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EDITORIAL

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Gothic Spaces: Boundaries, Mergence, Liminalities

In January 2-15, the Gothic Association of New Zealand and Australia (GANZA) hosted its biennial conference in Sydney, Australia. The theme of the conference was "Gothic Spaces: Boundaries, Mergence, Liminalities", a topical choice encouraging delegates to revise, revisit, and question the meaning and impact of the Gothic not only in aesthetic terms, but also in relation to their physical, psychological, and cultural scopes. The conference was extremely interdisciplinary in nature – with papers whose focus ranged from literature to film, television, food studies, art, folklore, and even the medical field– and offered fresh and multifaceted perspectives on both contemporary and canonical Gothic Studies.

Recent developments in Gothic Studies have highlighted the importance of "space". Here, "space" is not only an abstract locus of meaning, but is also a loaded term that incorporates the interconnecting dimensions of cultural, geographical, and textual studies. As matters of spirituality and location, style and representation, chaos and order intersect, the Gothic continues to be moulded and re-moulded in relation to ever-changing understandings of both division and fusion. As such, the Gothic refuses to occupy a single space, and, as it interweaves and merges with multiple disciplines, readings, and interpretations, it also puts on new masks that change and mutate over

time, societies, and cultures. The Gothic inhabits a space that is as liminal as it is demarcated, ambiguous as it is defined.

This themed issue of *Aeternum* continues the critical conversations that began at the GANZA biennial conference in Sydney. The papers included explore the various conceptual, cultural, geographical, and aesthetic dimensions of contemporary Gothic, and aim to find what "spaces" Gothic Studies occupies. Once again, the term "contemporary" here is taken to mean not simply texts that have been produced in the very near past, but also approaches and critiques that re-envision the analysis of historical texts via a fresh and newly established Gothic lens. Unsurprisingly, the first articles of the issue – by Ashleigh Prosser and Mary Ross-Volk, respectively – take the idea of space to be a socio-geographical and socio-political notion, and focus on the city as a Gothic(ised) space. The idea of the Gothic occupying a "negative space" in relation to bodily experiences is the focus, in different and revisioning guises, of the two further articles by Sarah Pearce and Erin Corderoy. The implications of the Gothic as a cultural space – both performatively and conceptually – are explored by Samuel Finegan, as well as Margaret McAllister and Donna Lee Brien, in the final two articles of this themed issue. Collectively, the authors present a very clear picture of how contemporary Gothic is not tied to one singularly constructed "space", but merges, blends, and morphs with different media and contexts, from literature to film, from medical studies to urbanization.

Finally, the issue concludes with a book review for *The Gothic and the Everyday: Living Gothic* (edited by Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Maria Beville), written by Kimberley McMahon-Coleman. This edited collection treaded on new ground by extending the reach of Gothic Studies beyond the realm of the representative, and focusing on how the Gothic is conspicuously intertwined with matters of folklore, culture, history, and ritual. Indeed, the review for *The Gothic and the Everyday* provides an apt way to conclude an issue focused on "space", proving that, even in this multi-media and multi-voiced 21st century, the Gothic maintains its ability to morph and shift (cultural) registers.

Editor's Details

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No Place Like Home: The Chronotope of the Haunted House in Peter Ackroyd's *The House of Doctor Dee*

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to explore the trope of haunting in contemporary English author Peter Ackroyd's seventh novel The House of Doctor Dee*, published in 1993. It will propose that Ackroyd's novel is a Gothic narrative of uncanny returns, in which the spectres of the past are returned to the present through the temporal dislocation of space in the classical tradition of the ghost story, by the haunting of a house. The majority of the novel's action is set in the house of its title, which is possessed by a mysterious history, ambiguous construction, and uncanny atmosphere. It provides the spatial medium through which the parallel narratives of the novel's two narrators, the famous Elizabethan Doctor John Dee and the contemporary Londoner Matthew Palmer, can transhistorically haunt one another in an uncanny act that brings the dark history of the house and its inhabitants to light. This article will first consider whether the trope of the haunted house can be effectively read as a new kind of Bakhtinian literary chronotope inspired by that of the Gothic castle. It will then explore the significance of the chronotope of the haunted house in Ackroyd's novel by employing the theory of the uncanny's "return of the repressed", and conclude by addressing how a chronotopic reading of the haunted house in* The House of Doctor Dee *reveals a ghost story that is both a modern Gothic narrative of the return of repressed trauma and a historical narrative of the visionary Gothic tradition.*

Whilst much has been written on the trope or motif of the haunted house in Gothic literature, particularly its uses in American fiction, there appears to be a gap in research regarding the significance it can have when read specifically as a literary chronotope in the Bakhtinian tradition.[1] This article seeks to fill that gap by exploring the trope of haunting in contemporary English author Peter Ackroyd's seventh novel *The House of Doctor Dee*; a Gothic narrative of uncanny returns in which the spectres of the past are returned to the present through the temporal dislocation of space in the classical tradition of the ghost story, by the haunting of a house. The majority of the novel's action is set within the house of its title, which is possessed by a mysterious history, ambiguous construction, and uncanny atmosphere. The house further provides the spatial medium through which the temporally distanced parallel narratives of the novel's two narrators, the famous Elizabethan magus Doctor John Dee and the contemporary Londoner Matthew Palmer, can transhistorically haunt one another in an uncanny act that brings the dark history of the house and its inhabitants to light. Since previous scholarship has predominantly explored the significance of the hermetic or the postmodern, historiographic, and metafictive aspects of *The House of Doctor Dee*, this article's textual analysis will exclusively focus on a close examination of the haunted house of the novel's title by considering its function as a chronotopic spatio-temporal conduit for what I argue to be the narrative's dominant interpretative frame, a ghost story in the Gothic tradition.[2]

As such, this article will first consider whether the trope of the haunted house can be effectively read as a new kind of Bakhtinian literary chronotope for Gothic fiction, one that could perhaps be best understood as the (post)modern evolution of the traditional Gothic castle. It will then explore the significance of the chronotope of the haunted house with specific reference to Ackroyd's novel by employing the theory of the uncanny's "return of the repressed" in light of Freud's writings on the subject. To conclude, the article will address how a chronotopic reading of the haunted house in *The House of Doctor Dee* successfully reveals a ghost story that functions simultaneously as both a modern Gothic narrative of the return of repressed trauma, and a historical

[1] Rebecca Janicker's *The Literary Haunted House: Lovecraft, Matheson, King and the Horror in Between* (2015) and Dale Bailey's *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction* (1999) are exemplary representatives of scholarship already in existence on the popular trope or motif of the haunted house in American literature.

[2] Susana Onega presents very compelling analyses of the hermetic in the novel in *Peter Ackroyd* (1998) and *Metafiction and Myth in the Novels of Peter Ackroyd* (1999). Julian Wolfreys has astutely explored the significance of its metafictive and intertextual elements in "Peter Ackroyd and the 'endless variety' of the 'eternal city': receiving 'London's haunted past'" in *Writing London Volume 2* (2004), an argument developed from an earlier work with Jeremy Gibson, *Peter Ackroyd: The Ludic and Labyrinthine Text* (2000). More recently, Buell Wisner (2014) employs the novel as a case study of the antinomial anxieties of postmodern historical fiction; while Jean-Michel Ganteau (2012) uses trauma studies to explore the poetics of (post)modern ruins referring to the novel's temporal fragmentation; which Jakob Winnberg (2013) has also addressed in Ganteau's latest edited collection with Susana Onega, by using trauma studies to read the novel as a postmodern Gothic romance of traumatic realism seeking therapeutic resolution.

narrative that evokes the visionary origins of the Gothic tradition and its ghosts. For, as Julia Briggs reminds us, "Ghost stories represent the return of the repressed in its most literal and paradigmatic form" (Briggs 2012, 178).

When discussing the depiction of space and time in literature, I have chosen to begin (like many scholars before me) with Mikhail Bakhtin's definitive essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics" (1981), in order to address the effectiveness these concepts can have for the literary analysis of Ackroyd's work when viewed together as a singular narrative construct. The chronotope, a term Bakhtin borrows from Einstein's theory of relativity, is translated from the Greek *chronos* and *topos* literally as 'time-space' and defined as the "interconnectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin 1981, 84). The representational capacity of the literary chronotope, Bakhtin argues, lies in its ability to fuse the "spatial and temporal indicators" of a narrative equally into "one carefully thought-out, concrete whole" (ibid: 84). Through the chronotope, then, time "thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically viable" and space becomes "charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (ibid: 84). In the essay, Bakhtin famously explores examples of major chronotopes beginning with the ancient literary tradition of the Greek Romance and moving forward in time to show how they have endured as types to determine the formation of the "most important generic variations" of the European novel from its earliest developments (ibid: 243). He thus goes on to claim that such chronotopes function as "organising centres" for generic classification because they form an aesthetic representation of "the place in which the knots of narrative are tied and untied […] to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative" (ibid: 250).

In the majority of Ackroyd's works, this place is undoubtedly the city of London, for in both his narratives of fiction and non-fiction alike he consistently depicts moments of historical time in the city to be inseparable from their spatial topography. The city of London's manifestation as a haunted site of uncanny transhistorical continuity has been the central 'chronotopic' preoccupation of much of Ackroyd's writing (Prosser 2014). However, I propose it further provides his *oeuvre* with an overarching chronotope, wherein specific architectural sites return their repressed histories to the contemporary through characters' engagement with their often Gothic psychogeography, as Matthew Palmer experiences when he inherits Doctor Dee's home in *The House of Doctor Dee*, and which Detective Hawksmoor similarly encounters in Ackroyd's third novel *Hawksmoor* (first published in 1985) when investigating sacrificial murders within seven churches built by Nicholas Dyer. The dual narrative structure of *The House of Doctor Dee* parallels that of *Hawksmoor*, which is similarly concerned with the sinister influence architecture can have over its inhabitants and also ends in the transcendental convergence of its contemporary and historical parallel narratives; however, further discussion of the similarities between the two novels is beyond the scope of this article. The "Gothic psychogeography" Ackroyd creates throughout his works, as Merlin Coverley argues, therefore explores "the more extreme forms of

behavioural response provoked by the city", in which London as "a place of dark imaginings" is aligned with an "antiquarianism that views the present through the prism of the past" by contrasting a "horizontal movement across the topography of the city with a vertical descent through its past" to reveal what lies beneath the 'secret' sites of London's repressed 'unofficial' history (Coverley 2012, 81, 14).

One can thus conclude that in Ackroyd's collection of works, London's city-space repeatedly functions chronotopically as a temporal conduit for its history. The overarching chronotope of Ackroyd's works is to be found, then, in his belief in the existence of "a Gothic *genius loci* of London fighting against the spirit of the classic" (Ackroyd 2001, 580), through which London's history is uncannily brought to bear on the city's present by the spatio-temporal hauntings contained within its Gothic psychogeography. As Bakhtin attests, it is not unusual for multiple chronotopes to interact within a single text, genre, or more broadly within a certain author's writing but "it is common moreover for one of these chronotopes to envelope or dominate the others" because of its status as a powerful conceptual tool (Bakhtin 1981, 252). It is my proposition, therefore, that this occurs in Ackroyd's *oeuvre* precisely because it is his overarching chronotope of London's Gothic *genius loci* that defines the nature of each narrative, the characters' haunting experiences of space and time within them, and the purpose and function of individual chronotopes like that of the haunted house in *The House of Doctor Dee,* as the analysis of this article seeks to show.

Ackroyd actively reflects on how the relationship between space and time functions within his own writing in the 1999 essay "All the Time in the World (Writers and the Nature of Time)", claiming that in all his works, regardless of whether they are what scholars consider to be postmodern historiographic metafictions, biographies, or narrative histories, his sole concern is with (re)creating London as a "spectral and labyrinthine world where the past and present cannot necessarily be distinguished" (Ackroyd 2002b, 368). Ackroyd's (re)creation of the city in these "multiple-world fantasies", to quote Alan Robinson, is achieved through the pervasive use of elements of "fabulation or Gothic repetition, involving paranormal happenings, uncanny historical echoes or rhymes of earlier events, and apparent transhistorical identities of characters separated by centuries," that effectively function to "destabilise historical reality" (Robinson 2011, 31). In Ackroyd's essay, he offers further insight into his method, elaborating on exactly how this depiction of the city-space functions in his novels by employing the rather pertinent metaphor of a house with many rooms: "In some it is a question of introducing the past to the present, and in others of introducing the present to the past. If they get on with each other, then we may introduce them to the future" (Ackroyd 2002b, 368). One can conclude then, throughout Ackroyd's writing, time clearly exists, to quote Bakhtin, as "the fourth dimension of space" (Bakhtin 1981, 84).

Paul Smethurst argues that this kind of approach to time-space in narrative is representative of a new postmodern form of literary chronotope which engages in previously unprecedented narrative complexity by enabling "a multiplicity of forms, as

well as space-times into the novel […] consistent with a postmodernist strategy to assert plurality, indeterminacy, and positionality over the ordering structuring and generalising chronotopes of realist fiction" (Smethurst 2000, 125). The spatial, or topographical, separation that occurs within postmodern chronotopic works, he claims, can "substitute for the temporal contingency in which past, present and future exist as a network within the present" (ibid: 110). Smethurst actually makes reference to how such principles of "non-directional time" in the postmodern chronotope are used in the parallel narratives of Ackroyd's third novel *Hawksmoor* to exemplify through the spaces of the historic London churches that "time appears to become flattened, to shift from a vertical degree of separation to a horizontal contingency based on complex time-altering symbolisms" (ibid: 110). Smethurst does not discuss *The House of Doctor Dee,* but the parallel narratives the novel contains could be employed just as effectively to support his classification of it as a postmodern chronotopic work within which "spatial proximity alone connects narratives that are separated by historical time" (ibid: 110). However, this article seeks to expand on Smethurst's proposition that it is "spatial proximity alone" that forges these connections between the narratives, by proposing they can be further understood through the trope of haunting in the Gothic tradition, an approach that I believe such spatio-temporal relationships often seem to necessitate in Ackroyd's works.

In Dale Townshend's introduction to *The Gothic World* (2014), a recently published academic collection co-edited with Glennis Byron, the idea of a "poetics of Gothic space" (xxxix) is briefly discussed in order to show how "a chronotopic approach to the challenge of defining the Gothic aesthetic" (xliii) can prove useful for current methods of literary interpretation. For as Townshend so astutely states, the spaces within which the Gothic is most symptomatically dealt with are "the spaces in which we have been hurt and wounded, but to which we obsessively return, the sites we remember in painful and horrific recollection, the spaces that return unwittingly *to us* in moments of lurid, traumatic recall" (ibid: xxxix). Therefore, before we proceed to examine the haunting presence of this 'Gothic aesthetic' in Ackroyd's novel in line with Townshend's suggestion, it is necessary to first succinctly address some of the scholarship that has already been published on the Gothic and the uncanny in relation to chronotopes of the urban and the postmodern more broadly, and with reference to Ackroyd's writing.

Petra Eckhard's monograph *Chronotopes of the Uncanny: Time and Space in Postmodern New York Novels: Paul Auster's City of Glass and Toni Morrison's Jazz* (2011) unites all of the aforementioned concepts by examining how the uncanny, as defined by Freud and later Tzvetan Todorov, functions chronotopically in the postmodern New York cityscapes of the two eponymous American writers. Linking Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope to the Gothic through the trauma of the 'return of the repressed', Eckhard claims chronotopes of the uncanny function as "materializations of repressed memories and histories" which, through postmodern narrative, can "provide access to both subjective and collective terrors apparent at the end of the twentieth century"

(Eckhard 2011, 186). Like Smethurst, Eckhard puts forward an argument for a new understanding of the postmodern chronotope, in this circumstance one that is defined by its spatio-temporal relations to the urban in postmodernity and the uncanny effects she believes it produces in the New York of the texts she analyses. Marta Komsta, in a published version of her doctoral thesis, similarly pursues the idea of a postmodern urban chronotope, however the focus of her analysis is placed squarely on its semiotic function in a selection of novels by Peter Ackroyd (Komsta 2015). Through the metaphorical representation of the city as a kind of 'Chemical Theatre', Komsta argues Ackroyd's urban chronotope is a "palimpsestic literary structure capable of sustaining the pattern of collective cultural continuity" she finds to be staged within his work (ibid: 10). For Komsta, the urban chronotope of Ackroyd's 'Chemical Theatre' presents the 'city-as-stage' as a *semiosphere* (according to Yuri Lotman's theorisation) and a "carnivalesque construct" (in the Bakhtinian tradition), through which she reads Ackroyd's characters to either be "forever trapped in the confines of a text or break free into cultural unity, symbolized in the metaphor of English Music [sic]" (ibid: 200). When brought into discussion together, the work of Smethurst, Eckhard, and Komsta, provide the critical context from which this article may now proceed. By using Ackroyd's own metaphor of the house that 'houses' time as a starting point, this article seeks to propose that, like the chronotopic motif of the Gothic castle, the haunted house of *The House of Doctor Dee* can also function as a new kind of Gothic literary chronotope that reveals the spatial embodiment of historical time to similarly uncanny effects.

Uncanny Chronotopes: the Gothic Castle and the Haunted House

Popularized in eighteenth-century Gothic fiction, perhaps most famously by Horace Walpole's *The Caste of Otranto* (1764), the Gothic castle is a chronotopic space because it is, in Bakhtin's words, "saturated through and through with a time that is historical in the narrow sense of the world, that is, the time of the historical past" (Bakhtin 1981, 245-246). The Gothic castle functions as an antiquated space that can materially 'house' time because "the traces of centuries and generations are arranged in it in visible form as various parts of its architecture, […] and in the particular human relationships involving dynasty primacy and the transfer of hereditary rights" (ibid: 246). Antiquarian settings and those that are seemingly so, like the haunted house, are a widely-acknowledged feature of the Gothic, but what is of most importance to note here is that they spatially manifest temporal returns, of a secret family history for example, through the physical or psychological hauntings that occur within them. As David Punter explains, the attitude to the past that pervades the Gothic is a "compound of repulsion and attraction, fear of both the violence of the past and its power over the present, and at the same time longing for many of the qualities which that past possessed" (Punter 2014, 198). One can conclude then, that the signifying power of the space of the Gothic castle is chronotopic precisely because it lies in its ability to act as a physical conduit for the paradoxical return of these troubled pasts to an often equally troubled present. Gothic narratives characteristically combine, therefore, "a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space" which,

Chris Baldick argues, work by "reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration" (Baldick 2009, xix). What Baldick is so astutely describing here is exactly what I believe to be the chronotopic relationship that one can find at work within both the Gothic castle and the haunted house, wherein space and time are ruptured by the often supernatural presence(s) of the past in the present, by what could effectively be considered to be the Freudian 'return of the repressed'.

In Sigmund Freud's seminal essay "*Das Unheimliche* (The Uncanny)" published in 1919, Freud famously attempts to define this "particular species of the frightening" (Freud 2003, 125) by comparing various dictionary definitions of the term, observing that its etymological origins in *heimlich* (meaning 'homely') become "increasingly ambivalent" until it ultimately merges with its antonym *unheimlich* (meaning 'un-homely') thus demonstrating that the uncanny is always a "species of the familiar" (ibid: 134). The uncanny, therefore, can be said to begin, quite literally, from *within the home*. Consequently, Freud develops the argument that an uncanny experience, such as the feeling of *déjà vu* or meeting a *doppelgänger*, can be attributed to a personal psychological encounter with the "return of the repressed"; either as the return of "repressed childhood complexes" from family life, or rather, from *within the home*, or as confirmation of the apparent return of "primitive beliefs" from pre-modern society, such as the belief in occult powers like the 'Evil Eye' (ibid: 155). These experiences have supposedly been surmounted by repression during our entrance into adulthood, by the advancements of the Enlightenment and the rise of modernity respectively, but in the uncanny moment seemingly return with powerfully unsettling effects.

