, even literal, sense emerge so explosively within an environment where such notions had been so thoroughly trivialised? And secondly, how, if Norway's example is so typical of modern religious trends, did it provide the breeding ground for such a uniquely sacrilegious popular music form? Moynihan and Søderlind suggest a number of plausible reasons why this might have happened where it did, including Norway's 'lack of religious fervour', and the 'relative degree of freedom and independence from their parents' of 'Black Metal adherents'. They also point to the country's geo-cultural 'distance' from the rest of the continent, which they plausibly consider to have had a lot to do with the original exponents' *gauche* inability to appreciate the 'tongue in cheek' elements of pioneering Metal extremists like Venom.[39] But above all, there was the country's traditional 'taboo against violence and horror' and tendency towards the 'censorship of violence and the macabre' (which the author's illustrate by citing the surprising statistic that the country's 'otherwise highly prolific movie industry has produced but one horror film in its seventy-year history'[40]) for the simple reason that, '[when] denied something, one tends to gorge on it when access is finally gained.'[41]

Ultimately, though, as mentioned previously, Moynihan and Søderlind remain sceptical about the possibility of a theory that can fully account for the phenomenon's emergence, concluding that the 'only reasonable solution… lies in all these pieces forming a whole'.[42] However, it is possible that the authors are perhaps being too pessimistic here, and that such an explanation, however tentative, might not be entirely inconceivable, by using certain sociological ideas that could serve to elaborate upon and add nuance to the factors listed by them. It is to this endeavour that the discussion will now turn.

4. Black Metal as a Cultic Phenomenon

The key component of this section of the discussion is Colin Campbell's notion of the *cultic milieu*. This is a nebulous but pervasive phenomenon, a substratum of contemporary Western culture that is dependent on no specific organisations, structures or personalities, but rather encompasses all '"collectivities, institutions, individuals and media of communication associated with [such] beliefs"'. The cultic milieu is driven by a 'common ideology of seekership' rather than dependence on external authority or received wisdom. More specifically, it '"[s]ubstantively… includes the worlds of the occult and the magical, of spiritualism and psychic phenomena, of mysticism and new thought, of alien intelligences and lost civilizations, of faith healing and nature cure."'[43] That is to say, it spans the more individualistic, alternative forms of contemporary spirituality such as the New Age, Paganism and, indeed, Satanism. Crucially, and in apparent antithesis to classic secularisation theory, it is (as Michael Hamilton paraphrases) also an integral, even quintessential, feature of modernity in its displacement of the 'commitment to specific doctrines and dogmas', and epitomises a 'major shift' in that direction, according to Campbell.[44] Indeed, the advent of Paganism in particular seems to demonstrate how untenable the notion of disenchantment has become within modern western societies.[45]

However, while it is evident that the cultic milieu has spread as far as Norway, where it is not uncommon for individuals to 'believe in contact with spirits, reincarnation, fortunetellers, and healing through prayer',[46] this still leaves the problem of explaining how and why Norway's unique cultic manifestation, Black Metal, arose there of all places. In order fully appreciate the significance of Black Metal within this context it is necessary to invoke another, closely intertwined concept, namely Romanticism. Primarily, this can be understood as

ideological counterweight to the Enlightenment Cult of Reason, which it sought to redress *via* a 'penchant for reverie and dreaming, [and] celebration of the irrational'.[47] In Norway at least, this darker, more (in a poetic sense) elemental form of Romanticism seems to have been sidelined in favour of the sort of picaresque or allegorical depictions of supernatural or mythic themes mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, Black Metal's indebtedness to Romanticism, however indirect, remains palpable, particularly with regard to nature. Thus, as Kahn-Harris points out, the latter's influence is evident in the way adherents tend to compare 'the wildness of the forests and mountains … with the effete cosmopolitanism of contemporary cities.'[48] Similarly, in his article about Black Metal's influence on the contemporary art world, Jérôme Lefèvre lists the artistic themes that most closely represent its 'dark and emotional aesthetic' as those of a 'typically dark Norwegian landscape – the fog, the forest and a certain emptiness', and suggests that such tropes can readily be used to convey a 'strong neo-Romanticism.'[49]

Particularly apposite here are two intertwined notions of crucial importance to both movements – *imagination* and *atmosphere*. By way of explanation, the English scholar Maurice Bowra writes that the conveyance of atmosphere was vital to the Romantic's poetic sensibility, as it is through this that the "'imaginative faculty'" combines with "'truth in observing,'" as Coleridge put it.[50] Even more interesting in this regard is the following quote from the German writer Novalis, which Bowra cites as in order to illustrate a darker Continental strain of Romanticism, where imagination ideally becomes disturbed by notions of 'unsatisfied longing':

> I know that imagination is most attracted by what is most immoral, most animal; but I also know how like a dream all imagination is, how it loves night, meaninglessness, and solitude.[51]

This heralds and prefigures Black Metal's own netherwordly ethos to striking degree, and seems to pinpoint the uncanny psycho-emotive quality that infuses the genre's preoccupations and binds them together, its visual, thematic and lyrical aspects, both sombre and fantastic, with its elemental and eruptive sonic facets.

With regard specifically to the imaginative side of this quality, it should be noted that Black Metal is quite clearly a cultural form that gives its participants free reign, not simply in broad terms relating to governing, darkly cosmological, mythical and historical themes, but also within the microcosmic framework of self-image. Most obviously, perhaps, Black Metal identity is commonly expressed in two immediately identifiable forms: the adoption of pseudonyms, and the use of make-up – or, to use a more genre-appropriate term, *corpse paint*.

The first of this should come as no surprise by now, as a role call of participants (not to mention band-names) from the scene's 'nineties heyday will attest: Necrobutcher, Helhammer, Dead, and the aforementioned Euronymous ('Prince of Death') from Mayhem; Nocturno Culto and Fenriz from Darkthrone; Frost and Satyr from Satyricon; Infernus from Gorgoroth; Count Grishnackh, otherwise known as Varg ('Wolf') Vikernes from Burzum; Abbath Doom Occulta and Demonaz from Immortal; Garm from Ulver; Dolgar and Sanrabb from Gehenna; and Agressor and Apollyon from Aura Noir. There are numerous others, but the above give a clear indication of the sort of identities practitioners like to project to the world, tending towards the diabolic (or diabolic sounding), mythical, occult, or eristic (which is to say, chaotic in nature, with implications of anti-social or boundary-defying behaviour).

The second of these methods, the use of corpse-paint is (along with other tropes such as weaponry and intimidating body language) the most common visual correspondence to these naming conventions, and serves to portray practitioners as nightmarish or mythic characters. According to Karl Jones, such is the potency of this type of image mongering that it may even '[transform] the person using [it] into their "fantasy selves"'.[52] In what might at first seem like a

similar claim, Richardson writes that these theatrical elements of Black Metal '[give] partial material reality to some of the characters we imagine ourselves to be.'[53] Explaining corpse-paint's quasi-sacramental function within the genre, Ciarán Tracey makes the following comments in an interview with Gaahl, then of Gorgoroth:

> "True Norwegian Black Metal" is a tag that bequeaths credibility, mystique and a treasure chest of metal history… Gorgoroth embody the term, in sound, attitude and aesthetic. With the donning that wraithlike make-up, they become as much a paradigm, a message and a personification of the art themselves.[54]

Turning now to the concept of atmosphere, it could be argued that this is the key to understanding and appreciating the genre in much the same way that the adrenaline rush is to Thrash Metal, seismic, airless sonority is to Doom Metal, and sheer brute impact is to Death Metal. Not least, it is frequently invoked by using unusual, 'haunting' chord structures and tunes, in addition to the sense of malign urgency more commonly associated with its music. As Moynihan and Søderlind put it, '[the] music could certainly be… described as barbarous by an unwary listener, although it is often complex and beautiful as well.'[55] A splendid example of such is Emperor's album, *In the Nightside Eclipse* (1993), about which Christe lyrically writes, '[though] still teenagers, the band members understood juxtaposition completely, sealing the album's sinister and sensitive sides together in a lyrical net of moon-worship, forest fantasy and dark-star loneliness.'[56]

Moreover, production techniques are commonly used to provide an unearthly, 'distressed' ambience. In fact, aficionados traditionally have preferred poor production values on a record, assuming that this is often more suitable for creating that sort of 'uneasy listening' mood.[57] Either way, the ultimate aim is to provide a potent ambience of 'powerful, violent, dark and grim' feelings.[58]

However, for all the apparent sincerity of the beliefs held, any discussion of Black Metal's debt to Romanticism must also take into account another integral aspect of that movement, namely its symbiotic relationship with capitalism. Paraphrasing Campbell, Slater explains that this can be seen in Romanticism's 'double and ironic relation to consumer culture', which incorporated a 'critique of the material civilization which produces consumers' while simultaneously encouraging the 'feeling, imaginative desiring and longing' that sustain the consumer drive itself.[59] And in this light, it is perhaps significant that the genre's epicentre was an Oslo record shop owned by Euronymous called *Helvete* (the Norwegian for 'Hell')[60] – significant, that is, because it seems to epitomise (albeit in microcosm) exactly the sort of grey area between consumerist and cultic urges Campbell identifies within contemporary Western societies. Thus, as Louis Pattinson puts it, while the 'capitalist impulse may seem anathema to Black Metal's pagan spirit and antipathy to modernity', Helvete nonetheless 'helped to solidify [it] as a sound, a scene, and a philosophy'.[61]

Accordingly, it could be proposed that what truly distinguishes Norwegian Black Metal as a youth subculture and as a broader cultural phenomenon is that it combines the more conventional contributory factors relating to youthful rebellion, as listed by Moynihan and Søderlind (disaffection, lacklustre religiosity, the absence of a sense of ironic 'distance'), with a sharply – indeed, savagely – cultic edge. More remarkably, in defiance of the country's traditional, prevailing conservatism and distaste for the gothic, this particular manifestation seems to have acquired its aesthetic and emotive force from the cultural province where dark and outlandish ideas, images and narratives have been most readily available to – and purchasable by – young, musically-orientated, Norwegians, this being Metal. Thus, whereas a British cultic phenomenon like, say, Wicca, saw fit to draw from centuries of artistic and

spiritual heterodoxy,[62] adherents of Norway's own unique form of cultic expression, it could be argued, had little option initially but to resort to the feral sounds and antinomian or heathen visions of 'eighties groups like Mercyful Fate, Hellhammer and Bathory for their inspiration, given the comparative dearth of available alternatives.[63] In short, Black Metal could plausibly be regarded as having been perhaps the defining conduit for Romantic, heterodox and – by extension – cultic sensibilities to Norwegians, and in particular Norwegian youth, in modern times, especially given the now indelible link that has formed between the musical genre and its initially grudging 'parent' culture.

But lest it be thought that the intention here is to trivialise or dismiss the phenomenon on an intellectual or sociological level, it should also be noted that, as Keith Kahn-Harris points out, Black Metal is actually 'the most intellectual and bookish of metal genres,'[64] which indicates a certain profundity of thought at work within what others might merely regard as a vulgar and unsophisticated musical subculture.[65] And in this respect, 'cultic' and 'seekership' notions resonate particularly well with Black Metal. That is to say, the genre illustrates the way that 'mere' assemblages of consumer products (such as recorded music, for example) can lead to what some exponents might regard as profound personal transformations, in this case through the harnessing of Metal music's traditionally eristic and fantastic ethos. To explain this proposition further, the discussion will now look at the province of cultic modernity that has clearly been the one most conducive to Black Metal affinities (and traditionally discomfiting to the Norwegian mainstream), this being the *Gothic*.

5. Black Metal as Nadir and Apotheosis of the Gothic

In an article on contemporary magical religion by Campbell and McIver, the authors explain how this was presaged in the 1700s by a popular craze for 'astrological almanacks, ghost stories and gothic horror novels', which rapidly grew into a 'commercialised "mass" market' dedicated to feeding the public's appetite for lurid and macabre diversions.[66] Given the previous discussion, it is therefore clear that any discussion of the Gothic cannot do justice to the subject without recognising its links to the (themselves closely intertwined) cultic and Romantic concepts.

As for Black Metal's debt to the Gothic, this is made abundantly clear in Richardson's thoughts on Darkthrone's early videos following the band's pioneering stylistic and musical defection from Death Metal in the early 'nineties. He explains,

> The visual language is immediately recognisable to cinephiles. The *chiaroscuro*, the gaunt vampire looming out of the darkness: [singer] Nocturno Culto apes Max Schreck in Murnau's *Nosferatu*. Darkthrone… were reaching back to an antique set of signifiers: the earliest cinematic imagining of the Gothic.[67]

But what does the term 'Gothic' actually mean? As regards to Romanticism, it could perhaps be seen as the forbidding and (for want of a better term) logical consequence of that movement's perennial preoccupation with such themes as 'the night, [and] wild nature'.[68] More specifically, and theoretically, it relates to what the sociologist Mark Edmundson eloquently refers to as 'the art of haunting'. Edmundson explains that the Gothic occurs when the 'audience' becomes 'possessed' by overbearing feelings of individual thraldom to existentially disturbing and dysfunctional states, characterised by such impulses as 'cruelty, lust, perversion, and crime'. Quoting the literary critic Chris Baldick, he argues that, accordingly, such sensibilities '"should combine a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an impression

of sickening descent into disintegration"', as epitomised (he adds) by the type of ghastly scenarios and characters portrayed in 'horror fiction and film'.[69] This is clearly the dark side of Romanticism, where desires are pursued to the point where conventional notions of fulfilment and self-development risk being inverted into something altogether more sinister or corrosive of well-being. Thus, while he admits to being a fan as well as scholar of the tradition, Edmundson is nevertheless of the opinion that too much Gothic is not something to be aspired to, commenting, '[when] a culture teems with such work and cannot produce persuasive alternatives, its prognosis is anything but favourable.'[70]

In Black Metal, however, Gothic culture's self-defeating logic is recast as a celebratory and self-aggrandising (or 'empowering', depending on one's point of view) identification with monstrous, otherworldly or uncanny entities, which is to say, the very same forces that have perennially been invoked to symbolise threatening or dangerous exigencies. For Richardson, all this ultimately means is that there is little more to Black Metal than escapism, for all its grandeur and allure. He writes,

> [We] are limited. We can't really be vampires. Which is why so many of the best Black Metal bands never perform live… We can picture them in a cemetery, surrounded by torches, a gibbous moon above, a cloud of cloaked warriors. Whereas actually performing live would place limits on what we imagine the shows might look like.[71]

Richardson rightly acknowledges some of the inherent absurdities of the genre, particularly apparent when the corpse-paint comes off, no doubt. Having said that, it could also be argued that he perhaps underplays the extent to which, as a cultic phenomenon, Black Metal may, indeed, lead to a type of genuine 'seekership' (to use Campbell's term), in which the 'sickening descent' presaged by the Gothic is duly transmuted into as a sort of (or, again depending on the point of view, actual) 'Underworld journey'.

In his essay on Left-Hand Path Ritual Magic, the anthropologist Richard Sutcliffe identifies some key features that might be of use in a discussion of Black Metal philosophy. Aside from his observation on the 'antinomian' nature of this type of magic, involving the 'transgression of mores and taboos', his most useful comments concern the 'magickal, esoteric imagination'. This, he writes, 'is a form of imagination which is accorded its own ontological positivity,' an idea that is 'radically different from the impoverished ontological status of the imagination prevalent in the West, i.e. as the "not real".' Furthermore, this is key to the appreciation of any 'symbolical systems', as these 'only become meaningful via the application of sophisticated modalities of analogical consciousness',[72] the principle goal being the achievements of 'auto-poiesis (self-creation)'.[73]

This is not to suggest that all Black Metal aficionados are practitioners of Ritual Magic (although some doubtless are). What is apparent, or at least conceivable, from this however is that the identification with monstrous or netherworldy forces by such individuals need not be as tenuous or deluded as Richardson believes, from a phenomenological viewpoint if nothing else.[74] A salient example to illustrate this point – and one now known to many due to *Lords of Chaos*[75] – is that of the *Oskerei* or *Oskorei*. These shadowy and intimidating characters from folklore have already been noted in a previous section. For the authors, however, the oskorei are particularly fascinating on account of the old Norwegian tradition (which was still on-going by the end of the nineteenth century) in which gangs of unruly youths would emulate these hideous supernatural creatures at certain times of year. What seems particularly significant is that their practices bore 'uncanny similarities to many of the traits which are distinct facets of modern

Black Metal – noise, corpsepaint, ghoulish appearances, the adoption of pseudonyms, high-pitched singing, and even arson.'[76]

Richardson himself is aware of this strange congruity, and cites 'riding with… the Oskorei' as a typically bracing example of Black Metal wish-fulfilment.[77] It should also be pointed out that (as Kadmon's article actually argues) it is very unlikely that there was ever a direct link between the two phenomena. Nonetheless, however they developed, the parallels are so striking that they must surely call into question the notion that modern individuals are somehow innately less able to identify with fantastical or netherworldly characters than their traditional predecessors. In his essay, Kadmon himself seems convinced that this is not the case. Thus, while acknowledging that whereas the original 'Oskorei' were 'members of a rural cultural landscape… Black Metal is primarily an underground culture of Scandinavian cities', he nevertheless adds, 'consciously or unconsciously, the Nordic cosmology is still effective in the music of the last decade of the twentieth century'.[78] And in an eloquent espousal of the phenomenon's potential for 'seekership' in the cultic sense, he adds the following comment:

> Black Metal is *Oskorei* romanticism… Of course there are many Black Metal musicians [for whom] Nordic cosmology is cosmetic make-up, decoration. But there are others who take Nordic cosmology seriously… Here Black Metal becomes a pagan avant-garde, a Nordic "occulture" reconciling both myth and modern world.[79]

It is not hard to find illustrations of Kadmon's words. Gaahl, for exemple, proclaims:

> Black Metal for me is based very much on what in many ways are very chaotic forces. When Odin sought knowledge, he always entered the chaotic; never the stable. But he brings the chaos out, and makes it possible for us to understand it. He is one of the figures that is an originating force for me.[80]

On a similar theme, in an interview for *Zero Tolerance* magazine, Ihsahn had this to say on the inspirations for his first solo album, *The Adversary*:

> The album title focuses on "the loner", which is a theme that I've brought up on several occasions with Icaros, Prometheus, the Lucifer figure, Cain and so on. All of these are different figures that symbolise those persons who stick their heads up and give a different perspective or speak a different opinion. They speak up and change awareness. I think that all boils down to what can be identified as the main protagonist of this album. It's the adversary, the outsider, the hermit.[81]

In other words, then, Black Metal shows how the dormant motifs and symbols of myth and folklore may re-emerge with something akin to their original, 'primal' and otherworldly force even within societies that have long made a virtue of their submission. On the other hand, Kahn-Harris argues that, however fulfilling it might be to fans, observers should ultimately aspire to maintain a 'critical perspective on the extreme metal scene', which should entail 'taking a sober, politically aware look at how far the scene is implicated in relations of domination and power.'[82] With demographics in mind, he writes,

> From this perspective, it is clear that while the scene offers many experiential rewards to members, some members may be excluded from some of these

> rewards… No individual and no space can ever truly be outside the workings of power and domination. Some members try to pretend that the scene stands outside modernity, but we do not have to join in this pretence.[83]

Kahn-Harris is correct to point out the unavoidable connections between Extreme Metal sub-genres and capitalism. The problem, however, lies in the implication that the cultural contexts within which these scenes operate and in a sense ultimately 'belong' are invariably determined by brute, bullying capitalism. This may be all well and good when applied to some national scenes. When applied to Norwegian Black Metal, however, such a reading does not seem so persuasive, given the peerlessly democratic and equitable nature of the country, which would suggest that the danger (if any) here lies not in the mainstream subverting the scene, but rather the reverse. Furthermore, the whole crux of the cultic milieu concept, of which Black Metal is a clear illustration, is that capitalism is not the blunt ideological flaying instrument it is often portrayed as, but could rather be regarded as having a genuinely supportive and reciprocal relationship with all manner of heterodox beliefs and lifestyles, however incongruous this might seem on the surface.