In his discussion, Freud also makes specific reference to the special kind of uncanny one experiences in a haunted house:

> To many people the acme of the uncanny is represented by anything to do with death, dead bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts. Indeed, we have heard that in some modern languages the German phrase *ein unheimlich Haus* ['an uncanny house'] can be rendered only by the periphrasis 'a haunted house'. We might in fact have begun our investigation with this example of the uncanny – perhaps the most potent - but we did not do so because here the uncanny is too much mixed up with the gruesome and partly overlaid by it (ibid: 148).

The haunted house is, therefore, by its own definition *unheimlich*; it is an *un-home-like home*. However, Freud aptly notes that the haunted house is often a contested space for the uncanny because its common usage in traditional Gothic literature was often to provoke fright by "gruesome" effect rather than from the unease evoked by an experience of the return of the repressed. Nonetheless, one could argue that in contemporary Gothic literature, it is the latter that has become the privileged uncanny effect of the haunted house, particularly when the writer uses realism to make us feel 'at home' within the text before he "betrays us to a superstition we thought we had

'surmounted'; he tricks us by promising everyday reality and then going beyond it" (ibid: 157).

Since the nineteenth century, the concept of the Freudian uncanny has found its metaphorical home in architecture, as Anthony Vidler has argued in his highly influential text *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (1992), particularly within the house "haunted or not, that pretends to afford the utmost security while opening itself to the secret intrusion of terror," and the industrialized city "where what was once walled and intimate, the confirmation of community […] has been rendered strange by the spatial incursions of modernity" (Vidler 1992, 11). In the contemporary world of the (post)modern metropolis, the decaying medieval castle and untamed rural landscapes of eighteenth-century Gothic works have been transposed into the "emblematic Gothic house, the haunted repository of our historical imaginings" (Punter 2014, 171-172), and the dark labyrinthine streets of a city-space populated by an increasingly unknowable urban mob, within which traditional supernatural hauntings have often become metaphors for the haunting of the self by a traumatised psyche. The uncanny, therefore, continues to persist in the (post)modern urban context of the contemporary Gothic "through tropes of enclosure or isolation […] and the emergence of paralyzed and alienated characters" (Eckhard 2011, 181).

The uncanny can thus be further understood, as Nicholas Royle proposes, as a "crisis of the 'proper'", derived from the Latin *proprius* meaning 'own', because it entails a "disturbance of the very idea of personal or private property including the properness of proper names"; that is, it is a crisis of what we call 'home' both physically and psychologically (Royle 2003, 1). It makes what was once intimately familiar unknown, or something unfamiliar suddenly and terrifyingly known, through a slippage that blurs what should be identifiable as reality with occult fantasies of supernaturalism, by obfuscating what is 'proper' within our very selves, in Freudian terms, through a confrontation with the *doppelgänger* and death. As such, Royle rather eloquently describes the experience of the uncanny as "a sense of homeliness uprooted, the revelation of something unhomely at the heart of the hearth and home" (ibid: 1). Viewed chronotopically, Ackroyd's haunted house of *The House of Doctor Dee* overwhelmingly reveals this sense of "homeliness uprooted" by creating a 'crisis of the proper (self)' for its inhabitants, as the rest of this article seeks to demonstrate through a close examination of the text.

The (Haunted) *House of Doctor Dee*

"I inherited the house from my father. That was how it all began" begins *The House of Doctor Dee,* immediately invoking the tradition of the Gothic castle and its questions of ancestry and inheritance (Ackroyd 1994, 1). In the alternating chapters that follow, two parallel narratives unfold. The numbered chapters of the first strand are narrated by twenty-nine year old contemporary Londoner Matthew Palmer in 1993 (the year of his thirtieth birthday and the novel's publication). After his father's death, Matthew moves

into his mysterious house in Clerkenwell, which is eventually revealed to have once belonged to Elizabethan magus Doctor John Dee, a discovery that leads him to the dark secrets of his own past. While the second set of chapters, mostly named after architectural spaces within the home such as 'The Library' or 'The Closet', are narrated in the sixteenth century by Doctor Dee himself. In this timeline, Dee endeavours in relative secrecy to create immortal artificial life in the form of a homunculus; a 'little man' formed by dark alchemy through whom "I, who made him, will live within him for ever. He, who owes his life to me, will return to me" (ibid: 226).

Like Doctor Dee, Matthew is also a professional researcher, whose work has led him to view "the past as [his] present, so in turn the present moment became part of the past" (ibid: 13). When he discovers his father has left him all of his estate including a secret house, he quickly becomes obsessed with learning its history, seemingly compelled by the strangeness of the house itself. When the connection to Doctor Dee is finally revealed, Matthew is overwhelmed by an urge to know more about the life of the man whose presence still seems to inhabit his home, since he feels "he was everywhere at once and, as I walked about his old house, I had the sense that somehow he had conquered time" (ibid: 132-133). A strong desire to possess the past dictates both Matthew and Dee's lives and narratives. As Matthew states, with reference to befriending fellow researcher Daniel Moore: "There is a camaraderie that grows up among those who work with old books and old papers, largely, I suspect, because we understand that we are at odds with the rest of the world: we are travelling backwards, while all those around us are still moving forward" (ibid: 12-13). For Dee, it is driven by his quest to (re)discover the mythical lost city of ancient London, aided by his (fraudulent) apprentice Edward Kelley, in order to harness the spiritual power of its godlike creators (ibid: 190-191), but it is also made evident by his wish to create "new life without the help of any womb" through the homunculus; a double of himself within an "everlasting creature" whose cyclical thirty-year existence grants it the power to possess the past, present, and future (ibid: 104, 124-125). These two temporally distanced yet intimately interwoven narratives are brought together in the final chapter, titled 'The Vision', in a transcendental space outside of time within which Matthew Palmer, Doctor Dee, and Peter Ackroyd (as author) commune in what I interpret to be a kind of textual *séance*.

The palimpsestic construction of narrative in the novel is also reproduced in the structure of its titular haunted house. In a reflection of the novel's alternating parallel plots and their passage through history to uncover what has been buried by time, it "was not of any one period" rather "the house became younger as it grew higher, […] and must have been rebuilt or restored in several different periods" (ibid: 2) because what is now the basement was once the ground floor as "the old house is descending into the ground" (ibid: 15). Matthew's friend and fellow researcher Daniel Moore accurately notes it is "very unusual to find a house of this age in London" (ibid: 14) as the 1666 Great Fire of London brought many historic buildings to ruin, just as the bulldozers of capitalist redevelopment have done in recent years. Matthew even

explains the house's patchwork construction out of the materials of its various past forms prompts the sensation "that somehow this house, and myself within it, had no connection with the world which surrounded us" (ibid: 4). It thus provides the house with the appearance of an architectural palimpsest, of being constructed out of the very fabric of history itself, confirming its function as a spatial conduit for the novel's temporal hauntings. Susana Onega even proposes that, in accordance with the philosophical works of the 'real' Doctor Dee, the structure of the house may also be read as representative of a "huge transdimensional door" (Onega 1999, 121). She suggests this reading is conveyed in Matthew's vision of first entering the house by opening four coloured doors of black, white, green, and red which correspond with alchemy's constitutive elements of earth, air, water, and fire (Ackroyd 1994, 9-10), and in its three floors that represent the "cosmic levels and their human equivalents, body, soul and spirit", which together reveal that "the house, shaped like a human body [...] is a striking example of the *monas hieroglyphica,* the materialization of Doctor Dee as Cosmic Man or *anthropos*" (Onega 1999, 121). Onega compellingly extends this hermetic analysis further to the structure of the novel itself and the relationship between its chapters, arguing that it can also be read as a representation of "the monad's constitutive elements" (ibid: 130). When the house's physical construction out of the different spaces of various time periods is read chronotopically, Onega's implication that Dee's home is an alchemical representation of his cosmic self is given further significance for, as I argue in this article, it can be read as an embodiment of the haunted house chronotope, in which its original owner haunts it by transcending space and time to become (in)corporealised within its structure.

Moreover, Ackroyd's house of Doctor Dee is not located at its original site in Mortlake, but on the seemingly fictitious Cloak Lane, "difficult to find [...] some thirty yards north-west of the Green" (Ackroyd 1994, 2) at the historic heart of Clerkenwell. There are two significant points to be made about this relocation to a more central area of London. The first is that it allows Ackroyd to physically place Dee within his "private mythology of London" (Lewis 2007, 75), in an area to which he ascribes a specifically haunting *genius loci* in his historical works. As he writes in *London: The Biography*, "the secret life of Clerkenwell, like its well, goes very deep" because it has long been home to the city's radical, spiritualist, and occult movements (Ackroyd 2001, 469). In the novel, the house becomes a physical repository for this history, giving the impression that "all the time has flowed here, into this house, and there is none left outside" (Ackroyd 1994, 82). Amongst the papers his father left him after his death, Matthew even finds an envelope titled "The Documents in the Case" which is filled with "passages in several different hands, scrawled across various types of paper" ranging in date from 1662 to 1924, that reveal a carefully compiled historical record of past incidents of haunting in the house (ibid: 219-224). Therefore, it is my suggestion that the house can be read to function chronotopically like "a sealed room" (ibid: 3) for all of London's lost time, within which these repressed 'unofficial' narratives of the city's esoteric past can be literally and figuratively preserved, because in Ackroyd's 'mythology' of London, to quote Julian Wolfreys, "a house or a library, or an area such as Clerkenwell […], is

formed through a structural resonance which is both temporal and spatial, and which therefore serves in an emblematic manner […] as a figure for the secret history and the spectral revenance of London as a whole" (Wolfreys 2004, 139-140).

The relocation to an area rich with what Ackroyd suggests is a mystical kind of historical continuity further positions Doctor Dee to be a part of Ackroyd's "Cockney visionary" tradition (see Ackroyd 2002a). In his non-fiction, Ackroyd has explained his belief in a collection of "London luminaries"; writers and artists, scholars and performers throughout history who have uniquely understood the city's spirit of place because they are able "to hear the music of the stones, to glimpse the spiritual in the local and the actual, to render tangible things the material of intangible allegory, all these are the centre of the London vision" Ackroyd finds within their lives and works (Ackroyd 2004, 319). However, it is important to note that the house of Ackroyd's novel is not the historical Doctor Dee's home, nor is it a historically accurate Dee who lives there. As Matthew tellingly suggests "every book has a different Doctor Dee [...] The past is difficult, you see. You think you understand a person or an event, but then you turn a corner and everything is difference once again [...] It's like this house" (Ackroyd 1994, 136). This leads us to our second point of significance; that the house of Doctor Dee is endowed with a spatio-temporal function that is clearly much more than just the novel's setting. As Laura Colombino reminds us, "houses and other enclosed spaces are often conceived as sensitive membranes, where exchanges take place between the inside and the city outside, but they can also work as metaphors of the body itself or, alternatively, as microcosmic projections of the larger metropolis" (Colombino 2013, 8). The house of Doctor Dee thus functions as a chronotopic representation of the uncanny relationship Ackroyd believes space and time to share within the city of London, and its haunting is what I argue allows for it to be positioned as both an embodied character and a symbolic metaphor in the tradition of the (in this circumstance, British) ghost story.[3]

Manuel Aguirre has argued that in modern Gothic works, the haunted house is "a *haunting* house [...] it does not happen to be sheltering a numinous presence, it *is* the numinous presence, an otherworldly living space that craves birth, sustenance, growth, reproduction in the human world" (Aguirre 1990, 192). I believe Ackroyd's novel exemplifies Aguirre's argument to a nicety for the characters' narratives are explicitly shaped by their uncanny experiences of haunting for which the house 'itself' frequently appears to be responsible. At various moments throughout the story, Dee and Matthew feel the presence of one another as the house carries their voices and images like ghostly echoes across time. Dee and Kelley can hear Matthew and Daniel talking in his chamber of demonstration (Ackroyd 1994, 188), just as Matthew can hear their conversation through the sealed door of the basement laboratory (ibid: 229). But as the novel

[3] Julia Briggs' *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (1977) provides the first comprehensive study of the traditions of the genre, but for an excellent contemporary resource that explores the history of the British ghost story to date see Simon Hay's *A History of the Modern British Ghost Story* (2011).

progresses, Matthew is overcome by the uncanny feeling of not being in control of himself when in the house; his kitchen and bedroom are mysteriously cleaned (ibid: 127), he is overcome by a surprising urge to defecate in the garden (ibid: 131), and ravenously eats food he has found conveniently left out from him (ibid: 136). He becomes particularly disturbed by the feeling that there is "someone, or something" living in his house (ibid: 128). The presence Matthew feels emanating from some sinister force within the house is repeatedly suggested to be his *doppelgänger* Dee's homunculus. Matthew's gardener digs up a circle of small bones surrounded by broken pieces from a tube of glass (ibid: 122), the same glass tube Matthew had earlier found whole in a drawer in the house (ibid: 15), which he later opens again to find a secret compartment filled with his father's papers that include "Doctor Dee's Recipe" for the creation of a homunculus and a document recording the history of the "Passages in Its Life" thus far (ibid: 123). The escalation of Matthew's unbalanced behaviour is thus implied to have been caused by his strange connection to the presence within the house, insinuating this is because perhaps he is "the homunculus [who] remembers nothing about its past or future until it returns home at the end of its thirty years, but it always does return home" (ibid: 125).

Furthermore, the reader is also invited to experience the house's uncanny acts of haunting through their echoes *between* the parallel narratives. When Dee employs the services of a prostitute named Marion on the day his father dies (ibid: 120), Matthew hires a prostitute named Mary shortly after his father's death (ibid: 173). Dee witnesses the ghostly apparition of their intercourse in his basement laboratory (ibid: 217-218), which is in turn the same place where Matthew's father and Daniel Moore performed their rituals of sexual magic (ibid: 172). When Matthew breaks a pigeon's wing in a psychotic fury by throwing a book on Doctor Dee at it, stamping on the bird until it dies (ibid: 136), mere pages later a dead pigeon with "a single wing" appears in the mouth of Dee's cat (ibid: 159). Matthew even finds in his father's documents the story of a previous inhabitant of the house, a 1920s writer overcome with fear that he unknowingly plagiarized his novel about eighteenth-century London radicalism (the action of which he relocated to Clerkenwell), a fear that is eventually confirmed, but it is also the period on which Daniel is writing his monograph (ibid: 222-224). The scene is undeniably an intratextual reference to Ackroyd's own metafictional work, which further foreshadows the entry of the voice of the author in the final chapter's transcendental vision:

> *The House of Doctor Dee* itself leads me to that conclusion: no doubt you expected it to be written by the author whose name appears on the cover and the title-page, but in fact many of the words and phrases are taken from John Dee himself. Just as he took a number of mechanical parts and out of them constructed a beetle that could fly, so I have taken a number of obscure texts and have fashioned a novel from their rearrangement (ibid: 275).

The alternating parallel narratives on the surface appear, then, to be juxtaposed by their differing temporalities, but they are actually very carefully connected by a kind of textual haunting that is echoed spatially through the chronotope of the haunted house. To further illustrate, throughout the novel, the final sentence of each chapter is rewritten as the beginning of the next and these textual echoes continue until the end of chapter five, after which the ending of each narrator's chapters begins their next one until the final chapter in which the past and present narrative strands merge together within a space outside of time. For example, at the end of chapter one, Matthew "seemed to see the dark shape of a man soaring upward above Cloak Lane" (ibid: 19) and the next chapter 'The Spectacle' begins with Dee exclaiming, "What became of the flying man?" (ibid: 20), and ends with "It was a clear night, and the fixed stars were all I needed to light my path to Clerkenwell" (ibid: 38) which begins chapter two when Matthew decides to walk through the night (ibid: 39). In the concluding chapter 'The Vision', the simultaneity of the past within the present (and *vice versa*) hauntingly reoccurs and is represented as a kind of transcendental awakening for the characters, within which, Wolfreys argues, "a free flowing play between distinct temporal locations [...] overlaid on one another in the same area of London" actually allows for "movement outside the times of Palmer's and Dee's narratives, when someone masquerading as the author steps forward to [...] present his vision of London" (Wolfreys 2004, 138). This vision could be considered to be the overarching chronotope of Ackroyd's *oeuvre,* which is conveyed in this novel through the spatio-temporal hauntings that create the chronotope of the haunted house. However, it is an experience that could equally be understood to be the symptom of a mental breakdown in Matthew after his father's death, triggered, in psychoanalytic terms, by the inheritance of 'the sins of the father' in the form of his mysterious house and the monstrous secrets contained within it, that in turn returns the repressed trauma of Matthew's lost childhood.

It is my proposition that Matthew's experience of haunting within (or rather, by) the house therefore conveys the uncanny's 'crisis of the proper self' via the Freudian return of the repressed in the modern tradition of a psychological ghost story, which Julia Briggs defines as "a story in which one explanation of apparently supernatural occurrences is to be found in the mental instability of the witness" (Briggs 1977, 142). Matthew remembers "very little" of his childhood, sometimes finding it "hard to believe that [he] had one at all", and often feels as if he "had come into being, and passed away, within one night" (Ackroyd 1994, 80). He plainly states "I really don't believe that there's anything there, just a space out of which a few words emerge from time to time" (ibid: 81), but he struggles with this psychological lack with an increasing intensity as the novel progresses for the "old house disturbed me, or provoked me" (ibid: 80). The cause for such a deep level of repressive disassociation is exposed towards the novel's conclusion when his mother reveals he was 'found' as a baby and secretly adopted by his father, while also accidentally revealing that his father sexually abused him, an act that is implied to have been an attempt to raise spirits in Dee's house through sexual magic (ibid: 176-177):

> That was the secret, after all. I had grown up in a world without love – a world of magic, of money, of possession – and so I had none for myself or for others. That was why I had seen ghosts rather than real people. That was why I was haunted by voices from the past and not from my own time. That was why I had dreamed of being imprisoned in glass, cold and apart. The myth of the homunculus was just another aspect of my father's loveless existence – such an image of sterility and false innocence could have come from no other source (ibid: 178).

One could argue, therefore, that Matthew's mental instability, conveyed through his experiences of haunting in his father's house, is in fact a representation of the uncanny's crisis of the proper self. What Matthew has violently repressed is an incestuous betrayal of the proper; his hidden adoption means he does not know his own 'proper' name, while the childhood abuse he experienced at the hands of his father violated the 'proper' conduct of the family home and denied him 'proper' ownership over his own body. In an episode not long after this realization, when Matthew hears the voices of Kelley and Dee in the basement laboratory, he cries out questioning the presence of the ghosts in his house, asking whether "they reflect sexual unease [...] And if ghosts are a sign of frustration, what about all the other elements – the locked door, the disordered bed, the weeping child? [...] Do you have anything to do with my father?" (ibid: 229). It is an uncanny moment of realisation for Matthew, that the inheritance of his father's unhomely home and his attempt to make it his own is what has triggered in him the return of his repressed childhood trauma. It is thus what has caused the spirits of the house to be raised, both metaphorically and literally, because as Jakob Winnberg astutely states, it is the "doubling of trauma […] that makes possible the acknowledgment of it and […] finds its metaphorical expression in haunting, ghostly echoes, *Doppengängern,* and the like" (Winnberg 2013, 233).