Finally, it is worth bearing in mind what Lefèvre has to say about the artist Damien Deroubaix, whose radically left-leaning work has up until recently been 'haunted by allegories of the craziness of capitalism, war, imperialism and hypocrisy', but is becoming increasingly informed by Black Metal.[84] Commenting on the artist's 'Burzum tree' – 'a dead black tree with pending black microphones and inhabited by a howling dead head' – Lefèvre makes the following comments:

> These strong references to Burzum are surprising considering Varg Vikernes' mindset and eventual actions in comparison to the artist. Burzum, conceptually, represents a kind of Armageddon but its/his representation in art proves again and again the strength of attraction that Black Metal's most controversial figure can provoke and only reaffirms the quality of his work.[85]

In the light of Vikernes' pivotal and formative role in the genre's foundation and subsequent reputation, these comments are significant, and could reasonably be thought to apply more generally (albeit perhaps more diffusely also) within the genre as a whole. In other words, however abhorrent (or, indeed, monstrous) the actions, works or ideologies might seem, by following its own sinister gothic logic to its netherworldly conclusion, Black Metal nevertheless seems to have obtained the power to enthral and enervate regardless of accustomed affinities or objections, in a spirit of genuine seekership in the cultic sense.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this discussion has been to neither justify nor stigmatise Black Metal, but merely to make suggestions as to its place within broader socio-cultural contexts, specifically the national 'parent' culture and the prevailing currents of modernity. It suggests that for all its apparent antipathy to the comfortable reality of modern Scandinavian life, the genre is ideally situated within it, by virtue of the way it exemplifies a quintessential feature of modernity, namely, the cultic milieu, along with that phenomenon's attendant Romantic and Gothic imperatives. Nevertheless, it does seem that Black Metal's sonic, thematic and visual contours were substantially moulded in riposte to Norway's censorious and conservative socio-cultural climate. Somewhat ironically, however, Black Metal has succeeded in making perhaps one of the greatest contributions to Norway's cultural legacy in recent years, if not the greatest, and might conceivably continue with its strange ambassadorial mission for some time to come.

Thus, while retaining its enviable standard of living and way of life, Norway has in some ways reverted to being a land of enchanted melancholy, Viking ferocity, and monstrous, elemental beings, to some at least. The truth probably lies somewhere in the middle.

Notes

[1] Eli Ketilsson, *Norway: Home of the Trolls* (Jar: Medusa, 1991), 58.
[2] Gorgoroth, 'Carving A Giant,' *Ad Marjorem Sathanas Gloriam*, written by Tom Cato Visnes (Regain Records, 2006).
[3] Ian Christe, *The Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 273.
[4] There was one notable exception to this – the murder of scene leader Øystein 'Euronymous' Aarseth by former friend and colleague, Varg 'Count Grishnackh' Vikernes, which proved controversial. See Michael Moynihan and Didrik Søderlind, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2003), 138.
[5] Margaret Hayford O'Leary, *Culture and Customs of Norway* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2010), 1, 9.
[6] Moynihan and Søderlind, *Lords of Chaos*, 99.
[7] O'Leary, *Culture and Customs*, 161.
[8] Moynihan and Søderlind, *Lords of Chaos*, 42.
[9] Tom Howells, ed., *Black Metal: Beyond the Darkness* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2012), 5.
[10] Keith Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 70.
[11] As Ian Christe puts it in his fascinating history of metal and its various sub-genres, exponents of black metal 'ultimately viewed themselves as elites of rarefied sensibility.' Ian Christe, *The Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 273.
[12] Paul Schwarz and Guy Strachan, 'The Boys from the Black Stuff: A Brief History of Black Metal,' *Terrorizer* 128 (2005): 37.
[13] Moynihan and Søderlind, *Lords of Chaos*, 218.
[14] Nick Richardson, 'Looking Black,' in *Black Metal: Beyond the Darkness*, ed. Tom Howells (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2012), 165.
[15] Richardson, 'Looking Black,' 165.
[16] Karl Jones, *A Blaze in the Northern Sky: Black Metal Music and Subculture – An Interactionist Account* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 2002), 7.
[17] Nathan T. Birk, 'From the Darkest Present: Black Metal Now,' *Terrorizer* 128 (2005): 44.
[18] He Who Crushes Teeth, from the New York band Bone Awl, uses the interesting term *orphanisation* to describe what he sees as the ambivalent view the US BM scene has of 'Old World' Black Metal, commenting, '"I really think we look to Europe as the mother county of the genre and we look to it for acceptance and rebel against it simultaneously"', an attitude, moreover, he believes has long been indicative of ''American culture'' in general. Howells, *Black Metal*, 59.
[19] Keith Kahn-Harris, 'The Meaning of Strife: Black Metal Philosophy,' *Terrorizer* 128 (2005): 40.
[20] Around the time that Kahn-Harris' article was written, other, more explicitly diabolic sub-genres were starting to come to the fore internationally, namely *Religious* and *Bestial* Black Metal, exemplified, respectively, by bands like Behexen and Impiety.
[21] Richardson, 'Looking Black,' 152-3, 159.

[22] H. R. Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), 12.
[23] Ibid., 17.
[24] Ibid., 15.
[25] Ibid., 23.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 46.
[28] O'Leary, *Culture and Customs*, 47.
[29] Ibid., 47-8.
[30] Ibid., 26.
[31] Ketilsson, *Norway*, 16-8; 30; 36-8; 46-9.
[32] O'Leary, *Culture and Customs*, 47.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] According to O'Leary, a mere '3 percent of Norwegians attend church weekly'. Ibid., 53.
[36] Pieter Spierenburg summarises Weber's *schema* accordingly. Firstly, 'magical beliefs and customs' in their pure form were displaced by religion – and in particular by 'universalising' or monotheistic creeds such as Christianity – through the latter's imposition of a 'systematic doctrine which sees the cosmos as a structured unity'. Secondly, religion itself was successfully challenged by the 'scientific-mathematical view of the world', which resulted in 'supernatural events [being] increasingly denied instead of being systematized'. Pieter Spierenburg, *The Broken Spell: A Cultural and Anthropological History of Preindustrial Europe* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press), 1991.
[37] Danièle Hervieu-Léger, 'The Twofold Limit of the Notion of Secularization,' in *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion*, ed. Linda Woodhead, Paul Heelas and David Martin, 112-25. London: Routledge, 2001.
[38] O'Leary, *Culture and Customs*, 53.
[39] Moynihan and Søderlind, *Lords of Chaos*, 41. The late Quarthon from seminal Swedish band Bathory had the following, coruscating words to say about Norway's apparent oddness in relation to the rest of Europe: '"Norway is a very screwed-up country… The church has a lot of say. They're not allowed to show this and that on the TV. The women come to Sweden to have an abortion. It's one of the most beautiful countries in the world, but it's fucked up, mainly because it lost its identity squeezed in between England, Denmark, Germany, and Sweden."' Christe, *Sound of the Beast*, 281.
[40] By contrast, Sweden, Norway's closest Scandinavian neighbour, has produced numerous classic films dealing with horror and the macabre, including *The Phantom Carriage* (1921), *Häxan* (1922), *Hour of the Wolf* (1968), and more recently, *Let the Right One In* (2008).
[41] Moynihan and Søderlind, *Lords of Chaos*, 41.
[42] Ibid., 41-2.
[43] Michael York, *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), 252-3.
[44] Malcolm B. Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1995), 178.
[45] Ieuan Jones, 'Modern Paganism in the United Kingdom' (PhD diss., University of York, 2005), 257-61.
[46] O'Leary, *Culture and Customs*, 53.
[47] Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 181.

[48] Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal*, 41.
[49] Jérôme Lefèvre, 'Pure. Fucking. Armageddon: Black Metal in CS (Conservative Shithead) Journal,' in *Black Metal: Beyond the Darkness*, ed. Tom Howells (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2012), 119-20.
[50] Maurice Bowra, *The Romantic Imagination* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 7.
[51] Ibid., 4.
[52] Jones, *Blaze in the Northern Sky*, 33.
[53] Richardson, 'Looking Black,' 165.
[54] Ciarán Tracey, 'An Act of Commitment,' *Terrorizer* 146 (2006): 10.
[55] Moynihan and Søderlind, *Lords of Chaos*, 202.
[56] Christe, *Sound of the Beast*, 276.
[57] This might also have been a matter of expedience. As Christe comments, while such rawness might have been an 'exciting aesthetic choice', groups within the genre 'often historically recorded using rather cheap recording techniques anyway' due to lack of funds. Christe, *Sound of the Beast*, 285.
[58] Kadmon, 'Oskorei,' appendix in *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground*, by Michael Moynihan and Didrik Søderlind (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2003), 386.
[59] Don Slater, *Consumer Culture and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), 95.
[60] As well as being a 'hang-out place for the few involved in the scene', Helvete was also the base for Aarseth's *Deathlike Silence* record label. Jon 'Metalion' Kristiansen, 'A Life Lived in Metal,' in *Black Metal: Beyond the Darkness*, ed. Tom Howells (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2012), 109.
[61] Louis Pattinson, 'Nocturnal Transmissions: The Selling and Distribution of Black Metal,' in *Black Metal: Beyond the Darkness*, ed. Tom Howells (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2012), 87.
[62] This includes 'the vast, culturally marginal stream of Western esotericism'. Danny L. Jorgensen and Scott E. Russell, 'American Neopaganism: The Participants' Social Identities,' *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38:3 (1999): 326.
[63] As will be evident from the following section, this is by no means to say that other influences – such as film – were not apparent. Nevertheless, the role of music, and specifically Metal music, in focussing and galvanising such influences into something radically more cohesive and purposeful cannot be ignored.
[64] Keith Kahn-Harris, 'The Meaning of Strife: Black Metal Philosophy,' *Terrorizer* 128 (2005), 40.
[65] Sad to say, Metal music and culture usually gets short shrift from non-fans, who, as Jones laments, tend to dismiss it as 'dumb', 'sexist' and 'banal'. Jones, *Blaze in the Northern Sky*, 1.
[66] Colin Campbell and Shirley McIver, 'Cultural Sources of Support for Contemporary Occultism,' *Social Compass* 34.1 (1987): 46.
[67] Richardson, 'Looking Black,' 151.
[68] Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), *viii*.
[69] Mark Edmundson, *Nightmare on Main Street: Angels, Sadomasochism and the Culture of Gothic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 4-5.
[70] Ibid., 5.
[71] Richardson, 'Looking Black,' 169.

[72] Richard Sutcliffe, 'Left-Hand Path Ritual Magick: An Historical and Philosophical Overview,' in *Paganism Today*, ed. Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman (London: Thorsons, 1996), 111, 117.
[73] Ibid., 112.
[74] Sutcliffe defines this type of interpretation as 'essentially descriptive and, furthermore, that this description is grounded in the self-understanding of the practitioners themselves.' Ibid., 110.
[75] See Kadmon, 'Oskorei,' appendix in *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground*, by Michael Moynihan and Didrik Søderlind (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2003), 386. Moynihan and Søderlind also reference this article at other points in their book.
[76] Moynihan and Søderlind, *Lords of Chaos*, 198.
[77] Richardson, 'Looking Black,' 165.
[78] Kadmon, 'Oskerei,' 386
[79] Ibid.
[80] Tracey, 'Act of Commitment,' 10.
[81] Oliver Holm, 'Outside the Gate,' *Zero Tolerance* 10 (2006): 34.
[82] Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal*, 160.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Lefèvre, 'Pure. Fucking. Armageddon.,' 127.
[85] Ibid.

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'A Horror Story that Came True': Metalepsis and the Horrors of Ontological Uncertainty in *Alan Wake*

Michael Fuchs

Abstract

Monstrosity is often conceptualized in spatial terms. The *OED*, for example, defines 'monster' as a 'creature which is part animal and part human'; that is, a living being that crosses the line between human and non-human. Similarly, Julia Kristeva conceives of the abject as that which crosses the boundary between Self and Other and Sigmund Freud's notion of the uncanny metaphorically relocates the strange and unknown to the known sphere of the home. Transgression of spatial borders is thus key to conceiving and understanding monstrosity. The present article argues that, especially recently, the phenomenon narratologists refer to as 'metalepsis' – that is, the transgression of boundaries separating (onto)logically distinct worlds – has frequently been used to create uncanny, monstrous spaces. By employing the narratological concept of metalepsis to the 2010 videogame *Alan Wake* and some of the paratexts contributing to the transmedia universe surrounding the game, I will demonstrate that the monstrous space constructed (and constantly deconstructed by metaleptic transgressions) in the gametext (and its surrounding paratexts) is, however, not limited to the fictional universe as such, for it even incorporates what we generally assume to be 'real' space.

Key Words

Videogames, media convergence, uncanny, Gothic space, transgression

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1. Metalepses: Monstrous Transgressions

Conceptualizations of monstrosity have repeatedly employed spatial metaphors. Julia Kristeva's well-known *Powers of Horror*, for example, suggests a way of understanding monstrosity in relation to what she terms 'abjection' – that elusive presence that does not 'respect borders' and 'positions,' and which following Kristeva might be best described as 'the place where meaning collapses.'[1] Although spatiality always plays an important role in helping grasp abstract concepts and thus abounds in Kristeva's work, spatiality, or, more specifically, the transgression of spatial borders, proves to be key to understanding one of her underlying arguments, namely that crossing (or even merely threatening to cross) certain boundaries can be considered abject, monstrous, that is.

In his elaborations on the 'uncanny', Sigmund Freud, likewise, employs spatial metaphors. According to Freud, the uncanny is 'that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar.'[2] Transgression again takes an important role, since Freud's starting point is the assumption that horror is evoked by 'the excessive stress that is laid on psychical reality, as opposed to material reality.'[3] Freud thus sees the collision or fusion of two worlds as one of the prime ways to elicit the uncanny. Nowhere is this idea more apparent than in Freud's word choice – *Das Unheimliche*. After all, the term implies that the home, which is supposed to be a safe haven, known, protective and comforting, has been invaded by an alien, strange and unsettling presence, transforming the familiar into something (partly) unknown in the process. Both Kristeva's and Freud's approaches thus

suggest that transgression lies at the heart of conceptualizing monstrosity. While crossing from the realm of the dead into the realm of the living (or vice versa) becomes the focal point of their attention, Freud highlights in a commentary that

> an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality.[4]

This conflation of reality and imagination is part of what Monika Fludernik has referred to as the ‘metaleptic mode’ characteristic of any recipient’s engagement with a fictional text (‘text’ should be understood in a broad sense here), for recipients – metaphorically – step into fictional universes when immersing in texts.[5]

Fludernik develops this idea in her elaborations on ‘metalepsis’. Like many other narratological concepts, metalepsis was conceived within the contexts of the analytic frameworks available for studying (print) fiction. In his book *Narrative Discourse*, Gérard Genette describes the phenomenon as ‘any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe . . ., or the inverse.’[6] Over the past few decades, a number of narratologists have critiqued this rather restrictive conceptualization, for Genette disregards transgressions between diegetic and extradiegetic worlds and extratextual reality – for example, when a character or narrator directly addresses the recipient. In addition, Genette’s unimedial focus on print fiction has opened up his definition to revisions from scholars working in the field of transmedial narratology. From such a transmedial vantage point, Werner Wolf has proposed a broader definition of metalepsis as ‘a usually intentional paradoxical transgression of, or confusion between, (onto)logically distinct (sub)worlds.’[7] While metalepses were traditionally thought to deconstruct texts and thus disrupt immersion, more recent studies have demonstrated that they can, in fact, serve a host of functions.[8] Sonja Klimek has, for instance, argued that metalepses can ‘result[] in complete immersion,’[9] especially in fantastic tales, in which metalepses often ‘celebrate the magical power of fantasy . . . and thus work towards . . . immersion.’[10] This claim also holds true for horror texts, which, after all, belong to the macrogenre of the fantastic. More specifically, in horror tales, metalepses frequently aid immersion, help create an illusion of reality, by playing a crucial role in the construction of monstrosity.

In Wes Craven’s *New Nightmare* (1994), for example, Wes Craven (played by Wes Craven) explains that Freddy Krueger, the villainous former child murderer created by Craven’s movies, tries to transgress the borderline between fiction and reality:

> I can tell you what the nightmare’s about so far. It’s about this entity – whatever you want to call it. It’s old. It’s very old. It’s existed in different forms in different times. The only thing that stays the same is [that] it lives for … [t]he murder of innocents. … [The entity’s weakness is that] it can be captured … [b]y storytellers …. Every so often, they imagine a story good enough to sort of catch its essence. And then, for a while, it’s held prisoner in the story… . But the problem comes when the story dies. … When the story dies, the evil is set free.[11]

In these bits of dialogue, Craven stresses that Freddy is a narrative construct; Freddy Krueger is merely part of a story. Even though there are various character traits that mark Freddy as a monster on many levels (his past as a child murderer, his killing of teenagers in the present, the visual construction of the character with burnt face and knives for fingers, etc.), at

the heart of Freddy's monstrosity lies his capability and willingness to transgress ontological borders. On the one hand, he moves from the realm of the dead into the realm of the living,[12] but, and this aspect is especially emphasized in *New Nightmare*,[13] he can also transgress the line separating reality from fiction, on the other.

As indicated above, *New Nightmare* presents merely one exemplary 'old' media artefact that suggests a strong connection between metaleptic transgressions and monstrosity. Even though 'new' media often merely remediate 'old' media and adapt narratives to new media contexts, metalepsis provides an exemplary case in which this translation into a new environment proves highly significant, for computers and videogame consoles may be considered 'metaleptic machines,'[14] as they translate performative action in the real world (moving the mouse, pushing buttons, but also certain moves etc. thanks to interfaces such as Nintendo's Wiimote and Microsoft's Kinect) into virtual action in the gameworld.

2. Crossing Ontological Boundaries in *Alan Wake*

The videogame *Alan Wake* depicts some days in the life of its titular character. A crime fiction and thriller writer by profession, Alan Wake has been suffering from writer's block for two years, which is why his wife Alice has convinced him to take a vacation in the small-town of Bright Falls in the Pacific Northwest, hoping that a change of environment will stimulate Alan's creativity – an aspect he is not entirely aware of in the beginning.

However, already before players get to know the reasons for the Wakes' vacation in Bright Falls, darkness looms large over the entire narrative, for the opening cinematic creates a nightmarish atmosphere by audio-visually reconstructing one of Alan's dreams in which he runs over a hitchhiker. After the dead body has disappeared, the uncontrollable world of cinematics fades to gameplay. While Alan seems to be constantly aware that he is recounting one of his past dreams, as Alan's voice-over narration tellingly employs the past tense, for the player, the participatory dimension of the videogame eclipses said awareness, as Alan's dream becomes enacted reality. Only some moments into the actual game, the hitchhiker reappears, addressing Alan:

> You don't even recognize me, do you, writer? You think you're God? You think you can just make up stuff, play with people's lives and kill them when it adds to the drama? You're in this story now, and I'll make you suffer![15]

Although this sequence is part of one of Alan's nightmares, as the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that this is exactly the situation Alan finds himself caught in – he has become a character in his latest novel. However, Alan has to realize that he is not merely a character in his latest novel; even worse, the 'real' Alan is a character in a piece of fiction by a writer named Thomas Zane, who died some thirty years earlier (and who, possibly, is Alan's father – in more than one way). Thomas Zane repeatedly transgresses ontological boundaries and appears in the gameworld as a figure surrounded by a bright light, underscoring the 'the author is God' equation established by the hitchhiker's first two sentences. While in the early goings, Zane's function is tutoring the player in gameplay mechanics, his important role to the narrative at large emerges only in the latter episodes of the game.