In light of this interpretation of the house's spatio-temporal hauntings, I propose the presence of Matthew's *doppelgänger* the homunculus within it can be further read as the monstrous projection of his traumatised unconscious. The home and other kinds of "lived space" can, as Andrew Hock-Soon Ng argues, "assume monstrous proportions when it becomes a repository for the subject's unconscious; the home becomes the locus of the subject's projected anxieties, bringing into relief the repressed other and (possibly) transforming the subject into a monster" (Ng 2004, 16). When Matthew first encounters the house he feels as if he were "about to enter a human body" because it "resembled the torso of a man rearing up, while his arms still lay spread upon the ground" (Ackroyd 1994, 3), and over the course of the narrative's events soon begins to feel like he too is "becoming part of the old house" (ibid: 44). Towards the end of the novel, Matthew discovers his father bought the house from a Mr. Abraham Crowley on the 27th of September 1963, a date which "aroused fresh speculation" for it had always been celebrated as his own birthday, revealing a critical connection between the apparent beginning of his own life and the life of the house (ibid: 219). The haunted house can be read, then, as Matthew's abhuman architectural double; a monstrous extension of himself that embodies and is embodied by the homunculus because it is, in

Susana Onega's words, "the microcosmic evil emanation of Dr Dee's house" that haunts its home and thus him too (Onega 1998, 68). For, as Manuel Aguirre reminds us, "the first thing we learn about the modern Haunted House is that it is *alive* [...] the force that lurks in it is part of the house itself" (Aguirre 1990, 190). One can thus conclude that Matthew's narrative represents the contemporary Gothic chronotope of the haunted house with its psychologically motivated ghosts, in that it is a literal reflection of Freud's concept of the self as a 'house' haunted by a troubled past, by a narrative of personal trauma that is not, or cannot, necessarily be resolved. Matthew is convinced a "madman" haunts his house and arguably, that madman is himself (Ackroyd 1994, 36).

How, then, are we to read the historical narrative of Doctor Dee and the significance of its unhomely hauntings? The parallel narratives of Dee and Matthew's lives within the same haunted house appear as uncanny reflections, for they are both tales of trauma and loss, of betrayal and regret. Dee, like Matthew, has a troubled relationship with his ailing father, and the final visits they each make before their fathers' deaths are echoes of one another; both are repulsed by their closeness to such physical and mental deterioration, they recoil in disgust at their fathers' attempts to grasp their hands, and abandon them moments before their death (ibid: 94-99). Dee is betrayed by his charlatan apprentice Edward Kelley, who, in allegiance with his old assistant John Overbury, murders his wife Katherine and sets fire to the house after his efforts to steal Dee's alchemical secrets are discovered (see 'The Closet'), just as Matthew is betrayed by his best friend Daniel who secretly practised cross-dressing and sexual magic with his father, and was instructed by him to befriend and "watch over" Matthew because he was "special" (ibid: 140-141). However, the hauntings depicted in Dee's narrative further recall traditional ghost stories in which ghosts return to resolve unfinished business by offering the haunted visions of change, as Dee's father and wife do for him in the chapters 'The City' and 'The Garden' by showing his future in "the world without love" (ibid: 204) if he pursues his occult experiments, or if he were to abandon them and "see the world with love" (ibid: 246).

It is possible, therefore, to argue that the ghostly encounters of Dee's narrative further function to illuminate the dichotomy between Enlightenment rationality and the metaphysical spiritualism of times past brought into conflict during the Renaissance period in England. Jakob Winnberg has proposed that as such, the novel "does not simply deal with individual trauma, but also with a more collective, shared trauma of modernity" through which he reads Doctor Dee himself to function as a representation of this "traumatic cultural rift" (Winnberg 2013, 234-35). Moreover, it is a dichotomy that I find is also inherent to the experience of the uncanny in the Gothic. The development of the Gothic and its ghost stories, to quote Julia Briggs, "was itself part of a wider reaction against the rationalism and growing secularization of the Enlightenment" (Briggs 2012, 179). The Gothic, throughout its history of literary resurrection and resurgence, has always been a medium through which the uncanny is able to return within apparent everyday life and rupture it, for it refuses to allow the ghosts of the past to be laid to rest; they are the essential experiential and psychological

fragments of reflection upon which our complex understandings of modernity are based. What we find uncanny is that which we once feared returning, it is a disturbance of what we thought we already knew to be (un)real, and it is from this threat of the disintegration of our concept of reality that the premise of the Gothic proceeds. The "disturbing ambivalence" that is generated by the uncanny's presence(s) in the Gothic can thus be read, according to Fred Botting, as an attempt to "explain what the Enlightenment left unexplained, [...] to reconstruct the divine mysteries that reason had begun to dismantle, to recuperate pasts and histories that offered permanence and unity in excess of the limits of rational and moral order" (Botting 1996, 23).

By merging a modern ghost story and its Gothic traditions with a nevertheless equally haunted historical narrative, the chronotopic space of the haunted house is used in Ackroyd's novel to intertwine the two and make them both strange, invoking Freud's definition of the uncanny. We are presented, then, with two possible lines of interpretation: one is a 'traditional' Gothic reading that privileges the supernatural, the occult, and the visionary, while the other is a contemporary psychoanalytic reading of the Gothic wherein the supernatural becomes a metaphor for trauma and loss, and a symptom of subject's psychic disintegration. The modern British ghost story is renowned for playing these potential interpretations off one another, perhaps best exemplified by Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and the unanswered question of whether the children's Governess is truly haunted by the ghosts of her predecessors or by her own madness. David Punter believes the prowess of the contemporary author of the Gothic is thus determined by the skill with which they are able to "continually throw the supernatural into doubt, and in doing so they also serve the important function of removing the illusory halo of certainty from the so called 'natural' world" (Punter 2014, 183). The depiction of the chronotope of the haunted house in Ackroyd's novel is, in my opinion, a testament to this great Gothic literary tradition. *The* (haunted) *House of Doctor Dee* is possessed by an ambiguity as to what exactly happens to the characters, what was 'real' and what was merely 'spectral' as it were, that remains to be resolved at its conclusion because, as Matthew asks: "who in this world can make the dead speak? Who can see them in vision? That would be a form of magic – to bring the dead to life again, if only in the pages of a book" (Ackroyd 1994, 258).

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Gotham Narratives: Terror and the City of New York

ABSTRACT

While four planes caused destruction on the morning of September 11 2001 in Washington DC and Pennsylvania, it is the attacks on New York that established the city, in the world's eyes, as that place where multiple cultures, fears and ideologies merged in the wake of the attacks. A place haunted by loss and memories, Lower Manhattan is a location of conflagrated purposes and unclear boundaries. A small part of the island of Manhattan, it has witnessed torture and murder by occupying British troops during the American Revolution; it is an African slave burial ground and it was a key port for that most horrifying of all trades- slavery. New York, too, is a site of aesthetic and architectural fluidity as the city continues to reconstruct itself after the September 11 attacks and its sedimentary layers of terror are borne out through these historical sites. This paper will explore the notion that New York, spatially and historically, occupies a threshold that leads it, repetitively, into outbreaks of violence and terror because its accumulated foundational myths of resilience and prosperity refuse to be reconciled with the horrors upon which these narratives of history are based. Through a series of historical events, including the excavation of a 18th century vessel at Ground Zero and the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911, this paper argues that New York is a city permanently located on a verge, unable to resolve the boundaries between its violent past and its vision of itself as a space of justice and inclusivity.

In his essay in *Re-Presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital and Culture in the 21st Century Metropolis*, Rob Shields presents the modern city as a place of uncertainty and fluidity, a site that is subject to visitations from the past which are always muddying the ways through which we understand the metropolis in the present. Shields recognizes ""The City" is a slippery notion. It slides back and forth between an abstract idea and concrete material" (Shields 1996, 235). This notion of malleability and immateriality is an apposite description not only of the Gothic city, but of the Gothic mode itself. As a way of reading cultural production, the Gothic holds up modern anxieties for us to confront but hints, too, that those fears thought to be relegated to the past will emerge again in an equally uncertain future. Cities induce fears of all kinds in their citizens and those individuals who move in and out of their geographical and conceptual borders; certain streets and sections of a city generate specific fears, such as violent crime or racial tension, while forever threatening is the universal terror the metropolis will always force us to confront- the fear of becoming irredeemably lost. While landmarks can lead us to believe we know where we are if we keep this building or that billboard in our sights and we can choose to avoid those areas or individuals whom we consider dangerous, the Gothic city offers no such guarantees that in avoiding these potential dangers, they may not still be lying in wait for us.

Every city understands its present through a psychogeographical narrative that is a carefully constructed series of moments from the past- not all memories become part of a city's story for some memories can serve to undermine the master narrative of progress, equality and freedom. Perhaps it is the unconsciously repressed knowledge about the finite existence of the city as we know it in its current form that is the most destabilizing feature of city life- a city cannot last forever. This fear is made real every time our city experiences an event that alters our understanding of it as impregnable and eternal and reveals to us the often hazardous and precarious nature of urban existence. The Gothic city is even more perilous for it exposes without warning (yet also as a reminder) the layers of historical terror events that unconsciously shape its citizens' sense of unease and unhomeliness. It denervates in its insistence that we live side by side yet can deny meaningful human connections and enervates through the demands it makes of us to be perpetually in motion; it unsettles us with the glimpses it reveals of a disorderly netherworld operating alongside the routines of the day and the gothic city, like Mervyn Peake's description of London during the Blitz of World War II, is always "half-masonry, half-pain" (Peake 1941), a metaphor echoed by Peter Ackroyd, sixty years later, when he describes the city of London as "half of stone and half of flesh"(Ackroyd 2001, 2). The Gothic metropolis is built upon the violent control of human labour and bodies and though it might champion resistance to rigid social orders, it nevertheless must crush indigenous or civic rebellion. The Gothic city becomes that site through which we must encounter, as Sara Wasson suggests, "the incorrigible fragility of modernity" (Wasson 2013, 132) and subsequently, the stability and coherency of ourselves.

It is the architecture of urban landscapes, however, that acts as a buffer against the salience of mortality (Landau et al. 2004, 1137); as Mark Wigley argues in his study of the role buildings play in our sense of familiarity in an urban environment, "it is the sense that buildings outlive us that allows us to have a life" (Wigley 2012, 71). But Gothic cityscapes offer little certainty to the citizen or the tourist for, like Shield's "slippery" city, their boundaries shift, both spatially and temporally- what we are sure was a right turn yesterday becomes a confused choice of labyrinthine streets tomorrow. Those buildings that form part of our personal and collective narratives- schools, civic structures and monuments- can disappear all at once for economic, social or more unsettling reasons.

Much Gothic scholarship has been dedicated to the sociological and semiotic complexity of the city, with London as the centre of urban Gothic studies. Lawrence Phillips and Anne Witchard's 2010 anthology *London Gothic: Place, Space and the Gothic Imagination* and Jamieson Ridenhour's 2013 study *In Darkest London: The Gothic Cityscape in Victorian Literature* have made a significant contribution towards a recognition of London as the model Gothic metropolis. These studies explore the connection between the Gothic mode and the social crises that arose following industrialization, challenges to the British class system, colonialism and the relentless forces of modernity that alienated the ancient customs of the city. While the recent British Library exhibition *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination* encouraged contemporary audiences to recognise the presence and relevance of London as evidence of Catherine Spooner's argument that its powerful role in steampunk fiction "embodies well the characteristic ambivalence of twenty-first century Gothic" (Spooner 2014, 205), the city's place in Gothic studies is generally regarded to be in the nineteenth century.

Similarly, New York City as a site of enquiry in Gothic studies has been grounded historically in the colonial era and the antebellum period of the mid nineteenth century, when anxieties about immigration, the institution of slavery and the fragility of the new nation to cohere abounded. Chad Luck identifies the persistent threat of miscegenation, disease and urban crowding as a defining characteristic of American urban Gothic in his contribution to Charles Crow's 2014 *A Companion to American Gothic*. In his identification of the contradictory impulse of the Gothic mode to present opposing experiences simultaneously, Luck presents the American urban Gothic as a series of "figurations of urban life (that) have included a deep-seated scepticism that run alongside, or perhaps underneath, more sanguine accounts of the city as engine of progress or seat of enlightenment" (Luck 2013, 126). New York is not a city of the past in the popular imagination- it is a space where the present has already slipped by as the future alters streetscapes and buildings as we look on, sometimes unsure of where and when we are. Certainly, there is Gotham, that demi-monde popularized by Tim Burton; indeed, Gothic New York was clearly established in comic lore by the creators of *Batman*, where it was situated within a highly prescriptive place and time: "Manhattan below Fourteenth Street at 3 a.m., November 28 in a cold year" (Boichel 1991, 9). The ubiquitous ghost tours of Manhattan that promise "elements of

the paranormal" and tales of "mystical, morbid and macabre" New York City might play with notions of a dark past, but the city is a place that through its perpetual renarrativising, its pursuit of progress and its clamour for the future is always in the process of becoming.

Yet, as Caroline Rosenthal has observed in her study of fiction set in New York and Toronto, "(t)he story of a nation …is always a haunted story; haunted by the very knowledge of its own fabrication and haunted because the repressed returns in uncanny, gothic ways" (Rosenthal 2011, 12).This same account of the development (or repression) of a national narrative can be applied to that of a city and is a useful point of reference for understanding New York City as a site that shifts constantly between truth and deception, what is literal and what is representation. When the citizens of a metropolis come to identify themselves, almost genetically, with the built environment of their city, the city itself- its skyscrapers, memorials and institutions- becomes anthropomorphized. Subsequently, as progress is personified through new architectural product, the citizens themselves internalize this sense of momentum and the new. However, Wigley warns of the unsettling effects when we identify too closely with our urban environment in his study of the September 11 attacks of 2001, arguing "(i)f everyday cultural life makes an unconscious association between body and building, it is enormously frightening when the confusion becomes literal" (Wigley 2012, 72).

When the Twin Towers fell in Lower Manhattan, much of the initial confusion experienced by Americans and, indeed, the global audience of millions, was based on the sense that the *body* of the city and its residents had been targeted. Further, the simulation of New York under attack, depicted in blockbuster movies, reinforced the sensation that the city had experienced these attacks before. I will argue that the fears generated by the terrorist attacks upon New York were anxieties that had *already* exercised a grip on the city and work to remind us that the city is a Gothic site where past terror events contribute to the climate of fear in the modern metropolis through their refusal to remain buried. Their insistent re-emergence demands that we understand historical incidents of oppression are as part of the dark and contemporary narrative of New York City.

Writing in the *New York Times*, five weeks after the terrorist attacks on World Trade Centers 1 and 2 in New York in September 2001, Max Page remarked in an opinion piece "On Edge, Again" that "Fear and this city are no strangers" (Page 2001). Page traces the various routes along which New Yorkers and their fears moved after the attacks- their fear of further street level and subway attacks, the anthrax scare- and links them to historical events of conflict and terror to support this both new and old way of looking at New York. Through the personification of the city and the experience of fear, Page presents us with an uncanny image of the metropolis and fear being forever on a threshold, facing each other and meeting again, but without the realization that they have met before. I believe this recurring refamiliarization with terror is one of the features that characterizes New York as a site of repetitive events of violence

throughout its history. While four planes caused destruction on the morning of September 11 2001 in Washington DC and Pennsylvania, it is the attacks on New York that have established the city, in the world's eyes, as that place where multiple cultures, fears and ideologies merged in the wake of the attacks. The spectacle of the Towers' collapse that seemed to create the space of Ground Zero *before* the literal destruction of the buildings can be interpreted using similar strategies to how we might access the Gothic mode; the space between simulation and the real, if we are to understand it as Ruth Bienstock Anolik does, "as unknown and unpossessable…space; its borders… permeable and undefined" (Anolik 2004, 6), is that region where the Gothic operates and where its unique propensity for finding entry points to narrative from terror and trauma might become most available.

Robert W. Snyder, a social historian at Rutgers University, describes Lower Manhattan, the site of Ground Zero, as a place "thick with memory and loss and pain" (Carlson 2006, 413), a site of conflagration, violence and unclear boundaries. It is a small boundary of streets on the island of Manhattan that has witnessed the torture and murder of American patriots by the occupying British troops during the American Revolution; it is an African slave burial ground, a site that was revealed in an archaeological excavation in 1991 and it was a key port for that most horrifying of all commercial practices, slavery. New York, too, is a site of aesthetic and architectural fluidity as the city continues to reconstruct itself more than a decade after the September 11 attacks and its sedimentary layers of terror are borne out through these historical sites, literally placed upon top of each other. As such, the city embodies the "ancient intimacy between architecture and violence" (Wigley 2012, 70) that the Gothic has always staged through such spatial conventions as suffocating dungeons and crumbling ruins. This paper will argue that New York, spatially and historically, is always occupying a threshold that leads it, repetitively, into outbreaks of violence and terror because its accumulated narratives of resilience and prosperity do not incorporate the horrors upon which these civic versions of history are based. Drawing from a series of historical events-the imprisonment and treatment of American patriots during the Revolutionary War, the excavation of an 18th century vessel at Ground Zero, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911 and the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001- I present the notion that New York is a city permanently located on a verge, unable to reconcile the boundaries between its violent past and its vision of itself as a space of justice, industry and inclusivity. Consequently, this reading of the city allows it to be mapped as a Gothic city, a site where old terrors, and their aftermath, must be forever re-experienced along with their resurrection as contemporary fears.

In order to contextualize New York as a place and symbol of liminality, it is necessary to understand it as a site where history, the popular imagination and rhetoric meet and diverge repeatedly. A colonial-era example of this idea is the Provost Prison, situated on what is now City Hall Park on Broadway. During the American War of Independence, the Prison was used by the British to house American prisoners of war. Historical accounts of the mistreatment of prisoners in the heart of Manhattan are

harrowing; an American prisoner of war, Robert Sheffield of Connecticut, described the conditions, and the experiences he and his fellow patriots, endured to the *Connecticut Gazette* in July 1778. He recalled the inmates

> "crying, praying, and wringing their hands and stalking about like ghosts; others delirious, raving, and storming — all panting for breath; some dead and corrupting… the bodies were not missed until they had been dead for ten days" (Dansk 1967, 126).

In 1991, on the site of the old Provost Prison, an African burial ground was uncovered in an area of the northern corner of City Hall Park; the 419 graves were those of African born and American born slaves who lived and died in the state that during the Revolutionary War had more slaves than all the other colonies second only to South Carolina. Writing in *Transforming Anthropology* in 1998, Michael Blakey estimated that 10,000 to 20,000 Africans and African-Americans were buried between today's Chambers and Reade Streets, Broadway and Centre Streets (Blakey 1998, 53), a most unsettling number when we consider New York's sobriquet of 'The City That Never Sleeps' and our fear of the dead existing in an in-between place. Here, at the very center of New York, is that abyss that Justin D. Edwards and Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet identify as "a reminder of death" for while we may have forgotten or repressed the site, the abyss will inexorably "draw one (back) towards it, attracting one to peer down into the darkness" (Edwards and Monnet 2012, 9). The African burial ground epitomizes the permeable nature of the urban Gothic space through its eruption into the present from the past and the encroachment of death into life.

But how do these examples of terror in the very heart of the city coexist alongside with the Western cultural discourse that presents Broadway as a place to find fame and excitement? What is the nature of the psychic amnesia between the records that document lynchings of African American men on Broadway during the Civil War Draft Riots of 1863 and the stage productions thousands of people a year pay for to escape from reality? I suggest that these spaces and sites of convergence are examples of Wasson's description of Gothic cities as "sites of "ancient poison"" (Wasson 2013, 132) that are forever perpetrating and experiencing acts of "bad blood." As poison remains in the blood, the impulse towards terror becomes a marker in the city's genetic sequence that cannot be eradicated.

Gothic cityscapes are mirrors of their citizens' historical and contemporary psychologically divided states; they are, as Fred Botting has pointed out in relation to Gothic spaces, "a reconstruction of the past as the inverted, mirror image of the present (where) darkness allows the reason and virtue of the present a brighter reflection" (Botting 2001, 5). The Gothic metropolis, then, is where our public and repressed selves must grapple with each other. Foucault's theory of space allows for a framing of New York, as a city that has been perpetrator, witness and victim of terror, as both a heterogeneous and a heterotopic place. The metropolis complies with Foucault's

description of a heterogeneous space as one "in which we live…in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us" (Foucault 1996, 23). The unsettling use of the alliterative verbs "claws" and "gnaws" works to create a sense of inevitability about the destruction of the space, evoking the Gothic imagery of ruin and decay Alexandra Warwick recognizes as an essential feature of the Gothic city (Warwick 2009, 251). The iconic image of the burnt steel frame of 2 World Financial Center by Steve McCurry titled "Sunrise over Ground Zero" (McCurry 2001) acts as an unsettling confrontation between violent pasts and uncertain futures; the girders act to affirm the presence of what was *once* sure and, seemingly, indestructible, yet they hold up nothing, like a Gothic Emperor's Clothes. Additionally, the image's title contains within it a paradox of new and old through the notion of a beginning but at a site framed by absence.

New York also acts as an exemplar of Foucault's heterotopia, that place that is "outside of all places" (Foucault 1996, 24). The "strange heterotopia of the cemetery" (Foucault 1996, 25) acts as the model for Foucault's second principle of heterotopic space: a somewhere that is created out of the marginalization of designated space by shifting cultural norms. David Morris alerts us to "the potential terror of what lies outside of language" (Morris 1985, 313) when we are unable to overcome the impasse presented by the sublime; the cemetery is that space where we are wordless through the confrontation with our own finitude. George Templeton Strong, a New York diarist of the 19th century, foreshadowed the city's compulsion to bury in 1876, when he recorded the pace of the post-war building boom: "a new town has been built on top of the other and another excavated under it " (Templeton Strong 1952, 80). The African burial ground in the heart of the city, then, acts as a reminder of historical terror and a haunting foreshadowing of future loss for the city that may always be uncovering sites of terror thought to have been forever concealed. Indeed, during excavation works of the World Trade Center site in 2010, the frame of what was subsequently identified as an eighteenth century boat was unearthed. Archaeologists working for an environmental consulting firm hired to document artefacts discovered at Ground Zero stated that there were "pieces of shoes all over" the excavated site and hypothesized that the ship "would have traveled up and down the river bringing cargo and people from the city to areas up north and might have gone as far south as the Caribbean" (Handwerk 2011). A diorama at The African Burial Ground Museum of The Middle Passage journey is accompanied by a caption that explains "nearly 7500 ships entered America through New York between 1700 and 1774" (African Burial Ground Museum 2014). British slavery trading between the Caribbean, Africa, the east coast of America and the United Kingdom leaves a sinister stain on this vessel and reveals a further layer of haunting and sedimentary memories of terror to the Lower Manhattan landscape.

The continuing resonance of past terrors in New York can be further explored through an event that develops, as Wasson argues of the post-9/11 corpus of Gothic literature set in New York, a "strand…that build(s) the (terrorist) attack into a longer history of the city as a haunted site or spectral space" (Wasson 2013, 139-40). In 1911,

146 garment workers died in a blaze that ignited in the Asch Building in Greenwich Village- the site of the city's first Potter's Field, the burial place of the dead who are not claimed. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire galvanized American workers and unions in their determination to win safer working and workplace conditions and the eventual achievement of these goals and legislative change that the disaster precipitated was directly due to the horrific images and sounds of the day, witnessed by thousands. The accounts of young female workers jumping to their deaths from the upper stories of the Asch Building are eerily similar to those of individuals who recall seeing- and hearing- people jumping from the collapsing Twin Towers to escape the heat generated by airplane fuel and burning paper ninety years later.

The most well-known account of the fire was published in the *Milwaukee Journal* two days later and syndicated around the country. William Shepherd, a journalist in Washington Square at the time, watched as the garment workers appeared at windows of the building, unable to escape through doors that had been locked from the outside: "a living picture in each window-four screaming heads of girls waving their arms…Behind them I saw many screaming heads… They were all as alive and whole and sound as were we who stood on the sidewalk" (Shepherd 1911). The most disturbing section of Shepherd's account is the auditory memories he recalls of

> "a new sound--a more horrible sound than description can picture. It was the thud of a speeding, living body on a stone sidewalk. Thud-dead, thud-dead…Sixty-two thud-deads. I call them that, because the sound and the thought of death came to me each time, at the same instant" (Shepherd 1911).

Shepherd reports he "saw every feature of the tragedy visible from outside the building" (ibid). An account by a survivor of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire reveals the proximity of the dying to the living, the merging of the shadowy line between horror and luck. Rose Hauser, a teenager who worked on the ninth floor of the building, recalled that once she had made her way to street level, she was stopped from walking on to Washington Place by firefighters, due to the number of bodies falling from above. Once the surviving workers were escorted away from the building, William Shepherd noted "a body in burning clothes (that) dropped from the ninth floor ledge, (become) caught on a twisted iron hook protruding at the sixth floor. For a minute it hung there burning. Then it dropped to the sidewalk" (ibid).

The view, then, of workers jumping, some on fire, was not obstructed or distant, such as the view of the victims of the Twin Towers attacks for onlookers standing on Greenwich or Liberty Streets in Lower Manhattan. Indeed, there was an almost immediate circulation of photographs of the Triangle disaster, photographs that David Dunlap in his study of photojournalism and the fire has labelled "candidly brutal" (Dunlap 2011). These photographs, however, capture the irruption of the real, what Botting terms "violent realisation" (Botting 2008, 5), into the hypermediated space of the Gothic cityscape so that the artifice of simulation cannot be maintained, that the city is

not dehumanised at all, but rather there is the literal fragmentation of life. Many witnesses who escaped from the Towers describe the experience of seeing and hearing the victims of the attacks on the World Trade Center, employing similar imagery to Shepherd and Hauser. A consultant for the global financial firm Lehmann Brothers heard upon her escape from the North Tower "strange echoing sounds…Then I finally put the sounds together that I was hearing. It was actually the bodies hitting the ground that was making the terrible sound" ("9/11: The Reckoning," 2011). Echoing Shepherd's phrase, the New York City Assistant Chief of Emergency Medical Services described the "thud, thud, thud" (ibid) of bodies falling into the World Trade Center Plaza. This linguistic and aural echo from the past effectively collapses temporal boundaries that resurrect primal and very urban fears of fire and falling, Gothic motifs that reverberate throughout the canon; from the fire that destroys the convent in Lewis' *The Monk* to the literal demise of Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the conflagration that destroys the sacred and domestic subverts notions of regeneration and recalls the original cataclysm of the fall from Eden.

Some of the most memorable images of the morning of September 11 are of the crowds watching the Towers, their heads angled up and often a hand covering their mouths in fear and disbelief. A photo taken as the fire burned in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory presents as compositionally similar to those taken of onlookers in twenty-first century Manhattan. The photograph depicts a police officer in the middle foreground, looking up at the burning building, with three onlookers, one of whom also looks up at the fire. In the foreground, at least four bodies lie at the policeman's feet, almost on top of one another. In her study of the modern phenomena of the photograph and political violence, Susie Linfield contends that "September 11 was not only an unusual political event, but an unusual visual one (because) (t) here is little evidence of the dead…the overwhelming number of 9/11 photographs portray onlookers, those who escaped…and rescuers" (Linfield 2010, 253). Indeed, the image published on September 12th 2001 in the *New York Times* of the individual who became known as "The Falling Man" and other images, such as that of a severed hand published in the *New York Daily News* the day after the attacks, became impermissible due to their very graphic representation of the attacks' consequences. "The Falling Man" was not reprinted again until 2003, an erasure that corresponds with the refusal of the media and the Bush Administration to include those who jumped from the Towers into the 9/11 narrative of heroism, endurance and survival. The reality of the event was almost immediately erased by the rhetoric of the event. While the attacks on the World Trade Center have been commemorated in the North and South Pools and the 9/11 Memorial, marking a clear and presumably permanent boundary around the geographical site of the terror event, the terror of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire is marked only by two small plaques on the Brown Building, the new name for the Asch Building. This renaming, a bureaucratic attempt to mediocritise the horror that is the building's story, is quietly buried within the plaques that are barely noticeable amongst signs pointing to Washington Square and other tourist sites of interest. On this street corner of New York City, the ever present potential for terror that the Gothic city possesses waits on a temporal threshold,

working almost as a clock going in reverse, counting down until the next terror event will occur. David Morris articulates this idea more cogently when he identifies

> "the specifically Gothic vision of history in which the past interpenetrates the present time, as if events were never entirely the unique and unrepeated product of human choices but rather the replication of an unknown or buried pattern" (Morris 1985, 304).

I suggest that the pattern Morris identifies becomes visible in New York City in a sporadic manner, reflecting the failure to repress historical instances of subjection; to know and bury both *unconsciously* and *intentionally* manifests in a haunting, what Botting identifies as "the disturbing return of pasts upon present"' (Botting 2005, 1). New York City as a Gothic city, then, lives with the "constant, low murmur of stress" (Smithsimon 2011, 125) that historical events of terror continue to exercise upon both the populace and the physical landscape. The old national fears of the threat of duplicity from within and the inevitable return of individuals or groups, or their descendants, to enact revenge or redress for past sins were fears for the European colonisers that were inherited by the citizens of New York City over centuries.

Indeed, the terror of the unruly and the Other or Kristeva's abject, those who '"lie outside, beyond the set, and do(es) not seem to agree to the (master's) rules of the game" (Kristeva 1982, 2) of the national narrative, has been passed on to contemporary New York; the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) states that following the 2001 terrorist attacks, hundreds of immigrants in New York City who were found to have had no connection to the attacks were incarcerated under "an official "no bond policy" that actively opposed their release"(American Civil Liberties Union 2003). Furthermore, the freedom of movement for residents of Lower Manhattan was restricted by the NYPD and the National Guard and enforced by armed escorts (Smithsimon 2011, 125), while NYPD and FBI- staffed bridge and tunnel checkpoints remain indefinitely after the September 11 attacks (DeBlasio *et al.* 2002). John Updike's claim that the right to physical freedom is one of America's "prides" (Updike 2011, 29) is reduced to an urban myth, an excessive act of self-deception in the light of history. We need only to remember the incarceration of prisoners of war in City Hall Park or the locked workers in the Asch Building to recognise the historical continuum of forced confinement in the city.

Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet, commenting on the capacity for the Gothic to expose the concealed that lies behind, or beneath, the visible world or word, uses the literary figure of *paradiastole* to characterise the genre of American Gothic. In her study of the role of gender and slavery as cornerstones of the American Gothic, Monnet suggests it is this figure of speech, that reframes a vice as a virtue, and its persuasive effect which results in "the retelling of a narrative in a completely different moral light" (Monnet 2013, 10) that is an "even more important" (ibid) feature of the genre than that proposed by Eric Savoy in his analysis of American Gothic. Savoy regards "the gothic tendency in

American culture (a) s… the imperative to return, the return of what is unsuccessfully repressed" (Savoy 1998, 4). It is *both* these tendencies – to falsify and delay the revelation of a deceit- that are at work in the reactions of the Bush Administration from the outset of the War in Terror and in the characterisation I suggest of New York as a city that is both a victim to, and perpetrator of, terror.

Lower Manhattan is an "especially" (Carlson 2006, 413) traumatized space and trauma, through its effect of holding us in the grip of the terror of an event, works to leave us in a place of liminality; we continue to inhabit a past that insinuates itself into, and maintains its hold on, the present. This part of the city resonates with the accumulated layers of terror and violence that have settled over the area for nearly four centuries; from the Dutch settlement of Lower Manhattan in the early 1620s to the social and ecological consequences of Hurricane Sandy, the city of New York has experienced successive events throughout its history that have generated fear and suffering. Colonial and modern bureaucratic decisions, including massacres of the Iroquois people, especially during the conflict between the Dutch settlers and the native peoples of Lower Manhattan and the destruction of street-level memorials, ordered by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, to the missing that covered the streets of Lower Manhattan in the days following the September 11 attacks contribute to the contested nature of the city's space, where commerce, memory, life and death jostle for recognition as historical and contemporary aspects of urban life.

Indeed, recognizing the inescapable connection between the past and the present, Max Page presents the interplay of the metropolis' history and the experience of terror as almost familial, reminding us that "fear and New York are words that have often gone together"(Page 2001). The post- 9/11 city, "this new New York" as Page characterizes it, operates on a historical, cyclical continuum; he suggests the city has been "ferried back to an older, more visceral New York, where it was understood…that the city was at risk…on edge" (ibid). The new and the old New York as coexistent were officially recognized by The World Monuments Watch which listed Ground Zero as "site 101 in their register of 100 endangered sites around the globe" (Meskell 2002, 557) in its 2002 Monuments Watch List. That a modern space could be listed alongside the Valley of the Kings in Egypt and the Great Wall of China, places of archetypal Gothic motifs of crumbling antiquity and long dead dynasties, hints at the ephemeral nature of the city of New York itself and the regimes of the Bush father and son. This memorialization and codification of New York City as simultaneously lost and present is suggestive of Jo Frances Maddern and Peter Adey's point, in their study of spectrality and geography, which presents gothic cities as sites where "ghostly relations tangle up the string of temporal linearity… (and) (s)paces and times are folded" (Maddern and Adey 2008, 292). The World Monuments Watch use of the adjective "endangered" is worthy of interrogation through its evocation of extinction and liminality, of being on the edge of existence. Indeed, Alan Lloyd Smith suggests one of the foundational elements of the American Gothic genre, along with Puritanism, racial fears and a political rhetoric of freedom, is a conscious awareness of liminality; he suggests that

> "In the early years of the colonies and the young United States, the settlers were acutely conscious that they existed on the verge of a vast wilderness, a land of threat…where many lived in isolation or in small settlements with memories and sometimes real fears of Indian warfare'(ibid, 161).

Lloyd Smith's identification of the most fundamental of European colonial fears- violent resistance to oppression and retribution- is a spectre that continues to haunt the present through the terror event of 9/11 on a structure with violent and recent memories of its own attempted destruction in the failed terrorist attacks of 1993. New York is simultaneously both old and new, a site of trauma but one upon which new terrors seem to hold no connection to the memories of past horrors for the general American public. This amnesia that buries the city's terrifying past reveals a reluctance or inability to accept that it is the 21st century Gothic metropolis, a city where the memory of violence, incarceration and disenfranchisement, to borrow Alan Lloyd Smith's useful phrase, "wreaks havoc" (Lloyd Smith 2012, 169) with the validity of the historical narrative of New York City.

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Confinement and Consumption: Reflections on the Gothic in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853)

ABSTRACT

The Gothic both embodies the female experience in nineteenth century fiction, and provides a space for female authors to explore and articulate aspects of female subjectivity that are typically denied voice in patriarchal spaces. In such literature, authors expose the politics of gender and power to which women are subject. Confinement is a central concern for female Gothic authors of both canonical and contemporary texts: many utilize Gothic spaces, including the female body itself, as metaphors for broader structures of repression and imprisonment. Likewise, starvation is another central theme and has been used by female authors to express broader concerns regarding the often limited and miserable subjective life available to women in the nineteenth century and since. The protagonists of both Wuthering Heights *(Emily Brontë) and* Villette *(Charlotte Brontë) are subject to confinement and various forms of malnourishment, inviting an analysis of these two core aspects of female literary subjectivity. This paper explores the links between female confinement and consumption in* Wuthering Heights *and* Villette. *Female characters are confined physically, in spaces such as locked attics; within limiting social roles; and repressed both socially and emotionally. They are denied various forms of nourishment, from the literal to the intellectual and emotional, and are vulnerable to threats from both within and*

without, including voluntary and involuntary starvation, pregnancy ('confinement') and tuberculosis ('consumption'). Through analysis of confinement and consumption, and the myriad relationships between them, it becomes clear that confinement within Gothic spaces represses, wastes, and even destroys female characters.

> "[The Female Gothic] is essentially formless, except as a quest; it uses the traditional spatial symbolism of the ruined castle or an enclosed room to symbolise both the culture and the heroine" (Fleenor 1983, 13)

> "Food and eating are central to our subjectivity, or sense of self, and our experience of embodiment, or the ways that we live in and through our bodies, which itself is inextricably linked with subjectivity" (Lupton 1996, 1)

The realms of both popular and high literature may be viewed as patriarchal spaces, dominated by male assumptions regarding women, female characters and creative production itself (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 3-17). Gothic literature and literature by women share some important features: historically, both forms have been positioned outside the mainstream as marginalized and denigrated forms (Botting 1996, 19). Of course, this exclusion of female authors reflects the marginalization of women within broader society. For this and other reasons, the Gothic particularly suited female writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, providing an outlet for the expression of anxieties, criticism of wider social issues and boundaries, and the exploration of female experience, sexual oppression and sexual difference (Botting 1996, 1, 19; see also Hoeveler 1998, 4). These themes continue to resonate within contemporary Gothic literature and are consequently reflected in contemporary scholarship, much of which regards the genre as "a vehicle through which the interrogation and problematizing of mainstream versions of reality and so-called 'normal' values is made possible" (Wallace and Smith 2004, 6). As Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith discuss, many critics have interpreted the Female Gothic as "a politically subversive genre articulating women's dissatisfaction with patriarchal structures" (2009, 2).

Throughout the history of the genre, Gothic heroines have been under constant threat from villainous anti-heroes and usurpers. Female authors in particular have expanded upon this theme of threat from without by demonstrating the ways in which heroines may be confined and victimized by physical settings as well as physical figures (Nichols 1983, 187). More specifically, the Gothic genre allows female authors through fictional modes to represent social and psychological confinement in recognizable tropes such as the locked attic or stormy moors. Such spaces are utilized to reveal the dynamics of gender and power operating on female characters: "the vast imprisoning spaces that appear so regularly in the Gothic as castles, monasteries, and actual prisons can be read as metaphors for women's lives under patriarchy" (Ellis 2012, 458). Further,

as Donna Heiland highlights in her discussion of gender and the Gothic, we may read "domestic spaces as figures for the people who inhabit them" (2004, 115).

The Female Gothic itself has been interpreted as a coded expression of women's fears of entrapment, both within the domestic space and within the female body itself (Wallace and Smith 2009, 2; see also Hoeveler 1998, 5). In his seminal discussion of the Gothic, Fred Botting points out that the domestic space may become "a prison rather than a refuge, a restricted space confined by a system of values that privileges the male and active world beyond the family" (1996, 58). Thus we can view the attic and other domestic spaces as inherently confining in and of themselves, and also as metaphors for broader systems of confinement (Wallace 2009, 29). According to Wallace, imprisonment is one of several key metaphors that are played out repeatedly at the heart of both the Female Gothic and feminist criticism more broadly, offering ways of challenging established hegemonies and discussing or theorizing alternative truths that are difficult to express in other ways (ibid: 26-27, 38). Such metaphors hold important clues to the female literary Gothic experience, and to the lived experience of being female.

From this positioning of confinement or imprisonment as a key Gothic metaphor, I now turn to the metaphors of consumption and starvation. Much as physical confinement may be read as a coded expression of various social, psychological and symbolic states in addition to discourses of power and gender, I suggest that consumption holds a similar array of literal and symbolic meanings. Further, as I will demonstrate in my analysis of Victorian literature, confinement and consumption are intimately linked as core metaphoric expressions of female experience and suffering.

Lorna Piatti-Farnell points out that "consumption intersects with all aspects of human existence: the material functions of food range from simple organic nourishment – characterized by feelings of hunger – to symbolic agent in the development of sociocultural and nationalistic identities" (2013, 90). Food and associated behaviours are of particular significance to women, who have both been aligned with the physical body and its processes in opposition to male rationalism and associated with food through socially assigned roles as preparers of food. Therefore, "food—ceasing to be a simple physiological necessity—is invested with great symbolic ambivalence in women's lives" (Piatti-Farnell 2011b, 10; see also Sceats 2004, 1, 126).