Alan's nightmare comes to a rather sudden end after he has reached a lighthouse, as he wakes up on a ferry about to reach Bright Falls. After having been presented the key to their vacation home by a witch-like woman, Alan and Alice find their way to Bird Leg Cabin on small Diver's Island in Cauldron Lake. When darkness falls a few hours later and power blacks out in the cabin, Alan can hear Alice's screams coming from the house. Thinking that Alice has fallen (or jumped) into the lake, Alan jumps into the dark water, only to wake up in a crashed

car in the woods, feeling ‘like [he] had woken from one nightmare and entered another.’[16] On his way back to town, Alan discovers that he cannot remember what happened in the past week and that he has apparently been working on a novel called *Departure*. After finding several pages of the book manuscript, Alan begins to understand that his writing was ‘an act of creation that had rewritten the world.’[17] As Alan feverishly hunts for traces of his lost wife, he learns that Diver’s Island was, in fact, destroyed some thirty years earlier and that Alice was taken hostage by a dark force that needs a writer in order to be written into existence, underscoring that, as Tzvetan Todorov put it, the ‘supernatural is born out of language,’ for supernatural creatures ‘exist only in words.’[18]

As the plot outline presented above may have already indicated, from Thomas Zane appearing in a story(-within-a-story) he penned to Alan Wake finding manuscript pages he wrote that have created the world he is living in, *Alan Wake* is filled with metalepses – that is, transgressions of ontological boundaries – and thus constructs a monstrous space that no longer adheres to the laws of nature.[19] This merging of different ontologies leads to confusion among characters and players. In fact, metalepses are so omnipresent in *Alan Wake* that it proves difficult to focus on specific examples. Arguably, the most elaborate metalepsis is presented by the narrative short-circuit created by the complex structure of the events taking place in Bright Falls, which are experienced by the gamer while playing the game. These events are entirely based on a story-within-a-story-within-a-story (the *Departure* manuscript, that is), while at the same time created by someone theoretically external to the storyworld (Thomas Zane, that is), who, however, repeatedly appears in the storyworld. Effectively, this ‘master metalepsis’ fuses different ontologies and thus also explains many of the other metalepses occurring in the narrative – since Alan’s life is merely Thomas Zane’s creation (and the events Alan and the player are experiencing nothing but the product of Alan’s imagination – written into Alan’s character by Zane), why should the laws of ‘nature’ in this fictional universe necessarily correspond to ours? Alan’s obvious confusion caused by his increasing realization that certain facts of life assumed to be indisputable are countered in front of his very eyes, however, complicates matters. In the beginning, Alan tries to rationalize the uncanny events he is experiencing first-hand, tries to convince himself that he is merely dreaming, but, as he notes, ‘it felt real enough to make me sick.’[20] Alan’s agent Barry Wheeler brings Alan’s internal struggle to a point: ‘[W]hen you’re starting to confuse fiction with reality, you’re buying yourself a ticket to the funny farm.’[21]

While Barry’s primary fear (at least early in the game) appears to be seeing his client go crazy, Alan’s most fundamental problem is that he does not really confuse fiction with reality, but rather starts to comprehend that the two cannot be that easily differentiated, if differentiated at all. Indeed, the more pages of his book manuscript Alan reads, the more he (and characters around him) realizes that everything happening to him mirrors events described in *Departure*. This ontological confusion results in many uncanny moments in which certain events are first described in the manuscript before they do, in fact, happen in the ‘real’ world of the game and experienced as enacted reality by the player. In the opening moments of the game’s fifth episode, for example, Alan and Barry are in prison after having been arrested by FBI agent Robert Nightingale, who believes that Alan killed his wife. When the lights abruptly go out in the Sheriff’s office and Sheriff Sarah Breaker wants to release Alan and Barry from their prison cell, Nightingale experiences a déjà vu, looks at the manuscript, and is suddenly snatched by the Dark Presence, never to be seen again. The FBI agent loses two pages of the manuscript which read:

> Nightingale tried to make sense of the manuscript. It was disjointed and strange. He didn’t understand half of it, but it all rang true, impossibly true.

> He took out his hip flask when he reached the page that described how he reached the page that made him take out his hip flask.
>
> It wasn't the booze that made his mind reel.
>
> Nightingale felt the situation veering out of his control, but the gun at least felt steady in his hands. He was ready to fire, resolved that he would let this happen over his dead body – and yet he hesitated.
>
> He had seen this moment before, read it in the page. He was transfixed by the déjà vu and the horror that he was a character in a story someone had written. Then the monstrous presence burst in behind him and dragged him into the night.[22]

One may be tempted to connect this narrative short-circuit to Jean Baudrillard's ideas concerning hyperreality in which 'the signs of the real' precede and eventually substitute 'the real.'[23] However, *Alan Wake* does not take it quite that far, for the gametext 'leaves the principle of reality intact,'[24] as there is a world (if not more than one) external to the simulacral world that Alan had inhabited for so long. After all, in the end, Alan learns that the only way to free Alice and destroy the elusive power is to write an appropriate ending to *Departure*. In order to do so, however, Alan has to be replaced by his double, Mr Scratch, in the simulacral world he has come to know, in which Alan ceases to exist, while Alan begins to inhabit a parallel universe of sorts (Alan describes the space as 'a strange zone beyond our world'[25]), transgressing ontological boundaries in the process.[26] This parallel universe, presented in vapid colours and in which Alan has practically nothing to do but use his old-school typewriter in order to 'crack open the door' and write himself out of his story,[27] proves to be the 'real' world, which, however, only Alan and Zane seem to be aware of.

Despite all the stylistic tricks reminiscent of postmodernism *Alan Wake* plays, the gametext thus presents a rather modern worldview – a world in which the 'real' has not been entirely submerged by simulacra yet. At one point in the game, Alan notes that, for him, 'the supernatural had always been nothing but a metaphor for the human psyche.'[28] Even though the 'had been' might indicate a change of perspective caused by the events in Bright Falls, Alan maintains pre-postmodern way of thinking until the very end, for his only goal is to escape the story and (re-?)enter reality. In addition, *Alan Wake*'s incredible amount of self-reflexive moments asks players to consider such a comment as a means to untangling the narrative mystery. And, indeed, Alan's comment presents an approach to decode the gametext (on one level, at least), since it underlines that the constant metaleptic transgressions employed in the narrative are a metaphor for the human psyche, for all of the metalepses depict 'the subject as . . . pathologically divided between reality and phantasy,'[29] that is, in a constant process of identifying with (positively or negatively) idealized images.[30]

On another level, *Alan Wake* touches upon a similarly fundamental aspect of human existence. As Brian McHale already stressed some twenty-five years ago, metalepses are eventually all about life and death, and death comes 'with the end of discourse and silence.'[31] Tellingly, Alan notes that if he stops writing, 'the world [he's] making dies.'[32] Of course, due to the various narrative short-circuits presented in the gametext, stopping to write would also result in Alan's death – or maybe not? This question cannot be conclusively answered. And this insight proves key to understanding *Alan Wake*. This ambiguity, this uncertainty must be accepted and it concerns not only the boundaries between reality and artifice, but also 'the boundaries between our living selves and our dead.'[33]

3. Stepping Into and Out of the Storyworld

Alan Wake's metalepses do, however, also open up some interesting points concerning the digital convergence culture we are all participating in. The metalepses discussed above engage in a constant process of 'remediation' by not so much reflecting on videogames' characteristics,[34] but rather the medium's role in the contemporary mediascape. Establishing this self-reflexive connection to the media environment surrounding it allows *Alan Wake* to 'explor[e] how stories are told across media' in the age of transmedia storytelling.[35] Although the producers and distributors of *Alan Wake* have utilized a veritable storytelling machinery to transmedially expand the game's narrative by publishing a novel, a (of course fictional) report on the events in Bright Falls, and a six-episode live-action web series that serves as a prequel to the game (not to mention the more recent use of twitter in combination with a website in order to drop clues regarding the sequel's plot and its connections to the first game[36]), it should be stressed that the process of telling stories across media should not be conceived a one-way street, but rather a dialogic phenomenon.

John Fiske's ground-breaking study *Understanding Popular Culture* argued already more than twenty-five years ago that audiences frequently resist what Stuart Hall called the 'dominant meaning' communicated by mass media.[37] In his book *Textual Poachers*, Henry Jenkins went a step further by emphasizing that fans are not merely passive consumers of mass entertainment, but active agents who appropriate the material provided by 'rework[ing] the program ideology . . . in order to make the texts speak to different perspectives.'[38] However, the emergence of Web 2.0 and 'participatory culture' has tremendously affected scholarly investigation, for '[t]he debate now centers on the terms of our participation, not whether spectatorship is active or passive.'[39] In this media environment filled with potentially active prosumers, fans 'create their own original fictional narratives based upon and around videogames,'[40] thus 'expand[ing] the [transmedia] world in a variety of directions.'[41]

'What does this have to do with metalepsis in *Alan Wake*?' one might wonder. More than one would at first imagine. Indeed, by looking at Andrew Blake's (unfinished) fan fiction tellingly entitled 'Andrew Blake,'[42] one will quickly understand how important some fan productions are to discussing metalepsis in the contemporary mediascape. Blake's text, the first episode of which was published nearly two years after *Alan Wake*'s Xbox 360 release, is set two years after the events depicted in the game. The annual Deer Fest is about to be celebrated in Bright Falls when 16-year-old Andrew Blake and his parents arrive in town. Andrew has a soft spot for the supernatural and is fascinated by radio show host Pat Maine's story about the disappearance of celebrity writer Alan Wake two years earlier in the area. One night, Andrew's parents disappear from their cabin in a scene that very much resembles Alice's disappearance in *Alan Wake*. Andrew gets hit on his head, passes out, and realizes later on that he cannot remember what happened in the last three days. After a quick turn of events, he first finds himself incarcerated and then in the middle of the on-going battle between those possessed by the Dark Presence and those who are not.

In her illuminating piece on metalepsis in fan fiction and vidding, Tisha Turk argues that '[p]articipatory culture is inherently . . . metaleptic,' for

> immersion in the fantext requires not only engaging in the pretense that the fictional world of the source text is real . . ., but also engaging in the pretense that the fictional world of the source text and/or that the characters in the fan work are contiguous with those of the source text.[43]

This is a sound observation, indeed, but 'Andrew Blake' works on a different level, too, for Blake – much like postmodernist writers from John Barth to Woody Allen – creates a

double that enters the fictional universe just as much as his 'real' self becomes part of the storyworld that segues into reality. In fact, 'Andrew Blake' thus depicts two different kinds of immersion – one more distanced (a kind of 'projected identity'[44]), the other one completely given in to the story.[45] In other words, the fan fiction 'simultaneously establish[es] and deliberately break[s] down the separation between [user] and character.'[46] Yet while the previous quote is taken from in an insightful article by Annika Waern on 'bleed', that is, character identification, in *Dragon Age: Origins* (2009), what 'Andrew Blake' is indicative of is not so much identification with characters (after all, the game's protagonist is only briefly referred to by name), but immersion in a storyworld that becomes part of the user's life (story).

4. Our Doubles – Our Selves

Yet Blake's fan fiction is not only suggestive of how far immersion in a fictional universe can truly go, for it also highlights the participatory dimension established between user and game(text) so characteristic of videogames. This observation leads back to *Alan Wake* per se, since the game's metalepses are not restricted to the diegetic realities depicted in the game. As Bob Rehak outlines, avatars 'appear on screen in place of, indeed as direct *extensions* of, the [player]: sites of continuous identification within a diegesis.'[47] However, Rehak also highlights that any direct one-to-one correspondence between users and their avatars is overly simplistic, because 'players actually exist with their avatars in an unstable dialectic whose essential heterogeneity should not be elided.'[48] This notion of player participation brings the present analysis to full circle by returning to the idea of computers and videogame consoles as metaleptic machines, for *Alan Wake* suggests that such a one-to-one correspondence between player and Alan does, in fact, apply to the game in certain respects.

Chief among these correspondences is the fact that *Alan Wake* – like all videogames created so far – lacks a truly interactive dimension. Even though players might be given many choices and arrive at different narrative closures in contemporary videogames (albeit not in *Alan Wake*'s case, as there are neither multiple ways to solve problems, nor alternative endings), actions are restricted by the respective programmes. In the gameworld, Alan comes to realize that his life is to a great extent predetermined by the manuscript for *Departure* despite being able to influence certain aspects of his life – most importantly, saving Alice, although this feat requires a great sacrifice. In a way, this experience mirrors the player's when playing *Alan Wake*. Indeed, throughout the game, 'there are periods in which the player is in control of gameplay and at others not, creating a dynamic rhythm between self-determination and pre-determination,'[49] for cinematics repeatedly disrupt the participatory experience, taking 'control away from the player,' thus 'reinforc[ing] the sense that a metaphysical "authorial" force is at work, shaping the logic of the game.'[50] This metaludic dimension raises players' 'awareness of being limited by the rules of the game, of not being able to entirely freely roam the gameworld, of not being allowed a truly interactive experience.'[51]

However, Alan is likened to the player on a much grander scale, too. As was already indicated above, Todorov highlights that the 'supernatural is born out of language.'[52] *Alan Wake* follows in Todorov's footsteps by suggesting that the Dark Presence is merely a linguistic construct and in the process lays bare its own artificiality, as well. However, the gametext adds a crucial dimension to Todorov's argument by underlining – in a truly postmodernist fashion – that the borderlines between reality and artifice have become blurry. In his ruminations spurred by 9/11, Slavoj Žižek argued that '[t]he ultimate . . . paranoiac fantasy' of (post-)postmodern subjects is 'start[ing] to suspect that the world [they are] living in is a fake, a spectacle staged to convince [them] that [they are] living in a real world.'[53] For a long time, this realization seems to be the root of the horrors experienced by many of *Alan Wake*'s characters, too, as they play their roles in their 'life stories' just as much as players perform their real-world roles in the

stories we tend to call life (‘written’ by an ‘Author God’, whose simulacral existence predetermines ours?). Arguably, this (post-)postmodern existence has assumed hyperreal qualities that make it increasingly difficult to differentiate between the virtual lives of these characters and our ‘real’ lives.[54] Yet Alan Wake’s personal horror is of a slightly different kind: At the conclusion of his metaleptic crossings into various universes, Alan is not the one living in a world of simulacra, but outside of it, in a dull, monotonous world characterized by ‘all work and no play’ – to allude to one of the numerous intertexts *Alan Wake* references – while the ones he loves most are caught in a spectacular world of fakery. This is what Alan’s horror is about, at the end of the day: Through repeated metaleptic transgressions, Alan Wake is not only likened to the author and creator of his life, the one responsible for Alan’s destiny, that is, but also to the gamer sitting in front of the monitor, TV, or projection screen who is trying to escape everyday reality and immerse in a fictional universe for a few hours by controlling and – in a way – stepping into a virtual double. In effect, the gametext thus welcomes players to (or maybe even warns players of) a desert of the real – more *The Matrix*’s version thereof than Baudrillard’s or Žižek’s, mind you – that can be metaleptically entered and exited at will. In effect, *Alan Wake* draws an image of human existence that is intricately (inter)connected with virtual presence(s) and thus suggests that human subjectivity has become increasingly ‘fragmented, decentered, and . . . schizophrenic’ in this world,[55] as human beings enact their life stories in physical reality and perform various roles in multiple virtual realities, not necessarily simultaneously, but rather alternatingly. And this existence as both real living and breathing creatures and virtual embodiments that constantly transgresses ontological boundaries may be considered monstrous, indeed.

Notes

[1] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4: 2.
[2] Sigmund Freud, ‘The “Uncanny”,’ 1919, trans. James Strachey, in *Sigmund Freud, Vol. 14: Art and Literature*, ed. Albert Dickson (New York: Penguin, 1990), 340.
[3] Ibid., 364.
[4] Ibid., 367.
[5] Monika Fludernik, ‘Scene Shift, Metalepsis, and the Metaleptic Mode,’ *Style* 37, no. 4 (2003), 392–396.
[6] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 234.
[7] Werner Wolf, ‘Metalepsis as a Transgeneric and Transmedial Phenomenon: A Case Study of the Possibilities of “Exporting” Narratological Concepts,’ in *Narratology Beyond Literary Criticism: Mediality – Disciplinarity*, ed. Jan Christoph Meister, Tom Kindt, and Wilhelm Schernus (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 91; original in italics.
[8] For a detailed discussion, see Karin Kukkonen’s introduction to *Metalepsis in Popular Culture* (2011).
[9] Sonja Klimek, ‘Metalepsis and Its (Anti-)Illusionist Effects in the Arts, Media and Role-Playing Games,’ in *Metareference across Media: Theory and Case Studies*, ed. Werner Wolf, Katharina Bantleon, and Jeff Thoss (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 184.
[10] Sonja Klimek, ‘Metalepsis in Fantasy Fiction,’ in *Metalepsis in Popular Culture*, ed. Karin Kukkonen and Sonja Klimek (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 37.
[11] *New Nightmare*, directed by Wes Craven (1994; Los Angeles, CA: New Line Cinema, 2011), Blu-Ray.

[12] Granted, Freddy is merely resurrected in teenagers' dreams. However, the fact that he repeatedly ends up in the real world (usually toward the end of the respective movie) supports the argument.
[13] Metalepses repeatedly occur in the movies belonging to the Elm Street franchise – in the first film (1984), final girl Nancy succeeds in first taking Freddy's hat and then Freddy from the world of dreams into the real world, in *Dream Masters* (1988), a character is sucked into the reality of an embedded movie, in *Dream Child* (1989), characters step into a comic-within-the-movie, and in *Freddy's Dead* (1991), Freddy pulls another character into a videogame-within-the-movie.
[14] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Avatars of Story* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 224-226.
[15] *Alan Wake*, developed by Remedy Entertainment (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Game Studios, 2010), Xbox 360.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 82.
[19] *Alan Wake*'s lead writer Sam Lake has acknowledged the influences of Paul Auster's *The Book of Illusions* (2002), Bret Easton Ellis' *Lunar Park* (2005), and Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) on the gametext, see http://community.remedygames.com/showthread.php?t=1844, all of which share the theme of ontological confusion with *Alan Wake*. However, especially the connections to Danielewski's post-postmodern haunted house tale go much deeper.
[20] *Alan Wake*.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 2.
[24] Ibid., 3.
[25] *Alan Wake*.
[26] *Alan Wake*'s diegetic space is filled with monitors and TV screens, some of which show episodes of the TV show-within-the-game *Night Springs*, others provide looks into the past, and some offer glimpses into this alternative universe.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Andrew J. Webber, *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1.
[30] Although this psychological dimension already plays an important role in *Alan Wake,* especially the two DLC episodes (which are part of the PC release), in which Alan and the player metaphorically re-experience Alan's psychological trauma, it is even more emphasized in the game's follow-up, *Alan Wake's American Nightmare* (2012), in which Alan has to constantly confront his evil doppelgänger.
[31] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Methuen), 222.
[32] *Alan Wake*.
[33] Martin Jay, 'Forcefields: The Uncanny Nineties,' *Salmagundi* 108 (1995): 21.
[34] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

[35] Racquel Gonzales, '"This must be a bad movie": Genre and Self-Reflexivity in *Alan Wake*,' *FlowTV* 12, no. 5 (2010): n. pag., http://flowtv.org/2010/07/this-must-be-a-bad-movie/, accessed December 2, 2012.
[36] See https://twitter.com/SamLakeRMD/status/209048041888559105 and the website linked to in the tweet.
[37] John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, 2nd Edition (New York: Routledge, 2011), 23. Stuart Hall, 'Encoding, Decoding,' in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, 3rd Edition, ed. Simon During (New York: Routledge, 2007), 483-487.
[38] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 176.
[39] Henry Jenkins, 'Why Fiske Still Matters,' in *Understanding Popular Culture*, 2nd Edition (New York: Routledge, 2011), xxx.
[40] James Newman, *Playing with Videogames* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 51.
[41] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 116.
[42] Andrew Blake [thedrew2639], 'Andrew Blake,' *FanFiction.net*, March 29-October 12, 2012, http://www.fanfiction.net/s/7968630/1/Andrew-Blake, accessed December 2, 2012.
[43] Tisha Turk, 'Metalepsis in Fan Vids and Fan Fiction,' in *Metalepsis in Popular Culture*, ed. Karin Kukkonen and Sonja Klimek (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 99-100.
[44] Zach Waggoner, *My Avatar, My Self: Identity in Video Role-Playing Games* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 156.
[45] Alison McMahan is only one of many scholars to highlight that there is both diegetic and non-diegetic immersion (68-69).
[46] Annika Waern, '"I'm in love with someone that doesn't exist!" Bleed in the Context of a Computer Game,' *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds* 3, no. 3 (2011): 240.
[47] Bob Rehak, 'Playing at Being: Psychoanalysis and the Avatar,' in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York: Routledge, 2003), 103; italics in original.
[48] Ibid., 104.
[49] Tanya Krzywinska, 'Hand-On Horror,' in *ScreenPlay: Cinema/Videogames/Interfaces*, ed. Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), 207.
[50] Ibid., 211.
[51] Michael Fuchs, '"My name is Alan Wake. I'm a writer": Narrative Complexity in the Age of Transmedia Storytelling,' in *Game On, Hollywood: Essays on the Intersection of Video Games and Cinema*, ed. Gretchen Papazian and Joseph Michael Sommers (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 147.
[52] Todorov, 82.
[53] Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* (New York: Verso Books, 2002), 12.
[54] In the context of this argument, see also Michael Fuchs, 'Hauntings: Uncanny Doubling in *Supernatural* and *Alan Wake*,' *Textus: English Studies in Italy* 25, no. 3 (forthcoming).
[55] Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 171.

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Irrationality and the Monstrous in Globalisation: Opening Spaces of Solidarity in Contemporary Anglophone Poetry

Antonio Cuadrado-Fernández

Abstract

The contemporary poetry of Romaine Moreton (Indigenous Australia), Seitlhamo Motsapi (South Africa), and Sharif Elmusa and Nathalie Handal (Palestinian) testifies to the horror and monstrosity of neo-colonial forms of oppression. Images of corpses, dead bodies, deformities, physical and emotional asphyxiation in prison spaces enact themselves as radical subversions of the discourse of modernity with which colonialism has been displaying its particular version of rationality since the Renaissance. It was during colonial contact and in the historical context of the scientific revolution that Europe created an image of itself as modern and civilised as opposed to the so described primitive peoples of the world. Since then, humanity has seen some of the most hideous acts of oppression and monstrous deeds like slave trade or the 2nd World War, all in the name of modernity and instrumental rationality. Recent advances in neuroscience shed new light on the interrelation between the brain, the body, the environment and other human beings. Inspired in these findings, the disciplines of cognitive linguistics and poetics conceive the reading of poetry as wholly embodied activity, with emotions playing a crucial role in the articulation of thought. Thus, embodied reason in the 21st century open new avenues for understanding and progress since it reconnects what Cartesian or instrumental reason conceived as unconnected. Reading the grotesque imagery of the poems with the resources of cognitive poetics can thus help readers find empathetic strategies with the writer's experiences of oppression and also can help construct a cognitive mapping that scrutinises the effects of contemporary forms of oppression in Indigenous populations.

Key Words

Grotesque, cognitive, senses, suffering, rational, globalisation.

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1. Globalisation and the Grotesque

500 years ago, the advent of what would later be called 'modernity' shook the foundations of medieval society, transforming the way the world and the universe were perceived and understood. From an organic and centred universe to a mathematical and decentred one, the dominant worldview exerted a sweeping influence in the reorganisation of society. Technical and scientific advances and the progress and wealth derived from commerce among others, loosened the shackles of theological authority and enlightened the spirit of the age and the hope in eternal progress and in the perfectibility of man and its institutions. The concept of modernity was sustained by a particular understanding of rationality that equated reason with the mental faculties of vision and with the idea of productivity. If knowledge is granted by the human faculty of seeing the atomistic parts of which the world was thought to be made of, the workings of nature and the universe can be understood and thus put to the service of human kind. Thus, the ethos of the scientific revolution brought about a marketable, commodifiable and mechanical world.

But the occult side of such progress and welfare was (and continues to be) a nightmare for many communities and peoples around the world, for whom progress meant nothing more

than a horrific experience of trauma and human exploitation. From slavery, to genocide, the experience of modernity in Africa, Indigenous Australia, South and North-America and Lapland (to name just a few places were colonialism had a genocidal impact) was associated with death, blood and torture. Even after the period decolonisation, the turmoil of civil war or ethnic conflict can be seen almost as a routine in many of the ex-colonial territories. It was also after decolonisation that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were created, perpetuating the idea that progress and prosperity would follow if the less developed (or less civilised) peoples in the world opened their borders to the 'miraculous' effects of free trade.[1] Again, the narrative of modernity was used to justify plundering and dispossession by other means. Hence, it is possible to argue that the apparent rationality of instrumental reason is experienced and felt by a significant part of humanity as terror, fear and unspeakable trauma, as Marxist critic Fredric Jameson suggests:

> This whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror.[2]

Recent developments in embodiment theory and neuro-science in particular shed new light on the interrelation of mind, body and the world. In particular, these perspectives suggest that 'cognition is embodied' which means that 'it depends upon the perceptual and motor capacities of our body, and that it is intertwined with the environment.'[3] Inspired by neuro-science, the fields of cognitive linguistics and cognitive poetics views the language of literary texts as rooted in the body's perceptual system and explains what happens in the mind when literary texts are read, focussing on conceptual and sensory information emanating from the text as the reader progresses. Thus, mind, body and world are not merely independent or isolated entities but closely interwoven ones, that is, feelings and emotions play a crucial role in the fabric of human understanding and the reading of poetry can be seen from this view.

The contemporary Anglophone poetry of Romaine Moreton, Sharif Elmusa, Seitlhamo Motsapi and Nathalie Handal is replete with grotesque imagery of death, corpses and mutilated bodies emerging in different prison spaces (e.g. military occupation in the West Bank, street violence in South Africa and Indigenous imprisonment in Indigenous Australia). The grotesque is defined by cognitive poetician Reuven Tsur, as the 'use of poetic devices that produce an emotional disorientation which is experienced as a shock, perplexity, surprise, or the like.'[4] This imagery manifests itself in terms of conceptual blends and metonymies with which writers conceptualise their experiences of horror and oppression. Both Blending Theory and sensory information reveal the different manifestations of unbalance in the writers' experience of oppression. Unbalance is the expression of grotesque excess that characterises the experiences of oppression and loss felt by Palestinians, South Africans and Indigenous Australians. From the perspective of cognitive theories the tenets of traditional rationalism as an exclusively mental faculty are redefined and can thus provide a better understanding of how human suffering, trauma and the grotesque manifests itself in the text as instances of irrationality in contemporary globalisation. In this way, the method of reading explains what happens as they 'travel' through the embodied experience of the culturally different 'other' from the standpoint of empathy and understanding. In this interaction of the method of reading with the writer's local and global concerns, this article aims to articulate bodily experience to the traumatic effects of globalisation for the reading and writing of poetry. In other words, this article explores the meaning of reason and the 'rational' through the grotesque consequences of the

monstrous acts committed in its name. For this purpose, a cognitive mapping of the monstrous effects of globalisation projected in the writers' work will be created.

To end this brief introduction, the method of reading proposed in this article is a far cry from traditional approaches to the literature produced by marginalised or oppressed communities, whose readings tend to be dominated by a scrupulous privileging of cultural difference.[5] In a postmodern scenario, celebrating the diversity of cultures in the world is understandable and it is certainly not my intention to raise criticism of cultural diversity. However, such strong emphasis on what makes human beings different has also led to reinforce and even perpetuate the alienation of the culturally different 'other,' racial and ethnic strife and the perception of cultures as isolated, atomistic entities.[6] The centuries of modernity and post-modernity have not seen monstrosity eradicated: the Balkan's war and the Rwanda genocide (with its colonial and neo-colonial ramifications) exemplify the recurrence of the monstrous in Western civilisation. Thus, it is difficult to see how the project of modernity underpinned by a limited notion of the rational can provide new avenues of understanding and empathy needed to face the challenges of humanity in the 21st century. Reading the poetry in question with the resources of cognitive poetics and linguistics is a necessary step in that direction.

2. The Origins of Irrational Rationality

The radical transformation of spatial perception mentioned above was founded on a number of historical factors such as the rediscovery of Ptolemy's map, Galileo's findings on the order of the universe and on the recovery of Democritus' theory of atomism. It is the interaction between all these historical and scientific events that enacts an enormous perceptual shift on the mind of Europeans. Later on, Rene Descartes and Isaac Newton, from relatively different perspectives, endowed this perceptual shift with philosophical and scientific legitimacy. As I have explained elsewhere,[7] the world and the universe became absolute, geometric space, a conquerable totality devoid of uniqueness and moral density. Only the mind, not the senses, were deemed able of granting access to the hidden world of atoms which were seen as governing the most intimate aspects of all life. Thus, in this context of scientific enthusiasm, reason came to be identified with the higher senses, namely, vision and audition as they were closer to the mind. The rest of the body was *res extensa*, mechanical matter unsuited to the tasks of freedom and imagination unfolding in the mind. The implications of this worldview were enormous and its influence governed all aspects of life, from work to education; despite the obvious benefits that scientific and technological advances had for parts of humanity, instrumental reason put means before morality, that is, the nascent economic order required the submission of the non-human world and the non-European world to the logics of abstract, economic and geometric principles. Slave trade, war for natural resources, and the first and Second World War with its ultra-rational concentration camps can be seen as the totalitarian manifestations of instrumental reason.

Since the Renaissance, some societies in the world have experienced a degree of material progress but the price to pay has been too high: nature and human beings were seen and represented through the lenses of abstract reasoning, which deprived these of any moral density or human meaning. The walls between human beings and other human beings and between humans and nature were erected in the name of economic progress with the justification of instrumental reason. It is also instrumental reason that connects the logics of Nazi concentration camps, cotton plantations in slavery and the abstraction of Israeli maps of the West Bank: these spaces have been conceived within the abstract logics of apparently rational, mathematical space, where humanity is a haunting absence, 'rationality' engendering irrationality, chaos, trauma, fear and monstrosity. Crucial to understanding horror as a product of modernity is the notion of sovereignty and the subjugated body. In his essay 'Necropolitics,' Achille Mbembe

suggests that from the plantations in colonial times, the South African Townships and the Nazi concentration camps, the bodies of slaves or prisoner have been deprived off their right to exist autonomously, they have been expulsed from humanity.[8] The project of western, instrumental and administrative rationality generates 'a peculiar terror formation:'[9] the state of exception, where death and massive killing is rationalised. The state of exception operates through the division of space in compartments where the rule of law is suspended and arbitrariness rules. The 'prison-like' spaces of South African townships, the west Bank and Gaza or Australian prisons (where many Indigenous Australians have suffered death in custody) are examples of what Enzo Traverso defines as

> the culmination of a long process of dehumanizing and industrializing death, one of the original features of which was to integrate instrumental rationality with the productive and instrumental rationality of the modern Western world (the factory, the bureaucracy, the prison, the army).[10]

In these spaces of confinement, the bodies of slaves or prisoners become dehumanised objects. Thus, for many peoples in the world, the rationality with which certain Western elites designed the fate of their lives can thus be described as little else than horror and monstrosity. In the name of reason and progress, the lives of Palestinians, South Africans and Indigenous Australians were seen as no more than impediments to progress and economic growth, or impediments to the normal exercise of 'progress.'

3. Cognition and the Senses: Reconceiving Rationality

For the last 30 years, developments in phenomenology, cognitive psychology and more recently in neuroscience and neurophenomenology have shed light on the interrelation between mind, body and the world. Inspired by these theories, cognitive linguisticians George Lakoff and Mark Johnson published *Metaphors We Live By*[11] in 1982, where the idea that language was rooted in the perceptual and cognitive tissue of the body was strongly argued. They found that human beings reason in terms of metaphors that help us conceptualise abstract entities like life, time or emotions like love and anger. Thus, from their view, our capacity to reason depended on our ability to creatively conceptualise the world via metaphors and metonymies. The legacy of Cartesian dualism receives a completely new focus with Antonio Damasio's research on the interweaving nature of neural systems and emotions. From Damasio's perspective, the mind cannot exist without the body.[12] Once it is possible to admit that rationality implies far more than the mind's command over an automatic body and that consciousness is an intersubjective and empathetic affair, it is possible to begin to think about the reading of the poetry in question as a space of communication, sharing and empathy between reader and text.

Recent developments in cognitive linguistics ad poetics and in human geography (inspired by neuro-science) conceive reading as an embodied activity, that is, as an activity that requires the participation of the cognitive and sensory apparatus in its apprehension of the literary spaces projected in the text. Writing is seen as well as the projection of the writer's embodied perception and conceptualisation of the world. In other words, it is possible to understand and explain what happens in the mind as readers cross the imagery projected in the text. In this way, the writers' experience of oppression, pain and suffering can be understood in a more precise manner so that the impact of globalisation on marginalised communities can be scrutinised. Reading can thus be seen as a journey through the writers' experience of terror, fear and anxiety so that a more precise sense of empathy arises. In his article 'Aspects of Cognitive Poetics',[13] Tsur proposes that in order to recreate the sensory and cognitive information evoked

in certain poems, it is necessary to employ a delayed-categorisation kind of reading. This reading style implies a maximisation of the reader's perceptual awareness of the poem's diffuse inputs (e.g. the sensory and cognitive information emanating from the text). On the contrary, a rapid-categorisation reading style would travel through the text 'packing' meanings into concepts, which would lead to the loss of important cognitive and sensory information. As readers find orientation in the space of the text, guiding words are found that help them construct mental spaces. Cognitive linguisticians call these guiding words deictic markers, because they help readers know whether they are entering a geographical space, a time space, a hypothetical space or a domain space (which refers to activities, work etc.). Deictic markers are usually definite articles, personal pronouns, time or geographical expressions.[14]

Mental spaces are the constituents of larger structures such as conceptual blends or metonymies. The term conceptual blends was coined by Gilles Fauconnier, in his book *Mappings in Thought and Language* [15] to expand Lakoff's notion of conceptual metaphor: instead of having a mapping between a target and a source, Blending Theory explains metaphor in terms of several input spaces from which a final and emergent new image arises. The new emergent image is not any of the inputs but contains elements of all of them. In this way, the writer's experience can be understood from a more profound and expanded perspective. Applying Blending Theory to the reading of the grotesque allows readers to understand and experience the different forms of oppression emerging in the poems. Particularly, Blending Theory reveals the writers' experience of a world perceived as excess and unbalance. The prolongation of emotional disorientation exposes readers to intense and rich pre-categorial information. This delayed pre-categorial information is crucial for the readers' understanding of and involvement with the poetic image. Because this poetry deals with terrible experiences of oppression, an attentive reading demands time and mental elaboration. This kind of analysis is important because it offers readers the possibility of crossing into and experiencing spaces of oppression and dislocation in the contemporary world.

Finally, from a cognitive perspective, metonymies are also useful in projecting grotesque imagery. As Radden and Kovecses claim, metonymy 'is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same idealized cognitive model[.]' and does not 'simply substitute one entity for another entity, but interrelates them to form a new complex meaning.'[16] Then, readers extract from contiguous entities their common features, that is, if these metonymies are interpreted by virtue of what they look like, smell like, taste like and touch like, then it is possible to discern the common properties of the metonymies. In other words, Metonymy plays an important role in our conceptualisation and understanding of the world because it is a common aspect in human perception to partition the world into objects that represent larger wholes. These grotesque metonymies enact a sense of disorientation in the reader because the causes of this violence are not textually manifest.

4. Overwhelmed Bodies in Confined Spaces

The first example of a prison space is Nathalie Handal's 'War.'[17] In this poem, the disruption caused by military occupation reaches extreme levels, as seen in the following fragment, where the violence associated to the historical vicissitudes of the Middle East conflict takes over the inner layers of the body:

> A continued past of blood,
> of jailed cities
> confiscated lives,
> goodbyes.

How can we bear the images that flood our eyes
and bleed our veins: a dead man, perhaps thirty,
With a tight fist, holding some sugar for morning coffee.

The analysis of these conceptual blends provides a more analytical and precise idea of the bodily experience of (both physical and cultural) dislocation caused by military occupation and war. The first conceptual blend (as seen above) introduces the reader to the time space of the Israeli military occupation, as in 'A continued past of blood.' The time space is deictically marked by a time expression, 'A continued past', and governs the other embedded mental spaces. These mental spaces take readers through the scenarios and traumatic consequences of the conflict: 'blood' (the domain space of the military occupation), 'jailed cities' (the geographical space of Palestine) and 'confiscated lives' (the domain space of everyday life). The only perceived movement is a displacement into the past although, in reality, time turns spatial. The use of past participles 'jailed' and 'confiscated' reinforce the stillness and the pictorial effect of the image. Calmness is only apparent as 'blood,' 'confiscated lives' and 'jailed cities' should be perceived by readers as emotionally intense and oppressive. In other words, the deictic framework in these conceptual blends seems to mimic the contained tension of being imprisoned. Applying Blending Theory to the conceptual blend 'A continued past of blood' reveals the disequilibrium in which Palestinian lives are submerged:

1.	Input Space 1:	- Past - time elapsed. History.
2.	Input Space 2:	- blood - blood is the liquid that circulates through body. - inside the body, blood is life. - spread blood is usually a sign of violence.
3.	Input Space 3:	- domain of violence. - physical and intense force.
4.	Generic Space:	- Recent Palestinian history has been affected by war. - war is violent. - spilled blood is a sign of violence.
5.	Blended Space:	- Violence and war spread through Palestinian history. - Recent Palestinian history is covered in blood and violence.

The blend exposes the unbalanced lives of Palestinians. The body of Palestinians (symbolised by 'blood') inherits the features of the domain of violence (the experiencing of physical and intense force. At the same time, the domain of history (which is the recent history of Palestinians) inherits the features of violence as well. Finally, the domain of the body (which is the body of Palestinians) inherits the features of history and violence. Thus, the concept of 'blood' becomes a different entity that shares its features with the concept of 'past'. Exposing the sensory dimensions of blood also contributes to show the unbalance of Palestinian lives. Blood is a dense and warm liquid. Humans experience the sight of spilled blood with horror because blood is the vital principle and its loss endangers life. As readers elaborate the blend, they might proceed from the mental image of a large amount of spilled blood next to a corpse. They might attempt to imagine the kind of violence exerted on the body. Palestinian recent history cannot thus be understood without horror, panic and violence. These emotions are

continuous and extend to all Palestinians whose blood has been spilled by the violence of the Israeli occupation.