Food and consumption thus carry far greater significance than the merely literal, inviting detailed analysis on symbolic and sociocultural levels. Texts such as Sarah Sceats' *Food, Consumption and the Body in Contemporary Women's Fiction* (2004) and Lorna Piatti-Farnell's *Food and Culture in Contemporary American Fiction* (2011) indicate a growing critical interest in discourses of food, eating and consumption in literature, particularly texts authored by women. In her analysis of Gothic themes and consumption in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, Piatti-Farnell draws attention to the particular significance of food and eating within the Gothic. Food is a liminal substance; its

incorporation into the body "implies the symbolic breaking of boundaries between the "inside" and the "outside" world" (Piatti-Farnell 2007, 66; see also Lupton 1996, 16-17). Various critics have highlighted the particular significance of anxieties regarding the boundaries of the self for female Gothic authors (see e.g. DeLamotte 1990, 14, 151). Consumption is thus "a source of great ambivalence: it forever threatens contamination and bodily impurity, but is necessary for survival and is the source of great pleasure and contentment" (Lupton 1996, 3).

In *The Bell Jar*, Esther's vomiting sickness may be interpreted as "an impossible attempt to come to terms with the boundaries of her own corporeality, and consequently, the establishment of her own subjectivity" (Piatti-Farnell 2007, 74), or as a rejection of the superficial social world (ibid: 79): an attempt to exert control. This physical act of vomiting, much like eating itself, holds an array of symbolic meanings. As Piatti-Farnell urges, we must resist a purely physiological understanding of Esther's illness (ibid: 73). Gothic images of consumption, in this and other Plath works, "simultaneously suggest that female oppression involves a complex array of social, libidinal and economic determinants" (Piatti-Farnell 2011a, 198-99).

Such a contemporary approach to analysis of the connections between consumption, oppression and boundaries can help to illuminate these themes in canonical Gothic literature. Anxieties regarding the boundaries of the self have been linked to anxieties regarding the boundaries imposed upon female subjectivity by patriarchal culture (DeLamotte 1990, 151). It is with these connections in mind that I will explore and connect the core themes of confinement and consumption, with the aim of revealing the undeniable relationships between these two aspects of female subjectivity as represented in Victorian Gothic fiction.

In order to examine ways in which female authors have used Gothic confinement and discourses of consumption to represent various threats to and states of female subjectivity, I focus my analysis on two significant Victorian Gothic novels written by women: Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, published in 1847, and Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, published in 1853. In so doing, I offer a contemporary interpretation of Gothic elements of these texts, and the discourses of consumption and confinement that operate within.

My analysis of the texts will reveal ways in which Gothic spaces control and thus confine female characters, and examine the ways in which confinement by and within such spaces affects female consumption: what women consume and how they are consumed. Patriarchal spaces encroach upon and limit female subjectivity, resulting in wasting. Both voluntarily and involuntarily, women cease eating; women are in fact starved of physical, emotional and spiritual nourishment. Further, women are themselves consumed by their own repressed desires, by men, and by society more generally. The Gothic, then, becomes that which both embodies the female experience in

nineteenth century fiction, and opens up a space for Victorian female authors to expose the politics of confinement and consumption.

Through a brief discussion of the 'attic' trope, I now introduce some of the ways in which physical Gothic spaces are used by the Brontës to explore confinement and consumption as core elements of female subjectivity within the Victorian era. The examples I discuss here will further illustrate some of the connections between these elements and provide a context for the greater exploration of these themes within the paper.

The Attic Apace as Embodiment of Confinement and Starvation

The Gothic attic features prominently in each novel, in scenes that highlight discourses of consumption, confinement and control. In *Villette*, the teacher M. Paul locks the young Lucy in the dark and dusty garret, without any food, to practise her lines for the school play. After many hours, M. Paul takes her down to the kitchen and forces upon her more food than she can eat (C. Brontë 2004, 153): in so doing, he exerts absolute control over what may enter her mouth. This scene represents a microcosm of nineteenth-century female subjectivity in which women are expected to perform whatever roles men dictate; they are confined and controlled, even down to what they put in their mouths. Power performs a central role in discourses of consumption: "food and its relation to bodies is fundamentally about power" (Probyn 2000, 7). Anna K. Silver, for example, casts eating in this scene as a sign of male privilege, and starvation as a sign of female powerlessness (2004, 102). The scene, though it initially seems incongruous given more positive interactions between the two characters, functions as a warning regarding Lucy's later relationship with M. Paul. Though they love one another, he inevitably seeks to control her identity, shaping it through what he allows her to consume. The attic serves as a metaphor for Lucy's existence at the Pensionnat, trapped within its walls and starved for emotional nourishment. The attic also represents a deeper sense that she is imprisoned within her own inescapably female body (ibid: 103).

While Lucy's confinement is imposed upon her, it is the young Catherine herself who turns the key in *Wuthering Heights*. Following an altercation, Catherine locks herself in the attic of the house that belongs to her husband Edgar. When Heathcliff, Catherine's adopted brother and beloved, returns, Edgar demands that she choose between the two men, prompting her to flee to the attic where she refuses food for three days (E. Brontë 1995, 118). Trapped within their feud, and unable to realize her own desires, she locks herself away from them; the attic both symbolizes her confinement by male power dynamics and relationships, and offers temporary, albeit limited, escape from these forces. Catherine's self-confinement and her self-starvation (ibid: 121) are intimately linked; she locks herself away to escape the world that causes her anguish, and her food refusal constitutes a further attempt to escape the world through death. If "by taking food into the body, we take in the world" (Lupton 1996, 16), rejection of food

constitutes a rejection of, or severing of connection to that world (Piatti-Farnell 2011b, 9). As Heiland explains, Catherine's self-confinement and starvation may be viewed as an attempt to gain control: "if she cannot control [the two men]…, she can at least control herself" (2004, 118-19). Her actions may thus be seen as a desperate rebellion, prompted by her confinement within her marriage, within her husband's household and within the limited subjectivity permitted by dominant patriarchal forces. Further, her food restriction symbolizes her emotional and psychic starvation; Catherine's self-denial mimics denial of her desires and fulfillment imposed by the men who control her life.

As I have illustrated through a brief analysis of these two scenes, Emily and Charlotte Brontë each use Gothic architecture to explore male control over female subjectivity. The attic-space is a patriarchal space, governed by male superiority and power: the attic-space is also highly Gothic, embodying discourses of control, imprisonment and fear. In each of the scenes outlined above, the attic-space is associated with restricted consumption of food. During these periods of confinement, female protagonists cease eating, both voluntarily and involuntarily. Confinement within physical spaces, as well as broader social structures, therefore appears causally linked with limited consumption, or limited nourishment: I suggest that starvation is a consequence of confinement and limitation. Further, in much the same way that confinement serves as a metaphor for repression and limitation, fasting or starvation may also represent broader experiences of repression and denial. As I have shown, the careful decoding of the various symbolic and literal significances of such scenes illuminates some of the connections between Gothic confinement and discourses of consumption.

Social Confinement: Female Roles and Patriarchal Prescription

Patriarchal, or "masculine" (Hoeveler 1998, 4), spaces may be formed by male-governed architecture such as houses and places of worship; institutions such as the church or marriage; male-prescribed social roles such as spinster, lover, wife and mother; and agents of the patriarchal order. Such spaces are often desolate and dangerous for women, evoking the terror of Gothic themes. The female body itself constitutes a limited and limiting space, governed by external forces and even subject to invasion. As I discuss later, the female body also forms a liminal space, situated halfway between life and death: a space that is susceptible to invasion and rupture from within.

In the attic episodes discussed earlier, physical confinement is used by the Brontës to represent social confinement. Nineteenth century women were presented with only a limited array of options; these roles "define the appropriate spheres of action for woman as well as providing the limits of her world" (Russ 1983, 62). Both Lucy and Catherine are confined within various social roles, and this confinement is in turn reflected in their limited intake of food.

In the gallery, M. Paul instructs Lucy to look upon a series of paintings depicting the lives of women. Lucy's disdainful description of these as "grim and gray… cold… insincere, ill-humoured, bloodless, brainless nonentities" (C. Brontë 2004, 226) stands as a criticism of the limited and lifeless roles prescribed to women, and to Lucy by M. Paul himself. Lucy's repeated conviction "that Fate was of stone" (ibid: 177) speaks to the rigid limitations of female subjectivity. Lucy is not only an orphan, but also both unattractive and highly intelligent and thus likely to remain a spinster (ibid: 234), a social non-entity (Nichols 1983, 194).

Lucy's role as carer for Miss Marchmont, a spinster herself, has consequences for her food intake; "tame and still by habit, disciplined by destiny, I demanded no walks in the fresh air; my appetite needed no more than the tiny morsels served for the invalid" (C. Brontë 2004, 42). By the time her employer dies, Lucy is "thin, haggard, and hollow-eyed" (ibid: 48). Similarly, caring for the 'cretin' deprives Lucy of "the power and inclination to swallow a meal" (ibid: 174): she fasts for over a week. Polly, Lucy's young friend and charge, exhibits similar restriction as a result of feminine role-playing; in her subservience to Graham, she often feeds him, while taking nothing for herself (ibid: 27-28). In conforming to social roles such as carer and lover, women deny themselves physical nourishment.

As a teacher within Madame Beck's school, Lucy is subject to restriction and confinement in the form of Madame Beck's 'surveillance' (ibid: 80-81). As Lucy points out, she "could have comprised the duties of a first minister and a superintendent of police" (ibid: 82); Madame Beck, wielding masculine power (ibid: 86), is an agent of society and thus represents patriarchal space herself. M. Paul, Lucy's eventual lover, also places her under surveillance (ibid: 380). Further, he places restrictions upon her intellectual consumption in the form of directing and controlling her education (ibid: 385, 390). According to him, an intelligent woman is an unfortunate accident, "wanted neither as wife nor worker" (ibid: 393). An intelligent woman can find no acceptable role within patriarchal society. Finally, M. Paul attempts to control Lucy's religious beliefs by converting Lucy from Protestantism to his own Catholicism (ibid: 457).

In the world of *Villette*, women should not only be beautiful, minimally educated, subservient to men and desirable as wives: they should also conform to the religious choices of men in their lives. Though M. Paul is arguably a better match for Lucy than Graham (the doctor, who is oblivious to her affections), M. Paul's controlling influence on Lucy's life is perhaps demonstrated most clearly through her admission that his three years of absence "were the happiest years of my life" (ibid: 543). Through attempting to control Lucy's physical, intellectual and spiritual consumption, M. Paul confines and erodes her individuality. Here, a common thread emerges: limiting social roles prescribed to female characters in *Villette* result in reduced consumption on all fronts: of food, and also emotional and spiritual sustenance. Common threads such as these within Gothic fiction suggest that "the same wound, the same psychic trauma is being fingered, not simply once but repeatedly" (Hoeveler 1998, 25). In this case, the

'wound' represented by Charlotte Brontë is the severe, multi-faceted malnourishment caused by incarceration within the feminine social role.

Like Lucy, Catherine feels the restrictions of the conventional nineteenth century feminine role. She is "too mischievous and wayward for a favourite" child (E. Brontë 1995, 38); she and her adopted brother and soul-mate Heathcliff promise to "grow up rude as savages" (ibid: 46). Catherine constitutes a pronounced departure from the mould of morally impeccable Gothic heroines (Conger 1983, 92-103). Significantly, Catherine's misbehaviour was often punished with enforced fasting, and in situations where Heathcliff, a figure situated outside the accepted order, is punished Catherine becomes so upset that she cannot eat (E. Brontë 1995, 46, 59). It seems clear that non-conformity to patriarchal codes of behaviour results in both enforced and voluntarily restricted sustenance for Catherine.

Despite her initial disdain for Thrushcross Grange (ibid: 48), the home of Edgar Linton, Catherine eventually enters that world. In accordance with the hegemonic laws of property and inheritance, her brother Hindley wishes her to ally the family with the Lintons (ibid: 89). Later, despite her ill health, Edgar and his housekeeper Nelly seem most concerned that Catherine produce an heir (ibid: 135). Catherine is subordinated to the need of the Lintons' for continuity of their line (Homans 1983, 275), as the concerns of patriarchal lineage once again take precedence over female wellbeing and desire.

As Wallace explains, the house has historically been used as a metaphor for the legal institutions of marriage and patrilineal inheritance (2009, 29). Accordingly, the attic in which Catherine locks herself is a metaphor for the social structures that imprison and limit her. Like Cavendish and Wollstonecraft before her, Brontë uses the metaphor of the attic, and the greater house, to criticize the subordinate and limited position of women within marriage and society more broadly (ibid: 28-32). For Emily Brontë, unlike earlier Gothic authors, marriage does not resolve conflict; rather, it takes the place of the period of fearful physical confinement generally found in the middle of the traditional Gothic novel (Conger 1983, 92). This subversive re-ordering of Gothic tropes draws attention to aspects of female subjectivity unwritten by patriarchy and allows readers to consider alternative female narratives.

Catherine's decision to marry Edgar confines her within the role of middle class wife and expectant mother, which further restricts her behaviour and her social relations. Catherine's declaration during the episode in the attic demonstrates her social confinement and alienation:

> "But, supposing at twelve years old, I had been wrenched from the Heights, and every early association, and my all in all, as Heathcliff was at that time, and had been converted at a stroke into Mrs Linton, the lady of Thrushcross Grange, and the wife of a stranger; an exile, and outcast, thenceforth, from what had been my world" (E. Brontë 1995, 125).

Catherine elaborates further:

> "Oh, I'm burning! I wish I were out of doors – I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy, and free… and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them!... I'm sure I should be myself were I once among the heather on those hills…" (ibid: 125-26).

A little later, she reiterates this longing:

> "…the thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all. I'm tired, tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there; not seeing dimly through tears, and yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart; but really with it, and in it" (ibid: 161-62).

This is a clear articulation of Catherine's experience of confinement at the Grange: in this marriage, in this house, and in this attic, she is alienated from the moors and home of her childhood. *Wuthering Heights* may be read as a statement about girlhood, and "the adult woman's tragic yearning to return to it" (Moers 1977, 106); Catherine is trapped within her adult existence. She is confined, both physically and socially, and the connections between confinement and her starvation emerge strongly. Denied her girlhood, her freedom, and the object of her desire, Catherine is denied happiness and fulfilment and, in response, denies herself nourishment. Food restriction in this context may be interpreted as rebellion against confining social structures: an attempt to gain control through self-destruction (Heiland 2004, 118-19). We may read it as Brontë's criticism of the limited female subjectivity permitted by her society, in which women lead a starved existence. Self-starvation, along with masochism and suicide, belongs to a cluster of psychological symptoms that are almost classically associated with "female powerlessness and rage" (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 284). Catherine's self-starvation may therefore be read as the expression of her rage regarding her confined and limited life, and her ultimate lack of power and control over her own life and happiness.

Female Gothic texts often attempted to answer and thus counter male writings of women, most notably the Eve of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Fleenor 1983, 8). Consequently, we may position *Wuthering Heights* as a corrective, revisionist rewriting of *Paradise Lost*, as suggested by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979, 252-55). They cast Catherine's move from the Heights to the Grange as a fall, from 'hell' into 'heaven', or from nature into culture (ibid: 255, 260). In order to become an angel, she leaves behind her monstrous childhood. However, the wild and free 'hell' of Wuthering Heights is really Catherine's heaven; in this place she radiates being and wields power. Correspondingly, the docile cultured and repressive 'heaven' of Thrushcross Grange is really her 'hell' (ibid: 260, 266). Gilbert and Gubar cast Catherine's defection to the Grange as her consumption of "the poisonous cooked food of culture" (ibid: 303). Sadly,

by the time she closes her mouth on this particular morsel, it is too late: its poison will inevitably kill her.

Before considering the crucial event of Catherine's death, it is necessary to examine the role that illness played in her life. Throughout her life, Catherine suffers intermittently from tuberculosis, or 'consumption'; this wasting disease contributes to her weakened state prior to and during her pregnancy. As described by Katherine Byrne in her analysis of the relationship between tuberculosis and the Victorian literary imagination, tuberculosis was associated with the nineteenth-century ideal woman: a symbol of purity, virtue and domesticity (2011, 95-96; see also Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 24). The incapacitated, suffering woman is removed from worldliness, sin and lustful corporeality. Invalidism was thus an embodiment of ideal female characteristics: purity, passivity, and self-sacrifice (Silver 2004, 44-45). The ideal woman, Woolf's 'angel in the house' (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 17-20), was frail, devoted, submissive, powerless and thereby beautiful (ibid: 25). Within a society that prizes illness as a marker of ideal femininity, "the physical manifestation of sickness becomes associated with the ideal of feminine beauty" (Byrne 2011, 99-100). The ideal woman was an angel fallen halfway toward death: "the spiritualized Victorian woman who, having died to her own desires, her own self, her own life, leads a posthumous existence in her own lifetime" (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 25).

Tuberculosis was also associated with excessive emotions, such as a broken heart; Byrne suggests that heroines such as Catherine suffer from tuberculosis as an "outward expression of their inward suffering" (2011, 29). Moreover, in choosing to become an "angel in the house", perhaps Catherine left herself vulnerable to this 'angel's sickness'? Perhaps her illness represents a recapitulation to nineteenth century social values and expectations regarding women? Like Plath a century later, perhaps the real terror for Brontë was "not the monster, the goblin, or the freak, but the living corpse" (Moers 1977, 110). Catherine's stunted existence as a broken-hearted invalid wife is little better than that of a corpse. The invalid is a liminal figure, one situated neither in life nor in death, but somewhere in between. The pale, wasted consumptive woman is therefore spectral; as Wallace explains, spectrality is often used to figure repression (2009, 35, 38). Catherine is denied physical, social and emotional freedom; this repression slowly pulls her away from a full living existence and toward a pale, shadowy and limited existence. Catherine's liminal existence in this state thus draws attention to the destructive effects of imprisonment within male-prescribed roles and within patriarchal-governed spaces.

Tuberculosis is only one of several physical factors affecting Catherine at the time of her death. Significantly, Catherine dies in childbirth (E. Brontë 1995, 166); motherhood, in fact, kills her. Poignantly, these final stages of pregnancy are known as 'confinement'. Pregnancy may be thus interpreted as imprisonment or even invasion by male forces. Pregnancy is not only a state of imprisonment; it represents another manifestation of Catherine's liminal subjectivity. On the most base level, the unborn

baby distends the space of the mother's body; the mother's body-space is subjected to a violent pressure from within, a pressure that both stretches and suggests rupture. As Margaret Homans points out in her discussion of Gothic pregnancy, the boundary between woman and unborn child is "quite literally permeable, psychically and physically" (1983, 262). Pregnancy is a liminal state in which the mother is not only herself, but is occupied by a second being: she is no longer solely and wholly a woman and neither is she yet a mother. Due to these invasive and disruptive qualities, the unborn baby represents a threat to the self of the mother. For Catherine, it represents the total loss of her identity: death (ibid: 262, 276).

Catherine's eventual death is therefore rich with meaning. It seems clear that the compounded effects of pregnancy; impending motherhood; physical and social confinement; emotional suffering; tuberculosis and starvation end her life. In light of this confluence of circumstances, as Gilbert and Gubar have pointed out, her death is ultimately a demonstration of the damage caused by the feminine role prescribed by patriarchy (1979, 286). Perhaps most significantly, Catherine's illness and death are manifestations of a "terrible dis-ease with patriarchy that causes women… to try to escape their imprisonment in roles and houses by running, by starving themselves, and finally by dying" (ibid: 280).

Emotional Confinement: Repression and Emotional Starvation

In addition to physical and social confinement, Lucy and Catherine suffer as a result of emotional confinement, in the form of repression and the denial of desires. For Lucy, it "was necessary to knock [any longing] on the head" (C. Brontë 2004, 121); having internalised social norms, she firmly believes that she does not deserve the expression or fulfilment of her desires, and thus represses them. As Hélène Cixous points out, to desire requires space; as long as the social order denies space to alternative (in this case, female) desires, these desires will remain unknowable (Fuery 1995, 81). Patriarchal social space is antithetical to the expression and thus fulfilment of female desire.