The conceptual blend in the next stanza focuses on the effects of violence on the lives of Palestinians. The communal dimension of suffering is indicated by the use of personal pronoun 'we' and possessive pronoun 'our'. The inability of Palestinians to assimilate so much violence is the essence of this blend. That is why the poet's device of situating the blend in a space of hypothesis or speculation ('How can we') fits the poem's emotional dimension of powerlessness. Palestinians feel powerless to understand how they can cope with so much daily violence. Also, the use of 'we' includes the poet as part in the collective act of mourning and involves the reader emotionally as well. The hypothetical space is deictically marked by the participants: 'the images that flood our eyes and bleed our veins.' In this case, the deictic shift between the participant agents ('we,' 'our eyes' and 'our veins') and the object ('the images') adds to the dynamism of the conceptual blend because 'the image' is both a participant agent and an object at the same time.

The blending in 'How can we bear the images that flood our eyes' operates in the following terms:

1. Input Space 1:
   - Images of war.
   - war is an excess of violence.
2. Input Space 2:
   - Role: the eye
   - the organ of sight.
   - eyes allow humans to see.
3. Input Space 3:
   - flood.
   - a great flowing of water. Floods contain excessive amounts of water
4. Generic Space:
   - Palestinians witness large amounts of violence.
   - War is an excess of violence.
   - Floods are excessive amounts of water.
5. Blended Space:
   - the eyes are flooded by images; images cause harm and do violence to the eyes.

The blended space exposes the trauma faced by Palestinians for the last 50 years: their eyes cannot cope with so much violence because eyes are not designed for that purpose. As in the following Moreton's poem, the blend shows an unbalance: the excess of violence fractures the necessary equilibrium in a dignified life. The verb 'bear' indicates the idea of bodies resisting the tension of ongoing conflict. The poet's recourse to water to conceptualise the massive violence experienced by Palestinians helps readers to associate violence with the connotations of a flood. The image of a human body flooded by images of violence is perceived as choking and asphyxiating because the human body cannot operate under those circumstances. The size and dimensions of floods are comparable to those of war. Both war and floods have a destructive energy that leaves territories unfit for human occupation. The enormous dimensions and size of both war and floods exceeds the necessary balance human beings require for living. Thus, equating the violence in the West Bank with a flood might be perceived in terms of the overwhelming force of unleashed water. In other words, the vulnerability of Palestinians derives from the unbalance of violence in which their lives are submerged.

Images of bodily excess and imprisonment can as well be seen in Moreton's 'Don't let it make you over'[18] which exemplifies how the grotesque serves to conceptualise the experience

of imprisonment in Indigenous Australians.[19] The following image is particularly striking in its grotesque description of the physical experience of imprisonment:

> The cultural claustrophobia
> Of a hard prison cell
> Occupies my blood
> Choruses through my veins

First of all, the piece succeeds in creating an effect of oppression by placing the poetic persona as an object whereas the emotion of imprisonment appears as a participant agent. The poetic persona is deictically marked by the possessive noun phrase 'my blood' and 'my veins' whereas the participant agents ('the cultural claustrophobia' and 'a hard prison cell') refer to a location. The effect of this poetic device is the reader's perception of an inanimate agent as actively oppressing the writer's Indigenous body.

1.	Input Space 1:	- blood. - fluid that circulates through the vascular system of humans. - blood allows the body to move.
2.	Input Space 2:	- claustrophobia. - irrational fear of small confined spaces. - object (claustrophobia **occupies** the body).
3.	Input Space 3:	- Prison. - a small and confined space designed to control the movement of persons while awaiting trial.
4.	Generic Space:	- Prisons are small, confining spaces where bodies are controlled and movement involuntarily restrained. - Prisons restrict the movement of the body. - prisons are claustrophobic spaces.
5.	Blended Space:	- the prisoner's body is filled with fear claustrophobia; the feelings of fear derived from claustrophobia block the movement of the body.

In this blend, the input space of the body inherits the structure of the prison and the claustrophobia. The symptoms of claustrophobia are strong enough to block the functioning of the body. Panic, fear and nausea literally possess the body and impede its biological functions. This image shocks readers as a maddening experience of oppression. It is possible that this experience of oppression is actually felt by a large number of oppressed and marginalised indigenous Australians. Human bodies are designed to move and interact with the world. Indigenous Australian culture depends vitally on the body's interaction with the environment. Conversely, prisons are conceived as repressive spaces that restrict bodily movement. Prisons are usually perceived as small and confining, cold, impersonal and alienating. If the writer's indigenous body is experienced as a claustrophobic prison, the indigenous body and the whole indigenous culture is paralysed and prevented from moving and developing freely. For the last 300 years, the experience of Indigenous Australians has been marked by the loss of land and their increasing exposure to incarceration. The blend, thus, exposes the traumatic transformation

of indigenous Australians' life over the last three centuries with a shocking and grotesque imagery.

The following example from Sharif Elmusa's 'A Heap of Broken Images'[20] represents the grotesque consequences of the Israeli military occupation. The grotesque intensity of military occupation manifests most acutely in metonymic, fragmented images of an assassinated family besides a child as the only survivor: by extension, the following metonymies are parts of the Israeli military occupation in the West Bank:

> A young boy stays home,
> by himself, for five days
> with the corpses of his family

The emotional effect of this piece emerges as readers attempt to find orientation in the domain space indicated by the locative expression 'home.' This 'home' is occupied by a participant, 'a young boy (…) by himself.' So far, the scene remains calm as nothing apparently discordant is perceived in the image of a child alone in his home. The vagueness of the scene is reinforced by the use of the indefinite article 'a' and the lack of specification as to where the house is exactly located. The verb 'stays' is static and no movement is implied. The action is situated in the present although the emotion of intensity is avoided (the present continuous form of the verb, 'is staying,' would add the sense of an ongoing process taking place now). The use of the verb 'stays', reinforces vagueness and adds a sense of strange calmness by expanding the time frame and minimising temporal specificity. Conversely, the sense of duration is introduced with the use of a temporal expression: 'for five days.' Thus, disorientation emerges as readers perceive an atmosphere of relative calmness and vagueness (created by an absence of specific locatives and evaluative word-choice). However, this relatively calm and vague atmosphere turns to sadness as readers perceive stays 'by himself, for five days.'

The most intense effect of the piece is achieved when another participant is introduced in the domain space of the home: 'with the corpses of his family.' The image is perceived as grotesque and shocking and pervades the whole piece. After the perception of the corpses, the time and domain spaces aforementioned are perceived with increased emotions. The image of the boy alone in the house for five days with the corpses of his family is perceived with an intense emotion of both sadness and repulsion. The smell of corpses is usually perceived as unbearably nauseous. It is plausible that readers re-evaluate the whole image as repulsive, which, at the same time, increases the feelings of pity towards the solitary child contemplating the scene. The writer has created all these effects by delaying the introduction of the participant. The writer's purpose has been to increase disorientation and thus increase the emotion of shock. In other words, the contiguity between the boy, the house and the corpse create a grotesque image that situates readers in the experiential world of military occupation in Palestine. At this point, readers elaborate different mental performances. These mental performances are based on the disorientation created by the grotesque image.

A sensuous reading of these metonymies prolongs the state of disorientation that generates the aesthetic quality of shock and perplexity in the reader. For instance, we might proceed from the contrast between the pre-categorial information of the child, his home and the putrid smell of a corpse. The pre-categorial information of the child and his family might be evoked as the warmth, care and affection in the daily routine of a family. The kisses before going to school and the smell of food form part of human understanding of family life. However, the grotesque is the experiencing of the abruptness with which this atmosphere of comfort is disrupted. The smell of the corpse, its pale complexion and the body in a state of advanced disintegration are perceived by the reader as shocking and repelling as they contrast

with the warmth and affection of the family. The image of the child contemplating the corpses is followed by the following metonymies of destruction and despair:

> Family pictures
> drawers
> broken wares
> strewn amidst the rubble
> of houses.
> Fresh antiquities.

The piece is situated in the context of the continuing military occupation of the West Bank. The perceived effects of this piece are intimately connected to the experience of house demolitions carried out routinely by the Israeli army. First of all, the irregular tabulation of the lines mimics the destruction and chaos of the rubble. The lack of specific temporal deictic markers contributes to the stillness of the piece. No movement is suggested although the image is the result of extremely violent movements. The result is a number of objects that once formed a coherent whole in the context of homes. Thus, there is calmness but this calmness is the result of extreme violence exerted upon the house. The perceived effect of the image is the result of the common properties shared by the juxtaposed metonymies. Again, the house, as the epicentre of all that constitutes a normal life (family warmth, security, care) is only remotely present in the reader's perception. This pre-categorial information is suggested by the metonymies 'family pictures / drawers' and 'broken wares.' The grotesque element appears as the previous objects are presented 'strewn amidst the rubble.' All the memories and life experiences contained in the life of a house have been violently reduced to useless fragments. The smell of dust and the echo of recent destruction linger in the short-term memory of readers, endowing the image with an air of desolation and nothingness.

Finally, 'Fresh antiquities' adds an ironic closure to the grotesque imagery. Irony emerges from the use of 'fresh' which has a double meaning. Firstly, the adjective 'fresh' has connotations of life, clearly at odds with the death and destruction of house demolitions. Secondly, the term 'antiquities' takes readers to the domain space of archaeology. However, the field of archaeology is usually associated with the study of prehistoric peoples and their culture. With 'Fresh antiquities,' the poet increases the reader's feeling of disorientation, which generates an intense feeling of perplexity: it is not archaeology what the poet refers to. Rather, the ironic use of 'Fresh antiquities' expresses the poet's anger towards the cultural genocide of house demolitions in the West Bank: will the present Palestine be the object of Archaeological study?

Another example of grotesque imagery is Seitlhamo Motsapi's 'brotha Saul.'[21] In the following piece, imagery appears as a metonymic collage of the South African social reality of street violence:

> lissen ras
> i write u so short
> as outside fire mounts up de road
> des a firebomb shattering
> brotha's skull goes a-cracking
> while de blinking on/off blue light
> & de noising pierce of siren scream
> confuse de night

The first perceived stylistic feature is the use of phonetic jostlings across the piece. Phonetic spellings, as in 'lissen' (instead of 'listen'), 'u' (instead of 'you') or 'de' (instead of 'the') encode the social relationship between the participants. The use of a colloquial style indicates the poetic persona's attitude: there is an urgency ('lisssen ras / I write u so short') to warn ras about the perils of ignoring the social drama of post-apartheid South Africa. The use of the imperative mode (in 'lissen') intensifies the urgency of the warning as the imperative tense tends to be perceived as a straightforward request for immediate action. At this point, attention shifts onto the street scene. This movement is possible by the use of deictic adverbial expression 'outside'. In the possible world established between the two participants, the locative expression 'outside' embraces the violent social reality of contemporary South Africa. With only one locative expression, the reader accesses the geographical mental space of South African violent streets.

The recreation of this socio-cultural context is made possible by the vividness of Motsapi's use of language. This geographical context is deictically framed by a spatial expression, ('up de road') and the participants ('fire', the 'firebomb shattering', the brotha's skull' that 'goes a'cracking' and the blinking on/off blue light'). These locative and perceptual expressions form a fragmented metonymic mosaic of great intensity. These powerful images are parts of South Africa's street violence. The grotesque lies in the escalation of distorted images, as in the 'firebomb shattering,' towards the exposure of bodily excess, as in the 'brotha's skull' that 'goes a' cracking.' These grotesque metonymies enact a sense of disorientation in the reader because the causes of this violence are not textually manifest.

The reader is crudely exposed to a scene of great intensity without knowing the agent, which reinforces the intense emotion of shock and chaos. Readers experience chaos and shock as all the common properties of the metonymies are perceived. For instance, in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, 'fire' and 'firebomb' must be perceived as manifestations of violence and street riots. Particularly, 'firebombs' are perceived as violent explosions and intense and deafening sounds. Cracked skulls might be the result of firebombs' explosions: in this case, the readers' perception of a skull cracked intensifies the sensation of chaos and violence of the piece as well as its grotesque undertones. The use of 'skull' instead of 'head' contributes to intensify and complement the violence of the firebomb's explosion: skulls are perceived as a hard bone that protects the brain. Therefore, extreme force and violence are required to 'crack' the skull. Also, the skull has sinister connotations of death and bodily remains. The same effect would not be possible with 'head' because it does not have the same tactile and sinister qualities. Finally, the 'blinking on/off blue light' and 'de noising pierce of siren scream' accentuate the readers' feeling of chaos by submerging them in a chaotic scene of light and sound. This feeling of chaos and disorientation is achieved by the situation of the 'blinking on/off blue light:' rather than presenting the image with a locative adverbial 'here' or 'there,' the image is perceived as close. The closeness of image intensifies the dazzling and confusing effects of the light 'blinking on/of.' The same effects can be applied to 'the noising pierce of siren scream.' However, in this case the intensity of the image is achieved with the use of the expression 'noising pierce' and the noun 'scream.' These two words add a fundamental component of confusion and chaos to the violent experience of South African streets. Under the pressure of extreme noise and overwhelming visual input expressed in these metonymies, readers are offered a perceptual avenue into the utter confusion and turmoil in South African streets caused by the scars of apartheid. This effect is achieved by the analysis of metonymies and their interrelated properties. This analysis forms a new, complex meaning which in this case is the feeling of chaos and violence. This analysis allows readers to perform the multiple sensuous possibilities of these metonymies.

In this article I hope I have shown how the embodied analysis of conceptual blends and metonymies facilitate the reader's engagement with the writers' experience of oppression and horror. The importance of this analysis lies in its offering an embodied perspective of the writers' poetic account of the various states of exception they have witnessed or gone through, directly or indirectly. Recovering the body of the oppressed opens thus a space of negotiation between reader and text, where the monstrous is exposed as a potential generator of cognitive and emotional affinities. Similarly, the poetic analysis of horror hereby presented escapes the abstraction of current postcolonial analyses, which tend to focus the poetry in question from the disembodied standpoint of cultural identity or cultural difference, however important such approaches may be. I consider that the connection of human experiences through poetry is more important than the mere reassertion of difference, especially in the case of poetry written from the side of the oppressed and marginalised. In the same line, it is interesting to notice the underlying bodily base of the conceptual blends examined in this article. The recurrence to project overwhelmed bodies unable to function or operate normally becomes a powerful blend of contemporary forms of oppression and their bodily and psychological effects. Particularly, the application of Blending Theory to the body of conceptual blends and metonymies releases the inherent tension in the imagery: bodies flooded by images of violence, occupied by claustrophobic feelings of imprisonment or dazzled by the chaos of street violence are perceived in the emergent structure. Blending Theory contributes to the analysis of this grotesque imagery penetrating into the sensory dimensions of images. The result is excess and unbalance caused by the different forms of oppression experienced by the writers. An excess of violence leads to unbalanced emotions and lives. Blending Theory reveals the blend's crudeness and exposes readers to the writer's experience of cultural dislocation and oppression. As readers elaborate the blend of a body occupied by claustrophobia or the metonymic fragments of a demolished house in Palestine, the sensory information evoked by these images brings readers closer to the oppressive reality of neo-colonialism.

Notes

[1] David Slater*, Geopolitics and the Post-colonial: Rethinking North-South Relations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 87-96.
[2] Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 5.
[3] Evan Thompson, 'Human consciousness: from Intersubjectivity to Interbeing,' http://philosophy.ucf.edu/pcs/pcsfetz1.html
[4] Reuven Tsur, 'Aspects of Cognitive Poetics,' in *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis*, edited by Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpeper (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002), 288, 294, 295.
[5] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Routledge, 2002), 201.
[6] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005), 72-73.
[7] A Cuadrado-Fernandez, 'Mind, Body and Environment in Indigenous Anglophone Writing: Poetic Interventions for a New Modernity,' in *Multiculturalism: Critical and Inter-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Kerry Gallagher (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2011), 122.
[8] Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics,' *Public Culture* 15 (2003): 11-40.
[9] Ibid., 22.
[10] Enzo Traverso, *La violenze nazie: une généalogie européene* (Paris: La fabrique editions, 2002), cited in Mbembe's 'Necropolitics,' 18.

[11] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
[12] Antonio Damasio, *Descarte's Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (London: Vintage, 2006).
[13] Tsur, 'Aspects of Cognitive Poetics,' 282-288.
[14] Peter Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002), 41-46.
[15] Gilles Fauconnier, *Mappings in Thought and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[16] Zoltan Kovecses and and Gunter Radden, 'Towards a Theory of Metonymy', in *Metonymy in Language and Thought*, edited by Klaus Uwe-Panther and Günter Raden, J. Benjamins, Amsterdam, 1999, 18-19. Papers presented at a workshop held June 23-24, 1996, Hamburg University.
[17] Nathalie Handal, 'War,' in *The Lives of Rain* (Northampton: Interlink Books, 2005).
[18] Romaine Moreton, 'Don't let it make you over,' in *Post me to the Prime Minister* Alice Springs: Jukurrpa Books, 2004), 107-114.
[19] David McDonald, 'Aboriginal Deaths in custody and Incarceration: Looking Back and Looking Forward,' Australian Institute of Criminology of the Australian Government,' http://www.aic.gov.au/en/publications/previous%20series/other/21-40/aboriginal%20deaths%20in%20custody%20and%20incarceration.aspx
Laura Chrisman, 'Seitlhamo Motsapi,' Review, *New Coin* 32.1 (1996): 63.
[20] Sharif Elmusa, 'A Heap of Broken Images,' in *Flawed Landscape: A Palestinian Journey*, 8. Book kindly ceded by Sharif Elmusa previous to its publication.
[21] Seitlhamo Motsapi's 'brotha Saul,' http://southafrica.poetryinternationalweb.org/piw_cms/cms/cms_module/index.php?obj_id=5385.

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Book Reviews

New Vampire Cinema

Ken Gelder.
London: Palgrave MacMillan/British Film Institute, 2012
ix + 155 pages

The Vampire Film: Undead Cinema

Jeffrey Weinstock.
New York: Wallflower Books/Columbia University Press, 2012
144 pages

Despite their apparent differences in scope – Gelder's book covers only the last twenty years of vampire cinema, whereas Weinstock discusses a more general history of vampire movies – Ken Gelder's *New Vampire Cinema* and Jeffrey Weinstock's *The Vampire Film: Undead Cinema* offer remarkably complementary readings of the vampire in film. In particular, both Gelder and Weinstock deal with the ways in which vampire films 'endlessly and in so many ways talk about vampires and vampire movies'[1] in order to build 'narratives around the vampire's capacity not just to create a disturbance but to endure it and survive.'[2] Ultimately, these two books deserve to be read in tandem as they work together to illustrate the importance and cultural value of vampire cinema.

Weinstock's book is part of the Short Cuts: Introductions to Film Studies series and in many ways reads as a primer for vampire cinema. He begins with an introduction that riffs on Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's 1996 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)'[3] and sets up seven principles, complete with corollaries that guide the rest of the book:

Principle 1: The cinematic vampire is always about sex
- Corollary 1.1: Cinematic vampires are marked by performances of hyperbolic gender
- Corollary 1.2: Cinematic vampires are inevitably queer

Principle 2: The vampire is always more interesting than those who pursue it

Principle 3: The vampire always returns
- Corollary 3.1: Vampirism begins at home
- Corollary 3.2: The vampire always appears to come from someplace else
- Corollary 3.3: The vampire is always in motion

Principle 4: The cinematic vampire is an over-determined body condensing what a culture considers 'other'

Principle 5: The cinematic vampire is always about technology.
- Corollary 5.1: Vampire films are always about defining the vampire, which is a necessary preliminary to destroying the vampire.
- Corollary 5.2: Vampires are always cyborgs
- Corollary 5.3: Vampire films are always about the cinema itself.

Principle 6: The vampire film genre does not exist
- Corollary 6.1: The vampire film tradition is defined by generic hybridity
- Corollary 6.2: Vampire films are inevitably intertextual

Principle 7: We are all vampire textual nomads

Weinstock's discussion of these principles and their corollaries takes up three chapters and ranges over an astonishing number of films for such a slim volume. His discussion of vampire films from *A Fool There Was* (1915) to *30 Days of Night* (2007) serves to support not only these principles, but also his claim that

> The vampire…is a sort of ready-made metaphoric vehicle waiting for its tenor. Its potency, however, derives from its intrinsic connections to sex, science, and social constructions of difference…the vampire film is always about sex, always about technology and always about cultural "otherness".[4]

Gelder's book similarly claims that his volume's 'aim is simply to try to make some sense of what these film do and why they seem to do it over and over'[5] and that

> The films in this book all bring their vampires into the modern world, building their narratives around the vampire's capacity not just to create a disturbance but to endure it and survive…over the last twenty years or so the question of the vampire's capacity to make this journey and live through it is now paramount. Vampire films stage an encounter between something old and something new, something ancient and something modern; the arrival of the vampire (which is invariably from somewhere else) brings with it both excitement, and catastrophe.[6]

The five chapters cover what Gelder calls 'Inauthentic Vampires,' 'Our Vampires, Our Neighbors,' 'Citational Vampires,' 'Vampires in the Americas,' and 'Diminishing Vampires,' coming to the conclusion that

> There is something parasitical about vampire films…exhausting/ regenerating them simultaneously, giving them just that extra bit of life, or half-life. The original vampire and the "last vampire" bleed into each other; sequel and original soon become difficult to distinguish, just as parasite and host, vampire and victim, the remote and the proximate, periphery and centre, likewise converge and fold together.[7]

Perhaps inevitably, both authors discuss, at least briefly, the novel *Dracula*, highlighting its position as the ur-text of vampire movies. Gelder writes that

> Even though they mark out their various distinctions and differences, vampire films always speak to other vampire films, and of course, to that urtext of Stoker's which still, remarkably, seems to exert some sort of pressure on them, holding them in its grasp or perhaps letting them slip through its fingers.[8]

Weinstock notes that

> At the centre of the vampire cinema solar system is Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the vampire Ur-text that exerts a powerful gravitational attraction around which all vampire texts – literary, cinematic and otherwise – necessarily orbit.[9]

The similarities between these two books become most apparent when Weinstock and Gelder discuss the same movies, as happens often. For example, both authors analyse the cinematograph scene in Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), in which Dracula speaks to Mina Harker in front of a screen showing clips of various films. Weinstock claims that it 'shows us … the vampire present at the birth of modern cinema and the correspondence between the two – each creating legions of the undead.'[10] Similarly, Gelder writes that 'the scene self-reflexively puts Stoker, Dracula, theatre, the origins of cinema and Coppola's film into a sort of mutually citational loop.'[11]

Even when their analyses of films differ, they often seem to overlap, as, for example, in their discussions of the use of technology in the *Blade* films. For Gelder, Blade's reliance upon technology is an example of his claim that vampire films often highlight the anxiety surrounding encounters of the new and the ancient – in this case, Blade and his technology (equated, perhaps, by the half-vampire's name) are the 'new' coming up against the 'ancient' vampire regime. For Weinstock, the reliance upon technology in these films illustrates that 'the silver-screen vampire, itself a product of cinema technology, is inevitably defined in relation to various technologies of representation, definition, detection, and destruction.'[12]

Both authors also highlight the importance of what Gelder calls the 'moment of recognition' in vampire films. Weinstock writes that

> Vampire movies, like monster movies in general, are always about definition. …What the protagonists conclude about the nature of the vampire…has important ramifications not only for deciding how to combat the vampire but for understanding how the represented cinematic world works.

Gelder notes that 'Every vampire film has its key moment of recognition. To recognise a vampire 'for what it is' turns out to be crucial to a character's wellbeing or otherwise; it is also simply a way of saying, *this is a vampire film*.'[13] Weinstock's claim that 'vampire movies always define themselves in relation to previous cinematic representations of vampires and are often quite explicit about the revisions to the mythology that they are making'[14] could have just as easily appeared in Gelder's discussion of what he calls the 'citational' nature of vampire films. Ultimately, Gelder's interest is in examining this citational nature of vampire films, Weinstock's in discussing the principles guiding those films, but both offer investigations of the form and function of vampire cinema, and that similarity makes these two books particularly interesting and useful when read together.

Despite their many similarities, however, the ways in which the two works diverge means that one cannot simply stand in for the other. Weinstock's conclusion that 'what makes the vampire so potent is that it is a concatenation of sexual, racial and technological anxieties and longings – a sort of Rorschach ink blot of culturally specific dread and desire'[15] tied to the fact that 'a fundamental characteristic of the vampire film tradition has been its tendency to morph and colonise other genres' so that, 'like the vampire itself, the vampire cinema continually transforms itself and seeks out new victims to vamp'[16] reads as dramatically different from Gelder's claim that

> Vampires may be immortal for the time being, but they also carry with them a heightened sense of change, death and loss. This is the direction vampire films routinely take, in fact: offering the possibility of immortality and then cruelly snatching it away, or turning it into something that vampires cannot bear.[17]

The two authors' takes on the mobility of vampires differs, as well. For Gelder, 'vampires in the modern world in new vampire cinema – far from being able to move about freely and so on – are in fact condemned to a particular form of living that is precisely about registering the loss of one's freedom.'[18] For Weinstock, on the other hand,

> Mobility and crossing of not only geographical but social and psychic borders is central to the vampire narrative. Either the vampire arrives from elsewhere to interrupt the day-to-day existence of his or her new locale or the protagonist arrives at a place marked by some fundamental social difference – the superstitiousness of backwater villagers, the lawlessness of Mexico or Santa Carla, California, etc.[19]

Weinstock's book suffers a bit from lax proofreading, with problems on pages 49 ('Her's') and 109 ('Frost . . . becomes inhabiting' by La Magra'); Gelder's book sometimes seems to sometimes lose focus (as, for example, in an inexplicable concentration on filming locations for the *Twilight* series that neither adds to the discussion of the films nor corresponds with any other film's discussion in the book). Despite these minor problems, however, *The Vampire Film* and *New Vampire Cinema* together provide compelling discussions of over 150 vampire movies, offering insight into not only the vampire films themselves, but also our continuing fascination with those films.

Notes

[1] Jeffrey Weinstock, *The Vampire Film: Undead Cinema* (New York: Wallflower Books/Columbia University Press, 2012), 1.
[2] Ken Gelder, *New Vampire Cinema* (London: Palgrave MacMillan/British Film Institute, 2012), vi.
[3] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses),' in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
[4] Weinstock, 19.
[5] Gelder, v.
[6] Ibid., vi.
[7] Ibid., 107.
[8] Ibid., v.
[9] Weinstock, 17.
[10] Ibid., 77.
[11] Gelder, 4.
[12] Weinstock, 57.
[13] Gelder, vi.
[14] Weinstock, 127.
[15] Ibid., 13.
[16] Ibid., 17.
[17] Gelder, 106.
[18] Ibid., 94.
[19] Weinstock, 96-97.

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Wolf-Girls: Dark Tales of Teeth, Claws and Lycogyny

Edited by Hannah Kate
Manchester: Hic Dragones, 2012
270 pages

The 2012 short story collection *Wolf-Girls: Dark Tales of Teeth, Claws and Lycogyny*, edited by Hannah Kate, is published by Hic Dragones and is based on the most simple of premises: that every story in the collection focuses on or features a female werewolf. The emphasis is definitely not on the cute and cuddly – the words 'dark,' 'snarling,' and 'monster' all appear on the back cover to let readers know what they are in for. It is a deceptively straightforward concept – as to why it is deceptive, I will explain later in this review.

The appearance of Wolf-Girls comes at a time when the literary marketplace is already saturated by werewolf tales, such as Maggie Stiefvater's Young Adult series *The Wolves of Mercy Falls* or the works of Martin Millar and Glen Duncan. This in itself is surprising as the werewolf in Western popular culture has never quite achieved the prominence or popularity of their close cousin the vampire. In just one example of this, in the phenomenally successful *Twilight* series the werewolf Jacob Black is rejected as suitor by heroine Bella in favour of her obsessive love for the vampire Edward. In the popular Underworld film franchise, the werewolves have become the clear villains by the fourth movie. If the vampire is the adored, sophisticated aristocrat of the horror genre, then the werewolf appears to be the poor peasant cousin who it embarrasses people to acknowledge. However, despite this continued vampiric dominance, the werewolf has been steadily gaining ground in popular fiction, and this is particularly true of the female werewolf, whose popularity has mushroomed since the early

1990s.[1] A quick search on Amazon or Google will reveal a multitude of authors who write about the female werewolf in all her bloody, beastly glory. So what precisely can Wolf-Girls have to offer that the devotee of werewolf and horror fiction will not already have encountered?

Rather a lot, as it transpires. First of all there is the 'lycogyny' of the subtitle, which is a word specially invented for this volume. Certainly I found no trace of it in the Oxford English Dictionary. Inventing a word and its meaning ('the assumption by women of the form and nature of wolves'[2]) is a bold move and sets the tone admirably for what the collection contains. Namely, seventeen stories that display a remarkable amount of innovation, invention and which do an admirable job of avoiding stereotypes. The stories and their respective authors are assisted in this by the editor, Hannah Kate, who provides a brief but accurate analysis of the most prevalent clichés surrounding the female lycanthrope in her short 'Introduction' to the collection. The concept of the female werewolf as symbol of unrestrained sexuality and ecofeminist warrior are noted, as is the taboo nature of feminine hairiness. All of which the stories in Wolf-Girls then proceed to thoroughly undermine. Whilst issues such as sexuality, feminine body hair and the nature of being a lycanthrope are all explored in this collection, the editor's bold claim that 'there's so much more than this' is fully substantiated.[3]

Beyond the central premise of the female werewolf, the authors apparently have been given a free rein and the stories vary wildly in setting, writing style and plot, which ensures that the volume avoids becoming dull or repetitive. Settings range from the near-future in Hannah Kate's own story 'Sender: Shewolf' to the Wild West in Lyn Lockwood's 'The Deserter' to the Third Crusade in 'A Woman of Wolves Born' by Kim Bannerman. The themes explored are accordingly diverse, ranging from the difficulties of carrying on a romance when you like eating people ('A Good Mate is Hard to Find' by Nu Yang) to the ethics of performing bloody euthanasia on a terminally ill man ('The Pull' by Mihaela Nicolescu). Remarkably, the term 'werewolf' hardly appears at all in these stories – hence the 'deceptiveness' of the collection's central concept. The lycanthropes in these stories are 'monsters', 'bitches', 'shapeshifters', 'beasts', 'she-wolves' or something that simply cannot be defined. And in at least two stories – 'Sender: Shewolf', by Hannah Kate herself, and 'Nina Lupe-de-Loup' by R. A. Martens – it is remarkably unclear whether a female werewolf features at all. One wonders if the deft touch of Val Lewton in *Cat People* (1942) was an influence here – a film that, like many of these stories, leaves numerous questions unanswered.[4]

This is not to say the stories in the volume are completely divorced from the traditions and motifs that have endured in werewolf fiction. As the editor remarks, 'there's a good dose of silver, some full moons and some painful transformations.'[5] Customary lycanthropic themes such as lycanthropic madness (in Marie Cruz's 'Lunacy'), the werewolf as social outcast (in Rosie Garland's 'Cut and Paste') and even maternal infanticide (in Beth Daley's 'Sweet Tilly') are featured. That is not to say any of the stories included here can be termed unoriginal or hackneyed. Wolf-Girls' greatest strength is in its aforementioned avoidance of stereotyping in its presentation of its female lycanthropes, and accordingly there is a great deal here that is new and innovative. The taboo of feminine hairiness is confronted head on in two remarkably different stories, having been conspicuously avoided in the majority of contemporary female werewolf fiction.[6] Socially unacceptable feminine violence, viciousness and bloodlust also feature prominently, with little of the moral uncertainty or confusion about identity that characterises more mainstream female lycanthropes. Few of the female werewolves in Wolf-Girls waste time on feeling guilty about what they are, and ones who do (such as in Mary Borsellino's 'Familiar') are soon talked out of it.

On a purely subjective note, I felt the standout stories were Beth Daley's 'Sweet Tilly', a beautiful story about infanticide (yes, really) in which the lycanthrope explains her reasons for devouring her young, Helen Cross's 'Fur' (in which female hairiness takes on a life of its own,

to the delight of the woman turning into a wolf and the horror of her very shallow husband) and Hannah Kate's 'Sender: Shewolf' for its innovation. It is told entirely from the point of view of its deeply unsympathetic protagonist who unwisely opens an electronic message from someone, or something, called 'Shewolf' and pays the price – make up your own mind if a female werewolf is present in it. But most importantly, Wolf-Girls does an admirable job of illustrating the potential inherent in the figure of the female werewolf. The authors in this volume have spared no effort in discarding cliché, and accordingly have brought us an entertaining and well-written examination of the possibilities of lycogyny and lycanthropy. Suffice it to say I am eager to see what many of them produce in future.

Notes

[1] Brian J. Frost, *The Essential Guide to Werewolf Literature* (Madison WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 187.
[2] Hannah Kate, ed., *Wolf-Girls: Dark Tales of Teeth, Claws and Lycogyny* (Manchester: Hic Dragones, 2012).
[3] Hannah Kate, Introduction to *Wolf-Girls: Dark Tales of Teeth, Claws and Lycogyny*, ed. Hannah Kate (Manchester: Hic Dragones, 2012), 7-9.
[4] *Cat People,* dir. Jacques Tourneur (RKO Radio Pictures Inc, 1942).
[5] Hannah Kate, 'Introduction', 8.
[6] Carys Crossen, 'Female Werewolves, Fur and Body Hair,' *She-Wolf* (guest weblog post) 13 September 2012, http://www.shewolf-manchester.blogspot.co.uk/

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Steaming into a Victorian Future: A Steampunk Anthology

Edited by Julie Anne Taddeo and Cynthia J. Miller
Lanham, MA: Scarecrow Press, 2013
334 pages

Steampunk, Victorian-inspired science fiction/fantasy staged in literature, film, music, visual arts, and real life, can be dismissed as nostalgia, nostalgia in its most dangerous form as practitioners glorify a past that 1) didn't really exist, and 2) wasn't all that glorious for many as it did exist. However, this collection for the most part not only reshapes that idea but refutes it; the strongest essays move well beyond idealising the historical past from which steampunk derives. Embracing a past that recognisably did not exist but perhaps should have, identifying as much with the marginalised as with those in power in the Victorian era and beyond, many of these essays explore the power of steampunk to shape the future.

Steampunk traces its roots back to the Victorian fantastic fiction of authors including Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, whose work often featured the isolated, dangerous mad inventor-scientist-explorer and journeys to mechanically or scientifically advanced but morally or socially bankrupt other cultures and worlds. The conflicts within steampunk usually reflect those within ourselves, the monsters often being biologically human but characterised by monstrous desires. Because steampunk is alternative history, the monstrous is often a twisted extension of the forces that propelled the nineteenth century into our own present: imperialism, industrialization, and science, for example, are tools in the hands of a powerful few whose gains are ill-gotten at great cost to the many. Steampunk holds up a mirror to our past and our present and shows how monstrous the everyday can be. This collection reveals not only this side of steampunk, but also how the resistance within steampunk plots can transcend the boundaries of the imagined.

The book is divided into three parts based on steampunk buzzwords; the 'reimagining' and 'reconfiguring' (Part I), 'refurbishing' (Part II), and 'retrofitting' (Part III)--of people, spatial and temporal places, and things respectively--call attention to the subject matter's reworking of the past both as an aesthetic and to a specific purpose. Steampunk non-participatory observer and chronicler Jeff VanderMeer mirrors the opening ideas of editor/contributors' Julie Anne Taddeo and Cynthia J. Miller's Introduction in his Afterword to the collection when he says that steampunk at its best is 'creating a space for progressive alt-histories,' not just a selective look at the nicer parts of a dark time in history with some cogs and goggles added.

VanderMeer's afterword also notes that steampunk fiction, as publishers latch on to the growth of the aesthetic, 'runs the gamut from crap to amazing,' producing in equal measures fluff and substance, and the same can be said of steampunk scholarship; one tendency can be to engage in the ultimately meaningless act of merely identifying something as 'steampunk' or steampunk-like. Although this can be a useful stage in illustrating rather than just defining a movement or moment like steampunk in the early twenty-first century, which contains multitudes, 'this unexpected thing is totally steampunk' lacks the real-world relevance and progressiveness that I would argue, especially after reading this collection, is itself a vital element of steampunk.

The five essays that comprise Part I look at the interactions that drive steampunk fiction. Beginning with Catherine Siemann's consideration of the social problems of the nineteenth century, those rooted in class and empire as well as gender, that steampunk fiction employs and reworks to draw explicit connections to our own age (a theme revisited throughout the collection), Part I moves on to consider several different aspects of gender interaction. In pieces

dedicated to female 'troublemakers,' notions of femininity, and sex and sexuality, Mike Perschon, Julie Anne Taddeo, and Dru Pagliassotti demonstrate that women in steampunk fiction can be stronger, power dynamics may be more complicated, and what it means to be human is less than absolute. The fact that these essays deal primarily with topics related to gender and sexuality may suggest that steampunk fiction is preoccupied with couplings, in interpersonal private-sphere relationships like so much nineteenth-century fiction, but these essays raise a possibility of a redefined balance of power, one that would shape a different future.

The final essay in Part I moves beyond fiction and signals the collection and steampunk's move into to other media with Jamieson Ridenhour's examination of 'chap-hop' artist Professor Elemental, whose work makes explicit unfortunate similarities between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries and parodies the tropes that steampunk in its simplest forms embraces. This arrangement is perhaps unfortunate for the two essays immediately following; neither Erika Behrisch Elce nor John Tibbetts moves much beyond identifying as steampunk a graphic novel and a movie that predate the development of steampunk as an aesthetic by decades. However, both source texts foreground science and megalomania and adhere to a visual aesthetic, and as these are pretty much necessary elements of steampunk, these essays contribute to the expanding definition of the term, a definition that is applied in the final text-based essay in Part II; collection editor Cynthia J. Miller looks at the boundaries that steampunk pushes as it reworks the errors of the past to reimagine the present and thus move into a better future.

The last two essays in Part II, the first coauthored by Suzanne Barber and Matt Hale and the second by Diana M. Pho, set up the contributions that make up Part III by examining the participants within the steampunk subculture from an observational and a participant standpoint respectively. As each examines a segment of the subculture at distinct points in time, the conclusions necessarily are limited, but again, show the possibilities of steampunk as it moves beyond merely an aesthetic to become a forum for critique and activism; the mad inventors and warmongers of the past become those of the present. Sally-Anne Huxtable and Amy Sue Bix open Part III with essays that consider the roles symbolic and pragmatic of the material objects that are as much a part of steampunk as the literary works with which the collection opens, and the final two contributions, from Bowdoin Van Riper and Jeanette Atkinson, look at the display of these objects-as-artefacts and their origins in print and in physical space.

At its best, steampunk does not imagine its problems away. By moving beyond steampunk as a mere curiosity, art for art's sake, *Steaming into a Victorian Future* looks at the potential that steampunk has to be a contributor to social change through consideration of its past and its present. The collection is vast in its scope, critically evaluating 'texts' from an array of genres and the past, present, and future of this literary movement and its surrounding subculture, and is as valuable as an introduction to steampunk and its possibilities as any of the fiction collections available.