The social restrictions placed upon Catherine have grave consequences for her relationship with Heathcliff. According to her, "it would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, now; so he shall never know how I love him"; Catherine understands that their union would be frowned upon and that they would be beggars (E. Brontë 1995, 81), and consequently marries Edgar, denying her desires in the process. This marks the repression of her true feelings for Heathcliff, and also of the self that he knew, the wild and hardy young girl. Upon Heathcliff's return following three years of absence, Catherine is so overwhelmed that she is unable to eat or drink (ibid: 82); the severity of her repression becomes strikingly clear when the object thereof returns. Her repression and distress, themselves a consequence of social pressure, manifest in the now "all-pervasive motif of self-starvation" (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 282).

Charlotte Brontë contemplates the link between female fasting and emotional fulfilment more directly; Lucy narrates her unfulfilled desires as hunger, "a craving cry I could not satisfy" (C. Brontë 2004, 121). She likens letters and other tokens of affection to food (ibid: 266-67, 281), and begins to waste away when correspondence with loved ones ceases (ibid: 296-7). The characters that conspire to keep Lucy and M. Paul apart (ibid: 463, 491, 508), thereby deepening her emotional isolation, are either male or possess masculine characteristics (ibid: 86, 432), which reinforces our conception of patriarchal forces as limiting forces. Lucy's isolation from M. Paul results in further wasting; as with Catherine, repressed desires and the emotional confinement enforced by patriarchal spaces inevitably render her unable to eat.

Consideration of this link between emotional repression and starvation suggests a deeper connection between voice and consumption. Both eating and speaking are physically and symbolically connected through the mouth (Piatti-Farnell 2011b, 10), which represents consumption and control, need, voice and language (Lupton 1996, 18). In literature, it is thus "no wonder that eating and speaking should continually cross over in metaphorical exchange" (Eagleton 1998, 207). If we conceive of emotional repression as silence or lack of voice, then a direct link between silence and starvation emerges. Because eating and speaking are linked via the mouth, if the mouth is stifled—if women are unable to express their desires—then they may also find themselves unable to eat. I suggest that malnourishment and self-imposed starvation are used by the Brontës to figure emotional repression in the form of denial of voice.

As they interact with and are encroached upon by hostile spaces, these starving women waste away; they perform various roles, behaviours and emotions, but are constantly denied those things that could provide fulfillment and ultimately happiness. As she waits for a letter from Graham, Lucy likens herself to an animal pacing in a cage waiting to be fed (C Brontë 2004, 297); she draws a direct link between starvation and confinement within limiting spaces and structures. Lucy points out that the similarity between lack of food and solitary confinement is generally not understood or acknowledged by society (ibid: 303). Lack of nourishment in a most general sense threatens herself and Catherine, yet the structure of this threat lies unrecognized by male-governed society.

Critics such as Anna K. Silver have suggested that for Charlotte Brontë, "hunger is always painful" (Silver 2004, 81); the loss or lack of appetite therefore represents a critique of women's social roles, particularly the repression of female desire and voice. In *Villette*, Brontë's emphasis on the suffering of hunger and repression implies that women do not naturally have small appetites; she challenges nineteenth century conceptions of the ideal woman as frail, wasted and lacking in corporeal appetites. Rather, her depiction of hunger and associated suffering calls attention to those things that were denied to women: affection and voice. Lucy's somewhat dismissive and satirical descriptions of Polly, the incorporeal, passive, doll-like girl who both wins Graham's heart and hardly ever eats (C. Brontë 2004, 10, 14, 28), further demonstrate

Brontë's criticism of the 'angel in the house' (Silver 2004, 110). Restrictions, both internal and external, voluntary and involuntary, placed on the food consumed by these female characters represent the restrictions placed on female identity and subjective experience. Literal starvation therefore represents the states of repression and denial in which women are forced to exist.

We can view the Gothic as a quest-form; however, the heroine of the female Gothic, according to Juliann Fleenor, strives for "a false ideal created by a patriarchal society" (1983, 11). This quest for a false ideal consumes women: they deny themselves that which would give them happiness, and consequently waste away. The pursuit of the ideal female, the docile lover, wife and mother, even the consumptive beauty, leads both Catherine and Lucy into situations where they are denied control, happiness, emotional expression and fulfillment and, ultimately, nourishment of various kinds.

In *Gothic and Gender: An Introduction*, Donna Heiland points out that "the 'meaning' of a gothic novel… will in important ways remain constant over time, and yet that 'meaning' will change too" (2004, 186). As this paper has shown, contemporary criticism regarding discourses of consumption and the Gothic genre itself generates new perspectives on aspects of female subjectivity represented in these canonical Gothic texts. A contemporary analytic approach to the themes addressed in this paper reveals that politics of confinement and consumption have continued to echo throughout contemporary Gothic literature and criticism and also feminist discourse.

This analysis of interactions between female characters and Gothic spaces has illuminated the various ways in which such spaces, from the attic to the institution of marriage to men themselves, confine women. In turn, confinement causes limited consumption of food, as well as stunted emotional, intellectual and spiritual nourishment. The repression caused by physical, social and emotional confinement leads to wasting and destruction of the characters. Situated somewhere between life and death, female characters are desperately limited and miserable: their suffering is expressed as literal starvation. The use and subversion of recognizably Gothic tropes such as the locked attic and marriage allows female authors to express these 'unspeakable' aspects of female subjectivity for which patriarchy has no name (Wallace 2009, 38; see also Fleenor 1983, 11). In so doing, they expose the politics of confinement and consumption that lie at the heart of nineteenth century female literary experience. The false quest for the ideal feminine role and imprisonment within patriarchal spaces can only limit the subjectivity and experiences of these women; patriarchal spaces are desolate spaces, bereft of nourishment and offering only denial, repression and starvation.

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Describing the Indescribable: Negative Space and the Intangible Body in "The Great God Pan"

ABSTRACT

Arthur Machen wrote some of the most terror-inducing Gothic tales of the late eighteen-nineties. Though his work has something of a cult following, it has largely been forgotten. Not only is it a shame to relegate such compelling works to the margins, but to ignore his particular aesthetic of 'cosmic terror' is to miss out on the complex and compelling tropes of the weird fiction sub-genre. The horrific body is a particular trope that is put in service of 'cosmic terror' in Machen's works and it is the very nature of the body to be both seen and unseen – effectively embodying liminality – that drives the horror. Jean François Lyotard's discussion about vision coupled with Kelly Hurley's investigation of the body in fin de siecle Gothic fiction create a framework that reveals the cosmic horror of the body in the terms of negative space. Negative space is an area of aesthetics that aligns with the sublime in that it makes ideas tangible through the negation of space, simply put; vision limits and suggests what is seen and what might be seen. In Machen's work, the body is presented as a space that contains unpresentable elements such as memory or emotion within it, which situate the body in the terms of negative space. The source of Machen's 'cosmic horror' is that the unseen is ultimately unstable, which is a state that is horrifying. The Great God Pan is perhaps Machen's most well-known Gothic work and a striking example of the way in which negative space is employed to affect the sublime; likewise, negative space works to reveal the relationship between the liminal and the sublime and offers an aesthetic that produces the most cosmic horror of all: the unknowable and indescribable body.

H P Lovecraft counts Arthur Machen as one of the great writers of weird fiction. According to Lovecraft, few writers could hope to attain the artistic pitch of Machen's "cosmic fear" (2012, 81). This 'cosmic fear,' delineated by Lovecraft as "hidden horror and brooding fright" (Lovecraft 2012, 81), which he aligns with "fear of the unknown" as the "oldest and strongest emotion of mankind" (Lovecraft 2012, 25) is recognizable in Machen's most enduring work, "The Great God Pan" (1890-94), which offers 'cosmic fear' in the guise of the sublime and unknowable. The world is observable, but only to the degree that the senses allow; in fact, there is much more to the world that is unknowable and unpresentable except through suggestion, symbolism and allusion than vision would have us believe. Each of these devices offer a way to perceive the world and are a means to access and attempt to present that which is 'seen' or sensed. This article will examine Machen's "The Great God Pan" for the way in which the body is presented as a space in-and-of-itself that necessarily suggests a negative space, which, through the limit of vision, is a source of 'cosmic horror.' In many ways this work is an experiment and is intended to open discussion and thought rather than offer a definitive account of Machen's cosmic horror, which has already been attempted in Machen scholarship ranging from the general, such as Fred Botting's *Gothic* (1999) and David Punter and Glennis Byron's *The Gothic* (2004) to the specific, such as Susan J. Navarette's extensive chapter in *The Shape of Fear* (1998, 178-201) and Kelly Hurley's thorough examination of a variety of Machen's works in *The Gothic Body* (2004).

"The Great God Pan" opens with an emphasis on vision, its sets the scene for a narrative that relies on the limitations of vision where 'seeing' involves an acknowledgement of both positive and negative space. The way the world is perceived through senses such as vision is one of the only ways we can understand it. So that when we are confronted with something more than "mere vision" (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 4) we are at a loss to describe it "because a field of perception has limits, but these limits are also beyond reach" (Lyotard 1993, 16). Such is the case in "The Great God Pan" where reader and character alike are confronted with the aspect of negative space, which is the space surrounding an observable object yet that is not part of the immediate perceptual field accessible through vision. The object and its space are absent yet present at the same time, which is a paradox that Machen uses to convey the sublime and produce cosmic horror through "fear of the unknown and unpresentable" (Beville 2012, 118). It is the very intangibility of the body and its potential specialization that distances the rational mind from it and encourages the mind to conceive of the body as a space that is potentially ungovernable.

The focus of this paradox is arguably on the body as a site of negative space in the same way that Slavoj Žižek discusses the sublime object as a "paradox of an object which, in the very field of representation, provides a view, in a negative way of the dimension of what is unpresentable" and by doing so invites the "experience of the impossibility of the thing" (1998, 203). The body is a sublime object surrounded by positive and negative space, which is accessible to the self and limited from the self

through vision. In Machen's works the spatial body is obscured. It is liminal and sublime in its ability to be tangible and intangible. The body is able to be described yet is indescribable. Machen offers within the text as well as demonstrates through style and technique that suggestion is a powerful Gothic device, more powerful in fact than describing everything in detail since it resists absolutes and in so doing offers the event as resistant to or in excess of language's ability to describe it (Harter 1996, 2; Hurley 2004, 13). In part this is because Machen's works contribute to the *fin de siècle* Gothic trend of disrupting and denying that there is an objectively knowable 'real' that can be located and described (Beville 2012, 116; Harter 1996, 8; Hogle 2001, 156-157). This deferral of description is most evident in the treatment of vision and the body in "The Great God Pan." Vision opens the world and closes it, which is especially the case in relation to the body, where what one sees as 'filled space' is only a fraction of the picture. Even the refuse of the monstrous and abject body is a partial vision (Kristeva 1982, 3-4), but it is a vision that still highlights the void and the lack of control over the space of the body.

"The Great God Pan" demonstrates this partial view of the word in its very structure. It is made of eight sections, or fragments, which contribute to the instability and obscurity of fragmentation so central to the Gothic mode (Mishra 1994, 83-86). The first section details a standard trope of *fin de siècle* horror and scientific fiction in which "a mad scientist…betrays basic human values" (Evans 2009, 14). Dr Raymond's experiment on a girl named Mary is designed to manipulate an area of the brain that controls sense-perception thus opening the neural pathways to perceive the hidden or spiritual realm. In Machen's oeuvre the spiritual realm is not dimensional. It is part of the real, but a part that is not readily able to be perceived – thus it fulfills the requirement of negative space as something both sensed and present but not seen or necessarily visible (Lyotard 1993, 17).

Clarke is brought in to witness the experiment and both he and Dr Raymond conclude that Mary saw the Great God Pan before succumbing to catatonia (it is not made clear exactly what '[seeing] the Great God Pan' entails) (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 13). We then move to section two, which details Clarke's personal interests and establishes him as a man with a great deal of experience in the 'unknown' and unknowable while also trying to present himself to his acquaintances as a logical and rational man. Clarke's private and social selves fulfill the dualistic trope of *fin de siècle* Gothic fiction before subverting it throughout the narrative in the multivalent and insubstantial 'selves' of Helen Vaughan (Greenslade in Dryden 2003, 14; Botting 1999, 12). Clarke's compilation of a text called "Memoirs to Prove the Existence of the Devil"(Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 16) mirrors the compilation of what we come to recognize as a case file for the adventures of Helen Vaughan wherein the several permutations of her 'self' become manifest while rendering her body obscure, portraying it as a mere vessel.

Helen Vaughan is the daughter of Mary who supposedly became pregnant with Helen as a result of seeing the God Pan. The suggestion is that Mary was inseminated by the vision of Pan, which is only established through Clarke's having witnessed and speculated on the experiment and having seen Mary 'see Pan' Again, the negative space, especially as it relates to vision, is pertinent. The narrative progresses and we meet Villiers and Austin whose examinations into Helen Vaughan and her activities eventually lead to her discovery and, with the help of Clarke, to her demise. The narrative is very convoluted and cannot be done justice within summary. It is useful only to note that my analysis will focus on three characters: Mary, Crashaw and Helen. Crashaw is not a main character, but Villiers' observation of him is germane to a discussion about the way in which negative space can help us understand the terror of the liminal body.

The idea of negative space as it relates to vision and the spatial body is something that Jean-François Lyotard and Kelly Hurley have noted in their respective works *The Inhuman* and *The Gothic Body*. Negative space relies on vision as the medium that opens and limits our ability to conceive of and understand space. But vision is flawed in its ability to 'see' space. There is always a negative space, just at the edges. There have been many accounts of "The Great God Pan" that approach the body as a source of horror, but these accounts typically focus on the body as a symbol or on the grotesque and abject body. Susan Navarette, in line with Kelly Hurley, suggests that the body in "The Great God Pan" is horrific in the way that it is shown to be no more than intelligent primal substance, or protoplasm (Navarette 1998, 182). According to Navarette the body portrayed in "The Great God Pan" is "*the* sublimely abject substance" (Navarette 1998, 190. Italics original). But it is abject because it is so close to the physical makeup of the animal kingdom with its "atavistic character" (Navarette 1998, 190) not because it is in-and-of-itself an unknown or unknowable space.

Alternatively, albeit similarly, Hurley examines the grotesque body in *The Great God Pan* as one that excites a visceral response of horror, the organic processes of the body alienate us in its ruination. The body threatens the stability of identity and its dependence on a finite and material physicality (Hurley 2004, 12-14). Hurley's reading is close in kind to the one offered here, yet there is a little more to the story of the body in Machen's works that goes beyond the organic and delves into the metaphysical cosmic horror later adapted and adopted by H P Lovecraft. Cosmic horror arises not just in the organic or deformed body but in the body as a space that is limited by the senses, which are only accessible through that space. Vision is the most important of these senses in terms of the spatial body as it is limited to the body and the body is limited to it. The negative space, the unseen and unseeable body, is a site of potential invasion and is equally an unstable 'house' for the phenomenon Machen calls "life".

In this negative space a multitude of indescribable objects and events takes place such that vision itself only ever offers a liminal space, something that is there but not

there – and those two things, 'there and not-there,' make up spatiality. In Lyotard's terms,

> While a visual object is presenting one side to the eye, there are always other sides, still unseen. A direct, focused vision is always surrounded by a curved area where visibility is held in reserve yet isn't absent (1993, 16).

What Lyotard is suggesting is that the act of seeing always contains within it that which is not seen, or indeed, not seeable. This configuration of unseen space is akin to the spatial body that is both seen and unseeable. The body is always an admixture of the visible and the not-visible. Absence or the void is made possible in the way that the spatial body cannot be seen in its entirety, yet the body cannot as such be empty. In the moment it is voided it must again be filled so that the body's negative space is only tangible in terms of presence despite not being visible.

Lyotard's configuration of vision suggests that all spaces are negative and those negative spaces, once realized, are often marked with the attempt to fill them, since,

> …when vision actually sees, it can't ever forget that there's always more to be seen once the object is 'identified'. Perceptual 'recognition' never satisfies the logical demand for complete description (Lyotard 1993, 17).

In this way the 'absent' is manifestly present, but its presence is tinged with speculation. The specular is made spectacular by being obscured from vision and as Kelly Hurley notes, the spectacle of the human body is central to "The Great God Pan" (Hurley 2004, 13-14). The spatial body is imbued with cosmic possibility. It is a potentially absent space in the way that it cannot be totally seen, but that potential is always seen to be filled: it can never remain void.

Machen's earlier writing experiment, "The Inmost Light," which eventually led to "The Great God Pan," offers a more simplified vision of the spatial body. Mrs Black, the Helen-like character, has her soul, or 'life,' removed by her husband and transplanted into an opal. At the very moment that the soul is removed the space is filled with a demonic entity whose presence alters Mrs Black's body such that her autopsy revealed "[t]he brain of a devil" (Machen, "The Inmost Light" 1923, 116). The spatial-body is responsive to its invisible inhabitant(s) and is moulded to its needs rather than the visible having any control over its negative space. The negative space of the body is dominant and the unseeable governs what is seeable.

This idea is extremely applicable to the body as a space that is marked by the concept of "humanness" and is thought to be stable. In weird fiction the term 'human' is made suspect such that,

> [t]he space cleared out by the evacuation of this term [human] is both empty and full: it is a space where the human body, becoming not itself, becomes a non-signifier, and yet where the possibilities for monstrous embodiments multiply (Hurley 2004, 31).

What can be seen of the body necessarily demarcates what cannot be seen and the two are encompassed together such that the body, even the 'human' body is a negative space. We can further think about the way that we contain memories or feelings that are part of the body that are often described but that are all too often indescribable, resulting in poetic effusions that serve only to evidence the very impossibility of offering an explanation. These phenomena are similar to how Machen uses the term "life" in his works. "Life" seems to be the word or concept he uses to suggest that the very substance that makes us human is housed within a vessel, the spatial body. The substance, "life," can at any time give way to another substance equally abstract or indeed be vacated entirely.

So, the body is a space and in Hurley's terms the body is made abject when it "begins to clear out a space on which the ego will be constructed and from which an "I" will emerge […] the attempt to empty out a space upon which to erect a self is an impossible one…"(Hurley 2004, 43). The space of the body is never empty, but in our inability to confront or describe its fullness, encompassing both positive and negative space, we become abject, filling the void with notions of selfhood and the ego, it is that liminal space where "[a]bjection then wavers between the *fading away* of all meaning and all humanity … and the *ecstasy* of an ego" that embraces its sublimation (Kristeva 1982, 11-18. Italics original). In weird fiction, however, this space is never as such void. The negative space of the spatial body is always filled, some*thing* is seen to exist within that space and even though that 'thing' might be voided there is always another 'thing' to fill it. This idea that the body is prime real estate, especially for malevolent entities, is the driving force of Machen's cosmic horror. The horror is not so much that there are malevolent entities but that the spatial body, in its unseeability, is able to be filled or, indeed, voided. The body is 'only' a space over which we have little-to-no control.

When we are confronted with our inability to see the body in its fullness we are faced with a "cosmic horror" – the space is intangible and potentially unmanageable. In this sublime encounter with infinite possibility we envision the body as a vessel that might welcome a plethora of undesirable phenomena. Such is the case in Machen's tales. The body cannot as such be emptied without being again filled; for example, Villiers sees his friend Crashaw leaving the company of Helen Vaughan and observes that: "the man's outward form remained, but all hell was within it […]. [Crashaw] saw nothing that you or I can see" (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 67). In Lyotard's terms this is an event marked by seeing the unseeable where both positive space and negative space merge – even though there is a merger of space, the cosmic horror of intangibility remains. Intangibility, even in the event of fullness, is too much to comprehend through vision. Vision can only suggest what is happening and attempt to

realign negative space into a positive description, thus the act of seeing is also marked with the negation of visibility. We are necessarily limited to our own vision; Villiers is limited to his vision yet describes what he sees in terms that suggest he too has access to what Crashaw sees. The cosmic horror is extended then to 'other bodies' as well as implied within our own. At once we recognize the unknowable space of the alien other and the equally inaccessible and intangible space of the alien self.

At the same time that Crashaw's vision is observed to be fixed on another world his body is said to be filled with 'all hell.' Not only does the negative space of the body invite speculation and contamination but the limit of vision in relation to the spatial body offers a world of possibility. Villiers' observations about Crashaw suggest that the body is a site of sensual indeterminacy: what is sensed from and about the body is suspect and indefinable. By not being able to see the space in full, the space that is seeable, the 'house,' is made unstable. It is both sublime and Gothic in the way that it objectively presents us with the indescribable. In a phrase that could easily fit with Lyotard's examination of vision, Dr Matheson, a medical witness to Helen's demise, reveals that, in the "negation of light; objects [might be] presented to [the] eyes" (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 81) that appear as shadows, that hint at a vastly indescribable quality to space, especially bodily space. Like the description, or lack thereof, in Villiers' witnessing of Crashaw's inward and outward turmoil, our senses open us up to the world and to ourselves as well as limit us to them. We are our own negative space: we are at the same time an open and closed space that can 'see' but that cannot see our own space, which in turn makes it a negative space full of potential and possibility.

When Dr Raymond conducts his experiment on Mary's brain he brings in Clarke as a witness. Clarke's observations mediate the reader's access and interpretation of the events so that when Clarke tells us that "the soul seemed struggling and shuddering within the house of flesh" (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 13), we imagine the 'house of flesh' and its inner turmoil as somehow 'seeable'. Vision in this early section is excessive such that Mary's "seeing of Pan," which is confirmed by Clarke and Raymond (who merely 'see' Mary-seeing-Pan), draws attention to the "unseeable" and spatial aspect of the body. Whatever happened with Mary, it was internal, yet it is clear that 'something' happened, something that, while quite indescribable, is nevertheless described. This concern about the body as a space and its unseeability is heightened when Dr Raymond reveals at the end: "I broke open the door of the house of life without knowing or caring what might pass forth or enter in" (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 87). Mary's body is here explicitly described as an edifice or as a structure over which the phenomenon called 'life' has little or no control.

Akin to the inhabitable body illustrated in "The Inmost Light," Mary's body is described in spatial and architectural terms. Unlike the often psychological architectural metaphors that permeate Gothic fiction these descriptions are concrete (Botting 1999, 2; Grimes 2011, 90). The body is a house and its entirety contains both positive and

negative space loosely termed 'life.' What differs between "The Inmost Light" and "The Great God Pan" is that Dr Raymond does not suggest that he vacated a life force but that there was already a void that might be filled by external and unseeable forces, he broke open the edifice of Mary's body unsure if he might let something fill the space or indeed if he would let loose something already occupying that space. At once we have the impression that there is always a void, an unseeable space, contained within the body that, by virtue of its unseeable and intangible nature, might be invaded or occupied by abstract entities. The very essence of evil, in Mary's and Helen's cases, seems to house itself within them. Of course this vacancy is most readily aligned with the female body which does, on occasion, house something that is internal and external. The negative space of the female body is depicted as terrifying and this is made manifest in Mary's resulting pregnancy. Despite the cosmic nature of Mary's meeting with Pan, her pregnancy still lasts nine months. She is still restricted by the processes of the human body, processes that, until recently, were beyond the realm of human control.

If we think about the way that nineteenth-century Gothic fiction often presents the outside world as invading the domestic and private space of the home, or how that space might harbour secrets unknown even to its inhabitants we also see how the body is able to be 'invaded' or might contain more than was expected (Botting 1999, 38). The analogy of domestic space with body-space makes it possible to understand what Machen is doing in "The Great God Pan." Machen's bodies are the architecture for the supernatural world, they are the domestic spaces for the numinous and are "the quintessential site of Gothic horrors" (Navarette 1998, 190).

Helen Vaughan is the antagonist of the story yet we never completely see her. She is never described because she cannot be described except perhaps indirectly as an amalgamation of beauty and horror, because "she was at once the most beautiful woman and the most repulsive they had ever set eyes on" (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 36). At the point where one might expect a full account, the point where they piece it together and find a portrait of Helen who looks remarkably similar to Mary and every bit the same as Mrs Beaumont and Mrs Herbert, which are just two of the known personas Helen used in London, all we get is that it was like Mary's face but with something else that is not quite described lurking behind her eyes. Despite "the smile on her full lips" (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 44-45), which is the most concrete description of her physical form we get in the whole work, Clarke is driven to consider the words of his friend, Dr Phillips in relation to his own encounter with Helen, which is that she produced "the most vivid presentment of evil…ever seen" (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 44). There is a sense of enlightenment through vision as Clarke recognizes Mary's face in Helen's portrait and, as Clarke remembers his view of Mary at the experiment, we are reminded that something remains obscured that neither the reader nor the characters can see all there is to Helen. At crucial moments when a description might ensue there is an interruption, which creates negative space within the narrative as well as for Helen's characterization.

In the descriptions that are offered is the pressing recognition that, as Michael Callon and John Law note, "presence and absence … are *not* opposed to each other" such that "presence can be absence; and the absent present," which, as they rightly suggest, means that "we should be putting the oppositions implied in such pairs behind us" (Callon and Law 2004, 3; Derrida 2005, 369). Recognizing that absence and presence are not diametrically opposite, least of all in terms of the body, and drawing on the horror of such a realization Machen defers any attempt at description until the very end when we are given access to Helen's final disintegration by "some internal force" (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 81), which is described graphically. At first "the thick firm structure of the human body" progresses through beastliness and the division and wavering from sex to sex, "a horrible and unspeakable shape, neither man nor beast" that had been "changed into human form" (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 82). Helen's body then proceeds to devolve into a "substance like jelly" all the while "the principle of life…always remained, while the outward form changed" (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 81-82). The 'principle of life,' or 'life' in general, in Machen's oeuvre is itself abstract and indefinable. We are never able to access an absolute concept so 'life' becomes as indeterminate as any of the substances that might invade or alter the spatial body. The spatial body is made as impermanent as any space subject to the ungovernable and cosmic laws of the universe.

Through a multitude of forms and formlessness Helen's body torturously decomposes, but the torture is multiplied for the viewer (Botting 2008, 141-143) who must witness the disintegration of all that was contained within the house of flesh and that was supposed to have been "permanent as adamant" (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 81). This visibly impermeable structure, the spatial body, obscures an intangible and abstract quality such that, "when the house of life is thus thrown open, there may enter in that for which we have no name, the human flesh may become the veil of a horror one dare not express" (Machen, "The Great God Pan" 1923, 87). A lot of accounts of "The Great God Pan" suggest that the horror is in the disintegrating body. Susan Navarette, for instance, conducts a compelling analysis of "The Great God Pan" based on evolutionary theory and ideas about protoplasm. Navarette suggests that the horror of "The Great God Pan" is in the return to primal matter or protoplasm (1998, 178-201). While compelling, such accounts dismiss or ignore the way the body itself is presented as a space. Much can be said for socio-cultural analysis but there is something just as compelling happening at the very surface of "The Great God Pan." While this thesis can continue to support such a claim it also suggests that there is something more operating to generate such cosmic horror. The decaying body was always only temporary and always only housed even more temporary and indescribable phenomena, the stuff of 'life' it is transient and the horror momentary while the horror of the living but uncontrolled body remains pressing. In this sense it is not the fear of death or decay that, in Kristeva's terms (1982, 3), marks the abject, but the fear that we lack control over our own processes and that any control we do have can be forfeit. To extend the former analogy, the body is a temporary residence and the "self" or "life" cannot be certain of its tenancy.

"The Great God Pan" shows us the way in which Gothic and weird fiction in particular locates the body as a space that is limited by vision. Vision limits space by offering only positive objects, but it always implies a negative space. All space is made up of what vision distinguishes as positive or negative objects. By not being imaginable in its entirety the body becomes a site of terror wherein negative space might be void, voided and subsequently filled with malign forces. Additionally, the spatial body suggests an impermanence and lack of control over the 'edifice' that temporarily houses "life". The phenomenon "life" is easily and readily vacated or replaced by other, equally obscure, phenomena such as "evil". This article has suggested that the source of Machen's cosmic horror is in the way the body is depicted as a space. As a space it is subject to the limitations of vision and thus to negative space. The body's negative space is a source of anxiety since it cannot be seen and, as such, it cannot be governed by the senses. The fear of invasion, especially of the kind of invasion that might happen unbeknownst to the original 'life' inhabiting the body, is surely a source of horror and one that bears further consideration.

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Closing the Circle: Presencing Gothic Space Through Performance

ABSTRACT

Within contemporary thought supernatural knowledge is both everywhere; on stage, in film and television, in books, visual art, urban legend and folklore, and nowhere in strict rationalist terms. Most of us are exposed to occult practice, not through "respectable" research, scholarship or tutelage but through story and media. If we know how to sit séance, or conduct a black mass or provoke the dead it is likely those scripts come to us through the heightened realities of fiction. The fictiveness of these scripts, however, seems to have no effect on their potential to produce supernatural effect and anxiety. Performances of séance, Ouija, conjuring, legend tripping and ghost tourism straddle the territory between representation and embodiment. Known as 'ostensive play' to scholars of urban legends these actions, whether ritualized or intuitive, form the backbone of an ex-textual process in which the supernatural threatens to overflow the narrative and infect reality. While many of these behaviours take their model from older traditions, or totemic texts, the frivolous, dubious, eccentric, fraudulent, superstitious or otherwise unrespectable and unsanctioned aspects of occult cultures which also impact, inform and infiltrate ghost stories and urban legend. Just as the performance of the occult within text reveals a gothic world, so does the real world performance of the performance of the occult draw the real world within the circle of the gothic – recreating it, at least temporarily, as a place where the dead may speak.

According to the website www.ghostwalks.com the use of an Ouija board ought to be governed by "the Big 3 Rules of Ouija": "1. BE SERIOUS BECAUSE IT'S NOT A GAME […] 2. ALWAYS SAY GOODBYE AT THE END […] 3. NEVER USE THE OUIJA BOARD IN YOUR OWN HOME". Similar advice is replicated across the internet, in ghost hunting guides and collections of "true life" ghost stories. Despite these poe-faced prohibitions Ouija is, of course, a game; one patented, marketed and mass produced by Parker Brothers in the late nineteenth-century and peaking in popularity in the mid-twentieth. How then has the Ouija board transformed from a parlour frivolity into a locus of anxiety fostered not only by folklore and urban legend but fed by literary and cinematic tradition? One suggestion, and that generally favoured by its more serious practitioners, is that despite the frivolous intention of its designers the Ouija board is, however accidentally, a genuine occult tool. This suggestion of course rests in an understanding of occult and supernatural practice as relating to objective, rather than merely social or cultural, truth. It is not against supernatural logic to suggest it can be stumbled on accidentally. In Marcel Mauss's 1902 *A General Theory of Magic* we find the supernatural abiding in gestures that are not specifically seen as magical to the uninitiated. Mauss tells us "if folklorists had not informed us that they were, in fact, rites, we should be inclined to consider them as everyday gestures, entirely lacking in special character" (Mauss 2001, 55). Even the heartlands of "Western" scientific-rationalist culture are replete with pseudo-magical practice and iconography as Donald Holly and Casey Cordy remind us in the conclusion of their article "What's in a Coin?":

> while we are quick to acknowledge magic in other societies, we tend to attribute the same in our own society – rabbit's feet; lucky numbers; four-leaf clovers; things old and new, borrowed and blue – to mere amusement. But what is magic if not a wish made with the toss of a coin into standing water – or over the shoulder in the direction of a vampire's gravestone? (Holly and Cordy 2007, 350).

Claiming Ouija, séance-sitting and so on as magical, however, does not really resolve the peculiar binarism of the act. At once frivolous and serious, playful and dangerous the ritualistic enactment of necromancy in Western culture, often by children and adolescents, seems irretrievably bound up in the pageantry of play-acting and the lush excesses of gothic, horror and ghost tales. If indeed, Ouija is a serious and seriously occult business, then why is it so *silly*, drenched in velvet, ringed with black candles and redolent of histrionic excess? The answer lies somewhere in the liminal status of the supernatural within contemporary thought being both everywhere; on stage, in film and television, in books, visual art, urban legend and folklore, and nowhere in strict rationalist terms. Most of us are exposed to occult practice, not through "respectable" research, scholarship or tutelage but through story and media. If we know how to sit seance, or conduct a black mass or provoke the dead it is likely those scripts come to us through the heightened realities of fiction. The gothic quality of these fictional texts are revealed and defined by the presence of these performances (efficacious or not). When these fictional performances are "restaged" by real actors in real spaces the gothic element follows. This paper tracks paranormal performance through its real-world sites

showing how the occult penetrates and redefines a performer and audience's understanding of space drawing the compass of the gothic around the theatre, the sitting room, or almost any location – recreating it, at least for the duration of the performance, as a place where the dead may speak or devils walk.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, when it seemed that the dead could not stay mum, spiritualist mediums took to the stage. There before a ticketed public they would channel the dead, who would obligingly rap on walls and tables, levitate objects, and play musical instruments depending on the talents of the medium, and presumably the ghosts. The theatre of seance did not go unnoticed even at the time, as Simone Natale records in "The Medium on the Stage": "seances were not only meant as moments of religious and scientific inquiry, but also as a brilliant amusement where theatrical effects embellished an exciting shared experience" (Natale 2011, 240). As a simultaneous occult and populist "theatrical" effort "spiritualists often acknowledged that performances of mediums could include some acting, at least to give some more 'colour' to these manifestations" (ibid, 247). While spiritualism maintains an uneasy relationship with entertainment the 1940s and 50s spawned a variant of the spectacle where "religious and scientific inquiry" was done away with all together.[1] "Midnight ghost shows" discussed at length by Beth A. Kattelman in "Magic, Monsters and Movies" occurred on movie stages across America and "featured illusions and effects borrowed from seances, including table-tipping, spirit-cabinet routines, and the production of ghostly apparitions" and "showcased monsters from popular horror films and featured horrific illusions such as decapitations, immolations, and buzz-saw effects" (Kattelman 2010, 23).

The difference between the midnight ghost show and the spiritualist seance is both miniscule and immense. From a mundane perspective both produced the same effects, likely with the same or similar mechanics before eager crowds. One however purported to be, and was experienced as, supernatural and the other as an entertaining, but ultimately philosophically harmless entertainment. The difference lies in the reception of the audience and the status claimed for the performance, not in the gestures, actions and phenomena created. Unlike conventional theatre-going, mediumship redefined the space of the stage. The world drawn by the medium expands outwards and implicates its audience: "although the denying of an overtly fictional situation was customary in drama, in the seance space this question involved much more than a suspension of disbelief. The involvement of a sitter [or audience] in the ritual and, ultimately, the meaning of the seance spectacle itself relied on this claim of authenticity" (Natale 2011, 252).

The divide between the 'authentic' performances of Spiritualism and the amusements merely skinned in the aesthetics of occult horror would seem clear. One acknowledges its own fiction where the other denies it. Once appropriated by the gothic however, the distinction becomes negligible. The scavenging of "Midnight ghost

[1] I am thinking here of modern efforts like *Crossing Over with John Edward*.

shows" is continued by gothic textual productions which similarly poach the seance and its accoutrements, alongside a wealth of folkloric and imagined diablerie. The gothic does not only take and twist the aesthetics of these practices but also its expansive, suspended reality. Beneath the gothic gaze occult iconography becomes (potentially) inseparable from occult practices and effects.[2] This blurring exists not only in gothic texts, but has a history within the theatre itself.

Theatres are superstitious places. They play host to occult masques, stage-magic and re-enactments of witchcraft, sorcery and devilry. Theatre itself existed in the historical thought of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe on a "continuum that included diabolical illusion"(Butterworth 2008, 713). *Macbeth* has long been ill-favoured, associated with bad-luck and taboo utterances. The name itself is unspeakable and actors have refused to use prop-swords featured in productions of *Macbeth* in other plays right up to the current day. In addition to its supernatural trimmings of ghosts, prophecies and witches the play is identified by Marjorie Garber in *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers* as "continually, even obsessively, concerned with taboo, with things that should not be heard, and things that should not be seen, boundaries that should not be crossed but are" (Garber 2010, 121): concerned, in essence, with the same material that informs the ghost story and horror tale. While only representational, the Gothicised reality created on stage ceases to be contained: threatening its performers as "the boundary between what is inside the play and what is outside it is continually transgressed" (ibid, 122). A dramatic realisation of this transgression between inside and outside is related by Andrew Sofer in "How to Do Things with Demons". A sixteenth century performance of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus,* a play concerning a pact with a devil, incantation, and sorcery was disrupted as panic broke out when "one devil too many" was seen to join those assembled on stage. According to Andrew Sofer:

> In plays such as *Doctor Faustus,* conjuring models a performative speech act that threatens to blur the distinction between theatre and magic. Mirroring the ontological ambiguity of performance itself, conjuring poises on the knife-edge between representing (*mimesis*) and doing (*kinesis)* (Sofer 2009, 2).

An extra demon was able to join those on stage as it had become a ritual space. Whether intentional or not, the representational gestures, costuming and props embodied the same meanings as they *represented*. Just as Faust drew a circle in his study and called for devils to emerge, the actor drew a circle on stage and called for devils to emerge. Watching either places the audience into a gothic space precisely because they are experiencing the theatre (or the theatre-as-study) as a place where devils may emerge.

The overflow that accompanies gothic performance and iconography is given shape by Martin Heidegger and his reading of the magic of fetishism. According to

[2] Some hesitation is required here. Gothic texts are not always supernatural. Nor, in the case of supernatural gothic texts are all performances and occult practices 'genuine'. The *potential* however is a hallmark of the gothic.

Heidegger, fetishism is based on the inability to abstract the sign: "the sign is still completely absorbed in the being of what is indicated so that a sign as such cannot be detached at all" (Heidegger 1998, 76). In this case, the act of signing the supernatural cannot be separated from embodying it. Just as the recitation of taboo is itself tabooed, the signs of supernatural performance constitute a kinetic fetish in which "the sign has not yet become free from that for which it is a sign" (Ibid). Reading occult performance in a fetishistic way removes it from the logic of *intention*. A performance need not be intentionally supernatural in order to contain the kinetic fetish and, as such, cause supernatural effect. When a supernatural performance is undertaken then the audience necessarily hesitates between a suspension of disbelief, as is proper for dramatic entertainment, and a suspension of *reality* as the performance, through the logic of the fetish, raises the possibility that something may in fact happen. In this way, the occult performances of *Doctor Faustus* and *Macbeth* redefine the space of the stage. It becomes gothic not by being designated as a ritual space as in Spiritualism, but by the bleed between the representational and the real. This hybridized space is distinctly gothic.

A gothic space is necessarily unreal. Or rather, gothic space is produced by the interaction between real and imaginary spaces. The gothic is not naturally emergent but always already filtered through fictional texts: the follies, crumbling castles and desolate moors we may recognise as quintessentially gothic originate in the gothic "canon" rather than reality and are made digestibly visual through film and theatrical staging. As such, it is disingenuous to speak of essentially gothic landscapes. While the moors, castles and follies et al., of the canon have their exemplars and models in reality the "gothic" of their effect is a function of their presence within fiction and their relationship to narratives of passion, madness, imprisonment and so on. A gothic landscape is, therefore, not gothic by virtue of its visual impact alone but rather by its cuing of gothic ambience and narrative trace.[3] The gothic space which is realised through performance can be considered a projection of gothic fiction:

> "Projecting a world" seems an entirely appropriate phrase for describing the role of literature, and a great many literary works have undoubtedly functioned as imaginary maps, diagrams and constellations, and the like. As a means of understanding the world, literature takes the data of life and organizes it according to this or that plan, which can then aid readers in comprehending and navigating a portion of their own world (Tally Jr 2011, 42).