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Foreign Language Book Review

Theorie und Praxis der Bibliotheksmumie: Überlegungen zur Eschatologie der Bibliothek
[Theory and Practice of the Library Mummy: Reflections about the Eschatology of the Library]

Eric W. Steinhauer
Hagen-Berchum
Eisenhut Verlag 2012
105 pages, 15 Illustrations

Eric W. Steinhauer was born in 1971, has a Doctor of Law and works at the University Library of Hagen in Germany. His main occupation is to lead the media division of that library. He is that kind of librarian who loves books and his work. And this love has already in 2011 resulted in a book about 'Vampyrology for Librarians', the first volume of seven in his project called 'Cultural History of the Morbid'. Now, his second book about the mummies in libraries is published (a third volume about the link between diseases and libraries was recently brought to the bookstores). And a lecture of this second book is both fascinating and disturbing.

One should not expect a history of the library through the mummy or a new description of the mummy as a general phenomenon. Nothing could be more away from the author's intention. The library mummy has to be described instead, as Steinhauer writes, as 'an extremely marginal and largely unknown librarian phenomenon.' (11) But why do they exist? Why have there been even more of those mummies in libraries not only in Europe, but also in the United States? And what if those mummies have been more than just nice groovy decoration in institutions generally more connected to science, dust and the lack of laughter?

Steinhauer's book is divided in a short foreword, six chapters and some technical annexes like a list of abbreviations and a bibliography (16 pages large!). A glance at the bibliography reveals an interesting fact – the nearly complete lack of literature about this special kind of mummies. There are some isolated studies about certain mummies in specific libraries, but there is no monograph about them as a phenomenon, neither in German nor in any other language. It seems that Steinhauer may be the very first researcher who did that business of putting the library mummy in the focus of an own study.

The first chapter, 'Im toten Winkel der Wissenschaft' (In the Blind Spot of Science), is only three pages long and discusses the very limited research that was done on existing library mummies till nowadays. In contrast to those mummies, the 'Apothekenmumie' (Egyptian Mum(m)ia) and the 'Bibliothekskrokodil' (Library's Crocodile) have already gained the interest of some researchers, the first for having been not only a curiosity in pharmacies but also for having been the source of ingredients for a large scale of medications in Early Modern Era, the latter for being an attractive part of libraries and cabinets of curiosities, often fixed at the ceiling of the cabinet.

The second chapter, 'Praxis und Phänomen' (Practice and Phenomenon), describes the still existing library mummies in Europe, such as the mummy of Schepenese in the Abbey Library of Saint Gall in Switzerland or the two mummies from Peru in the Archeological

Museum in Lisbon, but also mummies that are lost today, like the mummies of the Trinity College in Cambridge. Library mummies in the United States are also taken in consideration, and they serve as a first hint for the author's theory that they are more than staffage…

With the third chapter called 'Bausteine für eine Theorie der Bibliotheksmumie' (Elements for a Theory of the Library Mummy), we do enter the theoretical part of Steinhauer's book. Steinhauer argues that the mummy is more than just a morbid symbol for death and a reminiscence of the old cabinets of curiosities, even it is to emphasise that they often could be found in such cabinets, which themselves have been from time to time the starting point for a library tradition. But library mummies in the USA underline that this kind of 'institution' could be developed far away from any tradition of such cabinets. Why should the relatively new libraries in the colonies be keen to have such old, dead, and wrapped Egyptians or Peruvians in their premises? There is a lack of such a tradition, there was even no possibility for such a tradition, and yet they are there. The fact that the mummy itself is in the majority of cases invisible in its sarcophagus relativises the morbid aspect.

But then – why? Answers and hints are given in chapter four, 'Die Medialität von Mumien' (The Mediality of Mummies). Mummies have their own written media context; the famous *Book of the Dead* is only one example for that. Steinhauer mentions also texts written on or into the sarcophagus or inscriptions in the pyramids. Some of the mummies brought to Europe have even been used to produce colours or ink and are now – in a book and as a book – part of the knowledge transport of the modern European civilisation. Others have been destroyed and turned into paper… who knows how many books or newspapers may have been produced by the use of the debris from former mummies. And mummies have always been an inspiration for the occupation with the history of Egypt, ending up in new books and well-filled rafts in the libraries. As a result, mummies have to be seen as a kind of medial phenomenon reaching far beyond the freaky aspects of horripilation and amazement. They are also the bearer of written information and enclosed in a world of texts that remained for a long time unintelligible and incited generations of researchers to understand the very nature of this kind of embalmed and preserved corpses. The existence of the mummy in the library may be also a result of the link between libraries and the book collections in the princely cabinets of curiosity, but that aspect is only one element in the phenomenon of the library mummy.

The last two chapters, 'Visionen von Dauer und Unsterblichkeit' (Visions of Perpetuity and Immortality) and 'Eschatologischer Ausblick' (Eschatological Prospects), are reserved for the conclusions. Mummies are, following Steinhauer, not only embalmed and dried corpses put into a written context either by their creators or the collectors of curiosities and books, they are also a symbol for our own behaviour towards knowledge. 'Our post-mortal existence is to a large extent medial and in most cases linked to libraries and archives. We have broken up the tie between body and text, as it existed within the mummy, in favour of the text alone' (77). For a long time, the cultural memory was reduced to the written word alone. But now, the once abandoned biological component is coming back! In a certain way… 'Searching for new and stable data storage media, also biological structures are now taken in consideration. Extremophile bacteria seem to be quite promising. It may be possible to store and re-read information by genetically encoding them. Those bacteria may transport their data very reliably and for millions of vears' (79).

A very last idea of Steinhauer is a comparison between the *Book of the Dead* and the DNA. Isn't the now readable encoding of DNA a kind of 'book of life' (82)? If so – isn't it interesting that the place of library mummies is always the reading room of a library?

The book of Eric W. Steinhauer is not a monograph just about the history of the library mummy. It is more an essay about the relation between the library and one of the most extraordinary things one can find in that institution. It is fascinating because for the first time,

that very special type of mummy is in the focus of a book. And it is disturbing – mummies are also containers for texts… and therefore only half as freaky as they may be seen at the very first moment.

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Film Reviews

Juan of the Dead (*Juan de los Muertos*)

Dir. Alejandro Brugués, 2011
La Zanfoña Producciones
Film: 100 mins

Even before the zombie epidemic spreads quickly through Havana and wreaks havoc on the beautiful old city, the topic of conversation among the protagonists of Alejandro Brugués's 2011 film, *Juan of the Dead*, centres on the question of whether they ought to give up on the socialist dream of Cuba and embrace at last the relentless allure of capitalism. While fishing from a small raft off the coast, the stocky, wisecracking sidekick, Lazaró (Jorge Molina), wonders aloud if perhaps they should leave their homeland behind and continue paddling to Miami. For Juan (Alexis Díaz de Villegas), however, this is not a possibility. 'I'd have to work there,' he explains, 'I'm a collector here, just sitting and waiting for something to come up. Besides, I'm a survivor…just give me a chance and I'll sort it out.' The list of events he offers as proof of his resilience (the Mariel boatlift, the Angola conflict, and the Special Period) are each the consequence of the aggressive spread of capitalism, and, having withstood these, he sees no sense in leaving Cuba now. Despite the fact that his unrepentant passivity has left his life in shambles – he has no steady work, his wife has left him, and his relationship with his daughter is strained – he takes pride in this antihero mentality because it connects him to his fatherland, which he describes as a paradise that no conflict or disaster will ever change. Conveniently, the test of this idealism arrives almost immediately when something snags on his line. He hauls a body toward the raft, but it is no corpse. The imperialist zombie invasion has begun.

Cuban cinema has long been devoid of the horror genre because of the Cuban government's traditional prohibition against it, but the genre's absence can also be attributed to the conviction that producing a horror film would represent something of a futile exercise. As Rafael Miguel Montes notes:

> Since horror is essentially, at its core, the relation between one and a perilous and often transmogrified other, the only other that is deemed worthy of discussion in Cuba is the capitalist imperialism of the United States. The yanquís, the Castro government's demonic appellation for the inhabitants of the country ninety miles west of Cuba, are the lone evil in the Cuban psyche. Since billboards about them are already everywhere on the island, making a film about their sinister intentions seems an utterly redundant act.[1]

In spite of this, *Juan of the Dead* has been marketed as Cuba's first horror film because of its significant capacity for making use of such redundancy to create a zombie comedy whose satirical tone cuts against both the obsessive nature of Cuban fears of the United States as well as the socio-political undertones of the zombie genre itself. Brugués's key achievement resides in his production of a hybridized version of the zom-com genre whose comedic sensibility allows it to retain a level of political critique that would otherwise be prohibited by one of the

main objects of its satire. In other words, *Juan of the Dead* exists as the first Cuban horror film because it is, in a sense, the only possible Cuban horror film.

The satirical mode of *Juan of the Dead*, as well as its title, signal that its most obvious precursor, in terms of style, is Edgar Wright's *Shaun of the Dead* (2004),[2] except that, instead of dispatching zombies with a cricket bat, Juan's weapon of choice is a boat oar. The humour of both films relies on frustrating the expectations of the genre's traditional suspense, and Brugués includes several visual allusions to *Shaun of the Dead* throughout. Nevertheless, despite this connection to Wright's seminal zom-com, the true antecedent of *Juan of the Dead*, in an ideological (and more significant) sense, is George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), in which a band of strangers join forces within a shopping mall in order to withstand a zombie outbreak that threatens them from the outside.[3] As in the film that many consider Romero's best work, *Juan of the Dead* strategically deploys its satire as a method for reviving and reimagining the socio-political allegory that has persisted at the heart of the zombie myth since its origin in the Caribbean, not far from Cuba itself. In one scene, for example, Brugués combines the humour of *Shaun of the Dead* with the political critique of *Dawn of the Dead* by replacing the speedy Porsche that Shaun (Simon Pegg) and Ed (Nick Frost) use as a getaway car with a Russian Lada model, which only starts after several attempts and breaks down after a quarter mile. Brugués's most significant and biting satire, however, comes in the form of the Cuban government's paranoid response to the outbreak, which paints the zombie horde as an imperialist attack. The Cuban media releases an 'official statement' warning that, 'lately there has been civil unrest in different areas of the capital. The police are investigating isolated riots apparently caused by dissident groups paid by the United States government,' and throughout much of the film, the characters refer to the zombies not as zombies, but as 'dissidents.' This propagandist depiction of the epidemic as an encroaching capitalist wave betrays the debt it owes to the anti-commercialist subtext of Romero's film while also differentiating itself as a critique of the problems and crises inherent to its own socialist perspective.

Because of the government's insistence that the zombie outbreak represents yet another example of capitalist imperialism, it is possible to read *Juan of the Dead* as a sort of sequel to Romero's film, a continuation in which the stupefying effect of American capitalism has moved south from Pittsburgh, crossed the Caribbean, and arrived upon the shores of Cuba. Of course, Juan and his compatriots do not have a shopping mall, with its high walls, heavy gates, sporting goods stores, and food courts to weather the heat of Havana's zombie summer. Instead they must make do with what they have: a boat oar, a harpoon gun, and a dilapidated apartment building. This lack will prove problematic because the survival of a zombie outbreak has always been about location.

As much as any other genre, the particular setting of a zombie film often acts as a character in its own right, one whose existence is vital to the plot and whose characteristics tend to reflect the underlying themes of the story itself. In *Shaun of the Dead*, Shaun and his cohort take shelter in the warmth of The Winchester pub, whose nerve-stiffening pints and pool-cue weaponry appropriately reflect the slacker sottedness of its anti-heroes. Likewise, the mall that provides shelter for the protagonists of *Dawn of the Dead* has consistently served as the touchstone for how critics have interpreted the socio-economic allegory behind the film. Marxist readings of Romero's film have long argued that the mall, to which the zombies instinctively gather after death, stands in as a symptom of the dehumanizing effects of commercialism. In recent years, however, this perspective has been countered by a recognition that the setting also provides the literal means for surviving the zombie outbreak, and so, in this reading, the mall functions as a space of resistance to this dehumanization rather than a mere symptom of it. In *Juan of the Dead,* Brugués expands this space of resistance from a pub or a mall to an entire island nation, while also managing to preserve the complex ambiguity of a

socialist 'paradise' under the threat of devouring capitalism. As a result, Juan and his motley companions find themselves caught in a liminal position between competing ideologies, neither of which seems to provide adequate means for avoiding zombification.

For the younger protagonists of the film, the socialist experiment of Cuba has long since lost its appeal, if it possessed any for them in the first place. Lazaró's son, Vladi California (Andros Perugorría), dreams of settling somewhere where Cuba and socialism are unknown: 'If they ask me who Fidel Castro is, I'll stay there forever.' Juan's daughter, Camila (Andrea Duro), informs him early on that she'll be leaving soon for Miami. Juan pleads with her to stay and argues that he has changed, but she refuses: 'No, Juan. You're like this country. Things happen to you, but you never change.' Even Lazaró has his moments of weakness, but Juan, whether out of love or simple passivity, remains faithful to his fatherland, even after experiencing the crises of Mariel, Angola, and the Special Period. All of this precedes the outbreak, however, and, once it begins, Brugués complicates matters rather brilliantly by instilling in the second act of the film a sequence in which Juan formulates a plan not only for surviving the epidemic, but also for thriving within it by embracing the very ideology that he has so stubbornly resisted.

In an impulse similar to what Naomi Klein has labelled, 'The Shock Doctrine,' in which free market forces are instituted under the duress of disaster and crisis,[4] Juan opens a business with Lazaró, Vladi California, a drag queen called La China (Jazz Vilá), and her henchman, Primo (Eliecer Ramírez). 'We're facing a crisis, and there's only one thing we can do,' Juan tells Lazaró. When his friend supposes that this one thing is to help others, Juan responds, 'No, charge them.' For as little as 30 pesos, Juan and his associates will kill your loved ones. Clean up is 50 pesos extra. Just as Peter Venkman, Raymond Stantz, and Egon Spengler profit from the increase of paranormal activity in Ivan Reitman's *Ghostbusters* (1984),[5] Juan identifies a niche market in zombie extermination and disposal, and so, despite his refusal to go to Miami because 'there you're going to have to work for a living,' he finds himself gainfully employed and caught up in the capitalist spirit right here at home. For Camila, however, this is precisely the flaw found both in her father and in Cuba that makes her want to flee. 'If that's what you want to do,' she argues, 'do it to help, not to make money,' but her father's answer is only, 'We're Cubans. That's what we do when things get tough.' The irony of his capitalist impulse reinforces the notion that Juan, in adapting to the most recent crisis, has already submitted, to some extent, to the dehumanizing ideology of the 'dissidents' outside his door.

Nonetheless, as the social structure of Havana falls apart, there are less and less customers available to pay for his services, and his burgeoning business never gets off the ground. For the passive collector Juan, this is just as well because, in his heart of hearts, he has always known that the narrative put forward by the Cuban media was an artificial one. In the second half of the film, Brugués intentionally shifts the allegory of the zombie away from its satirical status as a metaphor for imperialist aggression. In an attempt to repair things with Camila, Juan, Lazaró, and his business partners offer a 'Preparation for Defence' class, in which Juan correlates the zombie horde with the after-effects of the eroding socialist experiment of Cuba. 'This time the bad guys aren't the Yanks but a real enemy, and they're here among us,' Juan explains to the group, 'They want to eat, just like in the Special Period, but they don't just eat cats.' The zombies no longer participate in the advance of capitalism, but rather become its victims, suffering something similar to the starvation and material shortages that afflicted the Cuban populace during the severe economic crisis that befell the island after the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.[6] Brugués cements this connection in the one of the cleverest set pieces of the film, in which La China is bitten while handcuffed to Juan. Once she has turned, her attack and Juan's resistance are performed as a choreographed dance routine accompanied by Pedro Camacho and the Clan's version of the appropriately entitled song, 'Ella

me quiere matar' ('She wants to kill me'). In a fitting re-casting of the familiar zombie attack sequence, Brugués employs Timba music, one of the primary cultural products of the Special Period, as a metaphor for re-establishing Cuban identity after La China has lost hers to zombification. This new significance attached to the epidemic marks the film's transition toward the real crisis of an existence within a degraded, worn down version of socialism.

The structure of the film is unusual in that Brugués divides it between Juan's attempt to adapt to the encroaching free market in the first half and his attempt to return, in the second half, to the pure core of the socialist ideal in the form of community and cooperation, both of which are vital to surviving this most recent crisis. Early in the film, Juan confesses that the outbreak 'is bringing out the good neighbour in me,' and later, when the group is apprehended by the Cuban military, Lazaró responds to the request for identification by saying, 'We are altruists.' In Brugués's critique of Castro's Cuba, however, this is not enough. The soldiers handcuff the band in the back of a van and explain that it is time for the socialist revolution to begin anew: 'We are rescuing all survivors and supplying them with arms. You will build the walls to protect our community.' Unfortunately, this second revolution immediately fails when it is discovered that one of the other prisoners has turned, leading Lazaró to remark with a saturnine calm, 'Sergeant, official, dude, I don't think you're doing a very good job, man.'

It turns out that neither capitalism nor socialism proves sufficient for withstanding a zombie horde whose symbolism is never exactly clear anyway. Throughout the film, the allegory lurking behind the zombie becomes so muddled and multivalent that Lazaró no longer knows how he should curse them: 'Dissidents! Imperialists! Slaves! Plebs!' The confusion corresponds well with the predicament of the protagonists, who are caught in a conflict of competing socio-economic hegemonies whose destructive powers leave bodies in their wake, both dead and undead. The best they can hope for is to find a location where they might survive. When Vladi California asks, 'Shall we go to the mountains and start an uprising?' Juan responds, 'You're joking now, but that's what we should have done from the beginning.' In the end, in homage to Zack Snyder's remake of *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), the group modifies an old car, transforming it into an amphibious vehicle with which they might at last escape the zombie mob.[7] Nevertheless, at the last minute, Juan refuses to leave with his compatriots. In a final, truly altruistic act, Juan saves the life of a boy and gives him his place in the boat before wading, against the pleas of his friends and daughter, back to his home:

> I'm a survivor. I survived Mariel, I survived Angola, I survived the Special Period and that thing that came later, and I am going to survive this. Maybe people will see me and they'll join me to help. I'm fine here. I like it here.

No matter what the crisis, Cuba will be his location, his shopping mall, his Winchester, and he sees no sense in leaving now. His identity is inseparable from this Caribbean paradise, which will persist through any regime and any epidemic. And besides, if he left, he'd have to work for a living.

Notes

[1] Rafael Miguel Montes, 'Googling for Natives,' in *Diabolique Magazine*, No. 5 (July/August 2011).

[2] *Shaun of the Dead*, dir. Edgar Wright (Universal City, CA: Universal Home Entertainment, 2004), DVD.

[3] *Dawn of the Dead*, ultimate ed., dir. George A. Romero (Beverly Hills, CA: Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004), DVD.
[4] For more on this concept, see Naomi Klein. *The Shock Doctrine.* New York: Picador, 2007.
[5] *Ghostbusters*, dir. Ivan Reitman (Culver City, CA: Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment, 2002), DVD.
[6] Brugués plants the seed of this turn early in the film when an old woman complains to Juan that her newly zombified husband has met his demise because of the 'out-of-date drugs they give away in the polyclinic,' a clear reference to the medical crisis that was one of the most devastating consequences of the Special Period.
[7] *Dawn of the Dead*, director's cut, directed by Zack Snyder (Universal City, CA: Universal Home Entertainment, 2004), DVD. There is a fine symmetry to the fact that, whereas the protagonists of *Dawn of the Dead* flee a symbol of capitalism for a purportedly zombie-free island, Juan and the others seek to leave zombie-filled Cuba for the motherland of capitalism.

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The Moth Diaries

Dir. Mary Harron, 2011
MD (Quebec) Productions Inc.
Film: 79 mins

The Moth Diaries, taken from the book by Rachel Klein (2002) of the same name, was one of those vampire films that slipped under the radar.[1] Over-shadowed by the likes of other novel to screen adaptations, such as *The Twilight Saga*, *Vampire Diaries* and *True Blood*, it is a one-off tale rather than part of a series. It also somewhat de-sensationalises its undead elements as opposed to making them bright, shiny anti-heroes.[2] Moreover, unlike the block-busters mentioned above, its vampire is not something that encapsulates cultural repression and a desire for individual agency but is much more of a psychological manifestation of closeted teenage angst. Set in Brangwyn, a former hotel but now an exclusive all girl boarding school, it tells the story of 16-year-old Rebecca (Sarah Bolger). She was sent to the school two years earlier after the suicide of her father. It is intimated that she suffered some form of mental collapse because of this and was only saved from committing suicide by meeting Lucy Blake (Sarah Gadon), who is now her best friend. However, a new arrival at the school, Ernessa (Lily Cole), takes Lucy away from Rebecca leading to dramatic, even catastrophic, consequences.

The film is directed by Mary Harron, who also wrote the screenplay, and is best known for directing *American Psycho* (2000).[3] Like *American Psycho*, *The Moth Diaries* hides its true intent under a highly aestheticised exterior and can be seen to be a close study of one person's decent into psychosis. Whilst the film itself begins with a somewhat idealised, even nostalgic, view of school life, beneath all this is what forms the basis of all vampire tales, 'sex, blood and death' – a point actually made by one of he characters in the film. In fact, the film suggests that it is impossible to separate these three things and that life is itself a constant negotiation or battle between all of them. In the rarefied and claustrophobic world of a girls' school this would seem to be even more so. Subsequently, the narrative collapses the ideas of adolescence and vampirism in a way that is strongly reminiscent of horror films of the 1980's. In films such as *Once Bitten*, *Fright Night*, *Lost Boys*, and *Near Dark* teenagers, quite literally, had to fight their 'monstrous adolescence' in the shape of the vampire to be 're-born' into adulthood and maturity.[4] Whilst these earlier films all feature young males, they do share some interesting features with Harron's film – only the main protagonist can 'see' the vampire, and, as such, it becomes something of a 'reflection' of themselves and the emotional and physical turmoil of the growing pains they are going through. This state is exacerbated by the adults in the narrative who do not believe that the vampire is a vampire, and are often beguiled by them. *The Moth Diaries* makes much of these tropes and none of the adults see the vampire for what it is. Indeed when Rebecca tells her suspicions about the new girl in confidence to Mr Davies (Scott Speedman), a nominal male love interest in the film, he betrays her trust and reports it to the schools headmistress. Only Rebecca 'sees' or recognises Ernessa as being an undead creature, and this creates a special bond between them. This 'bond' is central to the film, and in many ways is the driving force of the story, but also ultimately, at least in terms of its narrative coherence, its downfall.

Recognising the vampire is central to many films of the genre and those characters within them who able to do this, more often than not, do so for a very particular reason. This usually falls into three categories: the main protagonist has, in some way, done something to bring the vampire forth; they both share a bond with the undead/supernatural creature; or they have something, often a gift, which brings them to the attention of the vampire. The first two we see in films like *Let the Right One In*, *Let Me In* and the 80's vampire films mentioned earlier.[5]

The latter, in narratives like those of *The Twilight Saga*, *The Blade Trilogy* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.[6] *The Moth Diaries* is in the first category in that in many ways Ernessa is brought forth by Rebecca, and even by the group of girls themselves, but there is also a hint of the last in that Rebecca has something that the vampire wants. This second part is easier to explain, so I shall start there. It is shown quite explicitly at the start of the film – Ernessa wants Rebecca's most prized possession, and that is Lucy. To call Lucy a possession might seem extreme but, within the film, its use is correct and explains much of what Ernessa does in the narrative. The film begins with Rebecca as narrator telling us that she is going to write everyday in her diary, and so, as in Klein's book, we are to believe that the events unfolding before us are the daily entries within it. This, of course, immediately sets up echoes to earlier vampire stories and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in particular, which is largely made up of the various characters' journal entries.[7] As the story begins, Rebecca describes an almost idyllic start to the new school term where she is sharing a room with her best friend, and we see them both in the bathroom talking whilst Lucy is bathing. A particularly Sapphic scene, it avoids the luridness of earlier Hammer films, such as the *Vampire lovers* and *Lust for a Vampire*, and reveals the connection between the two girls though showing that Rebecca, who is still clothed, keeps herself from her friend, whilst possessing the naked Lucy with her gaze.[8] They are interrupted by a knock on the door and when Rebecca opens it the headmistress introduces her to the new student, Ernessa Bloch. Rebecca stands at the door, protecting what is hers, but Ernessa catches a glimpse of Lucy in the bathroom behind her, and in a moment not unlike Count Dracula seeing the photo of Mina in Jonathan Harker's locket, decides there and then that she must have her.[9] Of course here, and as in *Dracula* before it, the goal is not to possess the possession but the one that owns it. And so, as explained by theorists from Christopher Frayling to Christopher Craft, the vampire expresses their 'forbidden' desire to possess their same sex victim by taking all that they hold most dear, for Dracula and Jonathan Harker that is Mina and so too Ernessa needs to own Lucy to possess Rebecca. This sets up a tension in the narrative, not just between the three girls, Rebecca and Ernessa in particular, but also the two major influences on the story, that of Stoker's *Dracula* and Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*.[10] Both stories are directly cited during the film, in the literature classes run by Mr Davies, and indeed Rebecca only recognises Ernessa for a vampire after the class on *Carmilla*. Le Fanu's story, of course, tells the story of Laura, whose father invites a 'guest from the west' in to their house, who, unbeknownst to him, turns out to be a vampire, who quite literally wants to love his daughter to death. Similarly, *The Moth Diaries* works on the idea of a claustrophobic space inhabited by women, as in *Carmilla*, but integrates it with the notion of possession and more obvious cultural repressiveness and sexual otherings of *Dracula*. As such, Rebecca's repressed sexual desires for Lucy become real in the figure of Ernessa, and Ernessa's need to own Rebecca is achieved through the sexual possession of Lucy. As a result, the vampire becomes both signifier and manifestation of forbidden sexual desire but also a societal othering that is not just to do with sexuality. This is something which is more obvious in the book, and largely glossed over in the film, and it involves Dora – the only other person that can 'see' the vampire.

Comparing novels to the films that are adapted from them can be a very difficult and often spurious exercise, as both mediums have completely different set of inherent characteristics and constraints. More often than not, a book is a singular endeavour; whereas a movie is not only a cooperative project but a commercial one as well, and not always involving the original author within that process. However, it is arguable to say that the significance of a character from the earlier version still carries a certain related signification in the later one, a narrative memory one might say. And in terms of Dora in *The Moth Diaries* this is quite significant because Rebecca, Ernessa and Dora are all linked in the original novel by being Jewish. The book makes this explicit within its plot and all three girls are 'othered' in some

form or other by their school friends because of their Jewishness. The conjoining of ideas of otherness, Jewishness and vampirism, has a long history in Western culture, and not least in the Victorian society that produced *Dracula* with his 'Shylock-esque' features in Stoker's novel as well as his stockpiles of wealth that he is seen to have 'sucked' out of the countryside around him.[11] Equally, on a cinematic level, the look of the vampire in F. W. Murnau's *Nosfertau* (1922) owes much to a similar cultural anti-Semitism, that sees the undead monster as a scheming villain with a stereotypically aquiline nose and long money-grabbing fingers/claws, who wants to suck the life out of the West. Harron's film never mentions this connection at all, and, as such, makes Dora's recognition of the vampire out of place within the film. Consequently, when she is killed by Ernessa, this is not because the vampire is 'seen' by Dora because of a shared 'othering' or special bond, but only serves to be a point where the film begins to unravel – where points that had a specific meaning in the original narrative have been transposed and displaced in the adaptation, becoming empty signifiers or aporias in the cinematic text. This then points to a more obvious flaw in the film, and that is in the look of Ernessa herself. The narrative, both in the book and the film, creates the impression that Ernessa is somehow Rebecca's doppelganger, an uncanny double that portends not only destruction but loss of the self and individual identity. Harron's film uses much of what is started in the novel. Rebecca often retreats to a 'secret' room in the school where she plays a piano that has been abandoned there, but Ernessa also finds the room and plays the piano much better.[12] Ernessa's father committed suicide, just like Rebecca's, and both daughters appear to live their lives in the shadow of this event. At one point, Ernessa even says to Rebecca, 'you and I are so alike.' Combined with Ernessa's possession of Lucy, it would appear that she is actually taking over Rebecca's life, being a better read, more liked and loved version of herself. This would all work to add an otherworldly dimension to the narrative except for the fact that, in the film, Lily Cole, who plays the vampire, looks absolutely nothing like Sarah Bolger, who plays Rebecca.

With her doll-like face and odd stature, Cole actually makes a very interesting choice for a vampire, being both knowing and child-like, superficially young and yet strangely old, especially in close-ups. As such, she effectively embodies the eternal youth or immortal child that is seen in Claudia from *Interview with the Vampire*, Eli from *Let the Right One In* and even Jane as seen in *The Twilight Saga*, but there is no possible way that she could be mistaken as a double for Rebecca in Harron's film.[13] As a consequence, the film is left with making Ernessa a form of psychic vampiric ghost, who does not drink blood, although we do see her lick Rebecca's blood at one point. She rather feeds off the life force of her victims.[14] This is explicitly shown later in the story when Rebecca visits Lucy in hospital. Lucy is there as she has become incredibly weak, we assume from the vampire's nightly visits, and Rebecca sees that the flowers recently put by her bed have wilted and died, all due to Ernessa visiting just before her. Rebecca's suspicions are further confirmed when she finds a photograph of the hotel/boarding school from 1907 and, in a moment that strongly references Stanely Kubrick's *The Shining*, spots Ernessa'a face amongst the guests pictured from over a hundred years in the past.[15] Ernessa, then, configures the past that bleeds through to the present and drains it of its energy, feeding off its life and light, as seen in the figure of Lucy. It is no mistake that just as Rebecca experiences a particularly violent menstrual stomach cramp, which links her to the present and her possible future as a mother, that she sees Ernessa, succubus-like, in the room next door orgasm as she sucks the remaining life force from Lucy, condemning her to the past and oblivion. Here then the link between death and sex is made explicit, just as its echo is heard within blood and menstruation as one death necessarily precedes the possibility of new birth. In this version of events Ernessa desires Rebecca, not as a sexual object, but as a companion during her intolerably lonely journey through immortality; her quest is to make Rebecca realise that a pain-less death is more favourable to a pain-full life, and that she can join her father and

herself if she commits suicide. This also works as another act of mirroring as we saw Ernessa do the same herself in an earlier flashback in the film (the notion that suicides become vampires is cited from Montague Summers in the movie).[16] Rebecca is left with no alternative but to find and destroy Ernessa's remains, killing the monster, and allowing them both to escape the memory of their respective pasts. The main problem with this conclusion is how this works in terms of the deaths of Lucy and Dora as they become nothing more than necessary collateral damage in the resolution of Rebecca's and Ernessa's stories. Lucy in particular is no longer the light and centre of Rebecca's and Ernessa's respective worlds, but is, somewhat anachronistically for a film about memory and the past, instantly forgotten. An alternative version, and one that once again clings around the film as a shadow cast from the novel, is the idea that this is all happening in Lucy's head.

The novel intimates this because it begins with an adult Rebecca, telling us that her former psychiatrist has recommended that she publish the journal which she kept during her junior year at high school. This situates the narrative as the record of someone going through, and surviving, some form of breakdown, immediately positioning Rebecca as an unreliable narrator and calling into question the taking of anything she says at face value. What we then begin to see is at the idyllic quality of her relationship to both her friends, and in particular Lucy, is anything but that. This is reinforced by comments from these characters as the narrative develops, revealing that Rebecca is obsessive, 'returning to her old ways' and sucking the life out of Lucy.[17] What slowly develops is the feeling that Ernessa is not a mirror of Rebecca, but actually is her, and it is the human girl that is sucking the life out of her 'friend.' We can then see that the narrative we have seen being described could actually be taking only inside Rebecca's head, which would link it to films such as *Identity* from 2003 which explored, the popular at the time and when Klein was writing her book, idea of split personalities and internalised worlds.[18] Here all the characters within the narrative are parts of the same person, configuring different aspects of the same self, and, indeed, many parts of *The Moth Diaries* work well within this framework. Here Lucy and Ernessa become the good and bad parts of Rebecca: Lucy acts as the light and the positive aspect of Rebecca's personality, and Ernessa manifests darkness, death and the negative part (the butterfly and the moth as it were).[19] The boarding school then becomes the enclosed world of Rebecca's psyche, and the various characters are actors in her battle to achieve a consolidated and whole self. This would also explain the constant dream-like state that pervades the film. Rebecca is often pictured just as she is waking up and we also see her experiencing a bad 'trip' after taking some drugs which belong to Ernessa. Further, she is constantly in night clothes and in bed or in her bedroom, making much of the film appear like a waking dream or nightmare from which she is struggling to finally awaken. This moment is only finally achieved when she kills Ernessa. This part of the film is more important than any other, for not only does Rebecca kill Ernessa but she also burns down part of her school in doing so. As such, she not only kills the hold of the past over her, and with that the memory of her father's suicide, but also gets 'expelled' from the school, signalling that she no longer needs the world she has created to 'work through' her psychological trauma or re-integrate her formerly fractured self. This further explains Rebecca's lack of remorse over the deaths of both Lucy and Dora, for she needed to 'kill' them in order to regain herself. As such, the moth we see emerging from its chrysalis during the opening of the film prefigures what we see after it, in that the subsequent narrative is Rebecca struggling to free herself of the protective 'cocoon' of the school. She only merges as her new and whole self at the end.

The vampire here, then, configures very much Ken Gelder's notion of the past intruding into the present, but it is one that wants to feed of its life and vigour, and prevent it from changing.[20] In *The Moth Diaries* then it represents a traumatic past that refuses to allow the

future to develop, and keeps its victim in the grip of darkness and the grave – a past that must be experienced, defeated, then moved on from. In terms of Harron's film it also becomes the undead novel from which the movie cannot escape. By not fully acknowledging its past, or killing its ghost, it cannot create itself a new. The spectre of the novel, then, haunts the aporias created within the film; gaps which draw the complexity out of the narrative turning a story of self-development and reflexivity into a simple, if fairly effective, ghost story.

Notes

[1] Rachel Klein, *The Moth Diaries* (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2002). Although the film was officially released in 2011, it did not get shown in many cinemas until 2012. The DVD version, by Alliance films, only came out in early 2013. *The Moth Diaries* (MD (Quebec) Productions Inc.).

[2] The films of *The Twilight Saga* (*Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Eclipse* and *Breaking Dawn Parts I & II*: 2008-2012) come from the novels of the same name (2005-2008) by Stephanie Meyer. *The Vampire Diaries* television series (2009-present), created by Julie Plec and Kevin Williamson, is adapted from the novels of the same name (1991- 1992), by L. J. Smith. And *True Blood*, the television series (2008-present) was created by Alan Ball from the *Southern Vampire Mysteries* (2001-2013) by Charlene Harris.

[3] *American Psycho* (Lions Gate Films, 2000).

[4] *Once Bitten*, dir. Howard Storm (The Samuel Goldwyn Meyer Company, 1985), *Fright Night*, dir. Tom Holland (Columbia Pictures, 1985), *Lost Boys*, dir. Joel Schumaker (Warner Brothers, 1987), and *Near Dark*, dir. Kathryn Bigelow (De Laurentis Entertainment Group, 1987).

[5] *Let the Right On In*, dir. Tomas Alfredson (Sandrew Metronome, 2008), *Let Me In*, dir. Matt Reeves (Icon Film Distribution, 2010).

[6] The Blade Trilogy: *Blade*, dir. Stephen Norrington (New line Cinema, 1998), *Blade II*, dir. Guillermo Del Toro (New line Cinema, 2002), *Blade: Trinity*, dir. David S. Goyer (New line Cinema, 2004), and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, dir. Fran Rubel Kuzui (20th Century Fox, 1992).

[7] Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Company, 1897). In Stoker's book the story unfolds largely through the journal (diary) entries of Jonathan Harker, Mina Murry/Harker, Dr. John Seward and Abraham Van Helsing. The vampire, as indeed in Klein's book, is never allowed to speak for itself.

[8] *The Vampire Lovers*, dir. Roy Ward Baker (Hammer Film Productions, 1970) and *Lust for a Vampire*, dir. Jimmy Sangster (Hammer Film Productions, 1970).

[9] Most cinematic versions of Stoker's story have a scene where the vampire chances upon the picture of Jonathan Harker's fiancé and is immediately entranced, suggesting that from that moment on he is determined to have her for himself.

[10] Sheridan Le Fanu, 'Carmilla', in *In a Glass Darkly* (Edinburgh: Richard Bentley and Son, 1872).

[11] See Howard L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) and Mervin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer, *Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present* (London: Palgrave, 2002).

[12] This motif is used extensively in the Ghost School Quartet of films from Korea, *Whispering Corridors*, dir. Park Ki-hyeong (Cinema Service, 1998), *Memento Mori*, dirs. Kim Tae-yong and Min Kyu-dong (Cinema Service, 1999), *Wishing Stairs*, dir. Yun Jae-yeon (Cinema Services, 2003), and *Voice*, dir. Choi Ik-hwan (Cinema Service, 2005). All of these films are

built around the same idea of female friendship, illicit relationships, betrayal and institutional claustrophobia as seen in *The Moth Diaries*.

[13] *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles*, dir. Neil Jordan (Warner Brothers, 1994).

[14] Oddly this is not part of Stoker's *Dracula* or Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, where the undead drink blood, but is a feature more of folkloric vampires that are often equated to the idea of the incubus that weighs heavily on its victims' chest at night and slowly draws out their life force.

[15] *The Shining*, dir. Stanley Kubrick (Warner Brothers, 1980). In the film a writer, Jack Torrence (Jack Nicholson), signs up to be a caretaker of a remote hotel in the off-season. The 'memory' of the hotel slowly possesses him. In a scene towards the end of the film we see a photograph of guests at the hotel from 1921, almost 60 years earlier, in which we see Jack's face smiling out at us.

[16] Montague Summers (1880-1948) was a clergyman and self-styled expert on witches, werewolves and vampires. His book *The Vampire* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co. Ltd., 1928) lists many causes for the creation of vampires but chief amongst them are those who were 'witches, wizards and suicides.' Summers, *The Vampire*, 12.

[17] Harron, *The Moth Diaries* (2011)

[18] *Identity*, dir. James Mangold (Columbia Pictures, 2003). The theme of multiple or disassociative personality disorder can also be seen in films, such as *Color of Night*, dir. Richard Rush (Hollywood Pictures, 1994), *Never Talk to Strangers*, dir. Peter Hall (TriStar Pictures, 1995), *Primal Fear*, dir. Gregory Hoblit (Paramount Pictures, 1996), *Session 9*, dir. Brad Anderson (USA Films, 2001) and *Girl, Interrupted*, dir. James Mangold (Columbia Pictures, 1999). One of the more interesting parallels is with the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, where in Season 6, Episode 17, 'Normal Again' (aired March 2002) we see Buffy being held in a mental institution and it is intimated that the life she lives as a vampire slayer only takes place in her own mind. [dir. Rick Rosenthal, Script writer, Dieog Gutierrez]

[19] This would fit in with a more psychoanalytical, object relations reading of the narrative as seen in the work of Melanie Klein for instance, where the infant is shown to divide itself into good and bad parts. See Melanie Klein, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, trans. Alix Strachey (London: Vintage, 1997 [1932])

[20] Ken Gelder, *New Vampire Cinema* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

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