In this sense, the gothic can be mapped on to real world environments via correspondences between fictive examples and the real world. When a group gathers around an Ouija board, and its members place their hands on the planchette they are "navigating a portion of their own world" by following a cultural script which places the dead not only close at hand, but side-by-side with the vengeful dead and the

[3] This goes someway to explaining the enormous diversity of gothic iconography. While the classic tropes of traditional European gothic are cited, the gothic of course encompasses a variety of terrains, landscapes and regional variants which do not share visual signifiers but a similarity of affect.

demonic. Whether begun in earnest or as a game, a session with an Ouija board suggests the possibility of haunting and raises the question, if not the belief, in the continued presence of the dead and devilish. When a person plays at necromancy through Ouija or seance sitting they are presencing a gothic reality not by claiming the gothic as a true vision of reality but by responding to their reality *as if* it were gothic. This reading of presence is in-line with Kinsella's in *Legend Tripping Online* where presence "encapsulates the reflexive generation, reception, and evaluation of individual and group experiences within any environment" (Kinsella 2011, 41).

Dedicated spaces of gothic affect (as opposed to the temporary space of the stage) are often deliberately artificial – gothic requiring not genuine historicity but only an appearance of history. Emma McEvoy's "Dennis Sever's House" signals this superficial artificiality as part of any attempt to realise the gothic within reality. Of Horace Walpole's property she writes: "Strawberry Hill invited its visitors to wander around and further and further in, looking at objects from the past that were used and owned, and bore witness to real, if sometimes forgotten events, as well as those objects that were deliberately re-fashioned or misnamed or even created by Walpole" (McEvoy 2011, 188). Far from detracting from the building's gothic effect this blending of genuine artefact and kitschy reproduction is in many ways exemplary of the gothic spirit. Just as Walpole counterfeited a historical provenance for *The Castle of Otranto* as a discovered manuscript, gothic amusements plumb history for "shocks, horrors and fairground rides" (Ibid 190) in order to construct "a series of miniature Gothic narratives – mostly concerned with torture and victimisation" (Ibid 190-191) rather than to serve and preserve local heritage. While many of these amusements exist in the same "safe space" of the midnight ghost show, still others exist in the same suspended space of occult theatricality. What these entertainments share is a fixation with the narrative engagement of the audience:

> Such attractions, whether they be ghost walks, prison museums, murder mystery weekends, or dramatized theatre tours, are characterized by their "interactive" character, the sense of overkill in the assault from all sides, and their insistence on creating narratives which are, by their nature, incomplete without the entrance of the spectator/consumer into the fictional world (Ibid 187).

A suspension of everyday reality transforms space into gothic space. The spectator/consumer does not *enter* the fictional world, rather the world around them is presenced as gothic by the simultaneous movement in to and out of the narrative. The site is fictional to the extent that the spectator is conscious of their involvement with narrative as entertainment or play, however at the same time, these fictions "call up" genuine gothic potential through fetish. The occult fetish, however, is not restricted solely to performative sites like theatres, or dedicated, constructed narrative environments like Strawberry Hill or more recent gothic amusements.

Both ghost tourism ventures and legend tripping bring the suspension described above into real world spaces. Legend trippers "outside of any institutionally sanctioned sphere" visit locations of relevance to local legend. These "may be sites of past tragedies, such as murders, otherworldly events, like appearances of strange objects in the sky, or even locations with intrinsic magical abilities, such as graveyards where gravestones are said to return if moved or stolen" (Kinsella 2011, 28). Once there trippers proceed to interact with the legend in ritualistic ways, such as throwing stones at houses, parking at the site of accidents, calling on and deliberately provoking supernatural forces to appear or assault the tripper. Legend trips then are ritualistic enactments of the scripts absorbed from narratives of supernatural encounter: "folklorists must acknowledge that traditional narratives exist not simply as verbal texts to be collected, transcribed and archived. They are also maps for action, often violent action" (Ellis 1989, 218). Despite following these scripts legend trippers cannot be described as true believers. Legend tripping rests less on full commitment to the existence of the supernatural than on the knife-edge between belief and disbelief. Many of the acts undertaken have, according to the legends they mimic, dire consequences. As Kinsella notes: "all legend-trips open with the transmission of accounts of past happenings that usually appear as caveats *against t*ravelling to a site or against performing a ritual" (Kinsella 2011, 28)[emphasis mine]. As such, doubt must be a prerequisite on behalf of trippers while at the same time the pleasure taken from chancing the existence of supernatural forces must rely to some extent on the possibility, however remote, of those forces actually existing. Kinsella defines this interaction within performance:

> Legend-tripping has less to do with belief in the objective truth status of the legend and more to do with the construction of meaning during and after the legend-trip. We cannot say that all legend-trippers believe their actions will summon the supernatural, but we may say that many legend-trippers perform belief to this effect (Ibid 45).

While ghost tours are comparatively staid affairs, only rarely integrating vandalism into proceedings, they involve a similar, if more passive, suspension. Ghost tourism, like other forms of thanato-tourism, visits sites of historical importance whose significance is coloured by the matter of the gothic – by madness, infanticide, imprisonment and so on. These tours occur in preserved historical sites, such as prisons, museums and asylums as well as in mixed use urban and suburban environments. Conducted by a professional tour guide; ghost tours combine historical fact with both contemporary and historical ghost stories. Often the events of previous tours are included as subject matter. While less consciously ritualistic than the legend trippers, ghost tourists and ghost tour guides still engage in all manner of performative behavior. In his 2010 examination of American ghost tourism, '"Am I Going to See a Ghost Tonight?": Gettysburg Ghost Tours and the Performance of Belief", Robert C. Thompson circles the question of belief and performance. He argues that: "the complexity of the ghost tour stems from the fact that tour guides perform ghosts as real or potentially real, that is to

say a veritifiable facet of the physical world"[sic](Thompson 2010, 80). Within the context of the tour, ghost stories are presented as a complement to "traditional" history. Despite this there is no expectation that the audience commit to belief or disbelief in the paranormal:

> The fact that tourists hope to encounter a ghost does not necessarily suggest that they are inclined to believe in ghosts. […] Even though the audience is inclined to doubt, their desire to have a paranormal encounter indicates that the closer they come to believing that encounter possible, the better they will enjoy the tour (Ibid).

According to Thompson, the most effective way to maintain this space between doubt and belief is to offer the tour guide as a "surrogate believer" (Ibid 83). While the guide must offer reliable belief behaviour: "ghost tour guides need not believe in ghosts in order to give an effective performance. A persuasive cynic might just as easily con the audience into believing what she or he believes" (Ibid).

Belief itself is an immaterial and ambiguous concept. It cannot be proven, or communicated objectively. The correspondences and relevancies of Heidegger's philosophies and fetishism do not directly account for this kind of ambiguity being more concerned with the essential nature of things than their misapprehension or misrepresentation. To theorise belief within performance Ludwig Wittgenstein and his theories surrounding private language and the language game are worth visiting. The language game of belief constitutes the claims, words and gestures that bespeak belief. The *game* in this sense extends beyond verbal claim into both the conscious and unconscious behaviours of a person demonstrating, or disavowing belief. This performance need not be mindful, as Wittgenstein writes in *Philosophical Investigations*: "when I think in language, there aren't 'meanings' going through my mind in addition to the verbal expressions: the language is itself the vehicle of thought" (Wittgenstein 1968, 107e). To extend this, the witness or potential witness of supernatural encounters need not think through the meaning of their reactions – they may react *as if* there were a ghost or haunting without consciously parsing or resolving the existence of that ghost.

Belief can be said to inhabit the same territory within language that Wittgenstein assigns to pain. The communication of the concept of belief, like the concept of pain, cannot be rendered in purely abstract terms. Primarily this is because no language, according to Wittgenstein, can articulate private experience:

> Could we also imagine a language in which a person could write down or give vocal expression to his inner experiences – his feelings, moods, and the rest – for his private use? ------Well, can't we do so in our ordinary language?--- But that is not what I mean. The individual words of this language are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations. So another person cannot understand the language (Wittgenstein 1968, 88e-89e).

In relation to pain specifically Anthony Kenny outlines Wittgenstein's further argument in *Wittgenstein*:

> We can have a pain without ever saying or showing that we do; and on the other hand we can say that we have a pain without really having one; the only connection between pain and the expression of pain is that they sometimes coincide. Pain and its expression seem no more essentially connected than redness and sweetness: sometimes what is red is sweet, and sometimes not
> [...]
> the relation of pain to pain-behaviour is not the same as the relation of redness to sweetness. It is essential to the language-game with the word "pain" that the people who play it both behave in the particular way we call expressing pain, and sometimes more or less entirely conceal their pains (Kenny 2006, 145).

The "language game" of belief, as a subset of words and actions that signal belief, partakes of the same ambiguity that Kenny outlines in Wittgenstein's work on pain. A person can undertake the actions of belief (perform belief) without really believing, and equally, may disavow belief (perform scepticism) as a form of concealment. While the truth of the statement cannot be ascertained, it can be supported or undermined by these behaviours and articles of belief. In pain these behaviours and articles are either "unlearnt, inarticulate expressions of sensation such as moans or winces" (Ibid) or the "learnt articulate expressions" (Ibid), which replace them. Physically, those in pain may have bruises or limp or wince, or sport crutches, bandages, stitches or other paraphernalia of the wounded. These objects and behaviours *correspond* (in the Heideggerean sense) to pain, but do not communicate pain as an objective presence; they do not ontologically ensure that the pain is real. These behaviours, as with the responses to supposed supernatural events or later reportage of supernatural experience, can be unlearnt and innate, deliberate and trained, honest or dishonest.

Ghost stories and other urban legends tease that even the joking performance of taboo incantations can result in genuine effects. "Speak of the Devil and he shall appear" becomes a defining motto of the performance-centric cautionary tale. In the chapter on "Children's Ghost Stories" in *Haunting Experiences,* Sylvie Grider points out that the confusion of fantasy and reality in a certain type of oral ghost tale is essential. Speaking first of a common ghost story motif – in which a youth who defiles a graveyard (normally with an unrealistic act of cannibalism) is hunted by the ghost of their victim – she discusses the performative ending in which the ghost's stalking culminates in the narrator grabbing at the audience:

> In aesthetic desperation to achieve a sense of absolute climax, the story literally yanks the audience into its spell. For a split second, the fantasy becomes reality. The screaming and grabbing of a member of the audience by the narrator

> unleashes a rowdy catharsis as the audience suddenly shares the punishment of the fictional thief (Grider 2007, 120).

This kind of reality-collapsing also informs the "Bloody Mary" style legends, which in turn inform the 1992 film *Candyman.* While the details of Mary's life and death vary between stories – often adapted to reflect local geography or concerns, the cornerstone of the legend is the invocation of her ghost in a mirror by the recitation of her name between three and twelve times. After this invocation Bloody Mary will appear, and either startle, wound or kill the actors. In a similar way, ghost tour guides draw attention to their surrounds, directly mapping their narrative onto the surrounding terrain. Ghosts, according to tour guides, have appeared "where you are standing" and may be seen, as they have been seen previously, in the windows and blind-alleys surrounding their tourists. The effect in these cases is particularly uncanny. Ghost tourism and legend tripping generate a gothic geography out of the material of the everyday. These ventures perform otherwise mundane locations as ones darkly resonant with histories of deprivation, murder and madness. Further, audiences straddle the line between audience and participant: implicitly invited to reconsider and re-evaluate their surroundings joining in the performance by keeping an eye out for ghosts, snapping photographs in the hope of producing a haunting keepsake or simply responding to the narrativised atmosphere with a shudder. Belief in these cases is being *enacted* rather than *experienced*. For the audience-performer of the seance room or the legend trip belief is an active, rather than passive element. This continual re-evaluation causes the location to become gothic. Just as the theatre has offered a space of suspension, the integration of occult performance with particular sites leads those sites to become gothic spaces – spaces in which the supernatural may erupt.

The interaction between performance as performance and performance as supernatural risk is shored up not only by real world practices but by fiction. The Ouija board is a very common horror trope, found across the canon from *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) to *The Exorcist* (1971). Urban legend motifs have been taken up by a number of films, and the rise of found footage horror adopts the structures of legend tripping and the techniques of ghost hunting to problematize these behaviours.[4] These films threaten that touristic, voyeuristic and playful enactments of the supernatural will have dire consequences – depicting an Ouija session that leads to demonic possession or a 'paranormal investigation' that leads to the death of all involved. As such, these deliberately and unquestionably fictional narratives supplement the cultural scripts of folklore and urban legends. The constant motion from the occult to the fraudulent and playful and back again highlights supernatural performance's particularly uncanny

[4] With a few exceptions such as *Candyman* (1992), *Ghost Watch* (1992) and *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), these films have not met with a great deal of critical or popular attention. They are also frequently not very good. For clarities sake I include a few titles here for the curious: *Urban Legend* (1998), *Bloody Mary* (2006), *Grave Encounters* (2011), *The Innkeepers* (2011), *The Quiet Ones* (2014). We can also consider films like William Castle's *House on Haunted Hill* (1959) with its "haunted house" party, and Robert Wise's *The Haunting* (1963) with its cast of paranormal investigators as predecessors.

character. Occultism is simultaneously a fun activity for playacting adolescents and a serious, life-threatening act. Supernatural performance itself is familiar – ingested through film, television, books, theatre and oral culture – and strange, threatening our conception of the world as mundane and ordinary. As such, these performances in performing the world as other than it is transform it, at least for the duration of the ritual, into a darker less rational world. When a group gather to sit seance or use an Ouija board they are doing nothing less than presencing a gothic space, redefining the mundane and material around them as a system of supernatural exchange in which they participate. These performances may be, as www.ghostwalks.com warns us, not *just* a game but they are games: games which seek to redefine and remodel reality. Games which are at once frivolous and serious, playful and dangerous and which we may all, at one time or another, play.

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Haunted: Exploring Representations of Mental Health Through the Lens of the Gothic

ABSTRACT

The linking of mental illness and the Gothic is prevalent and persistent. In spite of sustained campaigns from mental health advocates to promote a realistic portrayal of mental health care and the services available, the public continue to be bombarded with perverse representations of its dark side. In this context, we explore three texts in which mental health is represented in order to foreground their Gothic tropes – dark elements of the psychiatric experience, isolation, eerie landscapes, senses of foreboding, claustrophobia and entrapment, and the mad woman – proposing that this can assist awareness of how fear and stigma is established and maintained.

In spite of sustained and productive campaigns from mental health clinicians, scholars and advocates to promote a realistic portrayal of mental health care and the services available, the public continue to be bombarded with perverse representations of its dark side. In October 2014, for example, the Royal Perth Show (Australia) excitedly announced a new one million dollar exhibit aimed at children's entertainment: a haunted house based on the horrors of a seventeenth century mental asylum, complete with actors pretending to be inmates (Hiatt 2014). Responding to the national outcry from mental health advocates, the Royal Perth Show spokesperson stated that the exhibit was not about mental health issues and that the main aim was to provide a "thrill attraction" for entertainment purposes (Hiatt 2014).

There are national guidelines on the reporting of mental illness and suicide developed for the media (www.Mindframe-media.info) that recommend avoiding sensationalizing or glamorizing suicide, or giving it undue prominence, avoiding specific details about the suicide, recognizing the importance of role models (for example, the influence of celebrities), taking the opportunity to educate the public, providing information about sources of help and support; and respecting the privacy of the bereaved and others. Studies have shown that these guidelines are generally followed and that they have been effective in reducing copycat suicide since their introduction in 2000 (Pirkis et al. 2009).

However, when issues emerge that go beyond the bounds of these guidelines, then imaginative storytelling tends to outweigh ethics. As this example illustrates, mental illness continues to be a subject matter that is exploited and is narrated in the global and local media in ghoulish ways (Greenslade 2014) that are intended to thrill readers and viewers with a sense of horrified terror or, at least, a voyeuristic way of experiencing Royle's Gothic frisson of the uncanny (2003). This is despite it being widely acknowledged that the consequences of such unrealistic and sensationalized reporting and representation range from at best, unproductive stereotyping to, at worst, a range of negative outcomes (Cheng, Hawton, Lee and Chen 2007; Jobes et al. 1996). As a poignant and recent example, the day after Robin Williams' death from suicide, which was reported in media all over the world – and some of which blatantly disregarded the suicide reporting guidelines (Greenslade 2014) – an American suicide hotline received 7,375 calls, the highest number the organization had ever received (Taylor 2014). It is possible that this reporting acted as a catalyst for people to seek help. It is unknown if, or how many, people self-harmed or suicided as a result. But what is clear is that mental illness in the media has a strong impact on the public.

As well as such contemporary examples, the linking of mental illness and the Gothic is prevalent and persistent historically, and has set up and reinforced vivid, often terrifying and horrifying images of mental illness and its treatment in the popular imagination. Rather than railing against this enduring connection and people's fascination with it, this discussion proposes that instead, a more nuanced understanding of this connection will be of wide relevance and use. Those working in

mental health, as well as those learning to work in this field, for instance, need to understand, and utilize, this association in their practice. This is because contemporary mental health practitioners work as change agents at both the individual therapeutic level with their clients and socially in the community (McAllister 2010, Stanley 2011). In order to understand what motivates or impedes people from seeking help for mental health concerns, these practitioners need to understand what the public's perceptions are, what frightens them, what they have read or heard, and what they believe. Being able to distinguish fictional from factual representations of mental illness is also vitally important for those dealing with mental health issues themselves, or who know others with mental health issues, whether in personal, community or professional settings. Ill-informed judgments made about mental illness and people with mental illness, can actually exacerbate problems, such as social isolation, poverty and discrimination (Arboleda-Flórez and Sartorius 2008). Conversely, it has been shown that when people are accurately informed through stigma campaigns, prejudice and exclusion diminishes, and accurate knowledge and positive attitudes increase, although these effects may not be sustained over time (Evans-Lacko et al. 2014).

In 2007, Keri de Carlo examined 19 American films released between 1942 and 2005 to examine how psychiatric mental health nursing and its world of the mental hospital were portrayed. De Carlo critiques the way these films frame mental health nursing and the profession's interactions with other disciplines such as psychiatry, for reasons including that Hollywood films continue to perpetuate the notion that "mental health nursing occupies an aberrant, secret, and dangerous world" (338), that the image of "psychiatric mental nursing remained trapped in the Middle Ages" (338). She, moreover, concluded that these films reflect how society negatively views people with serious mental illness, noting that her critique was "a challenge for the profession to educate society regarding the profession's true work, reclaiming its commitment to affirming the dignity and human rights of those with mental illness" (338). Despite this research, we can find no evidence that such popular films are either analyzed in this way elsewhere or widely utilized in mental health or other contexts to challenge these stereotypes.

Responding to de Carlo's challenge, we propose that by teasing out the prominent metaphors and tropes of mental illness and the asylum in a series of films and understanding their relationship to the Gothic – and the thoughts and feelings they therefore may provoke in viewers – common negative, unhelpful and even dangerous stereotyping and associations around mental health and illness can be identified. We hope that this analysis will also assist in promulgating the idea of the "benefits" of Gothic literature, especially, in this case, in terms of how the Gothic foregrounds social aspects of decay that need to be corrected, including the subtle or overt dehumanisation that can occurs within mental health care and services.

Madness and the Gothic

To investigate this assertion, we explore three texts in which mental health is represented in order to foreground the Gothic images and tropes they contain, proposing that this can help viewers to be more aware of how a sense of fear and stigma can be developed and established in such representation. This focuses on the dark elements of the psychiatric experience including: terrifying periods of isolation; threatening institutions set in eerie landscapes; a sense of foreboding, claustrophobia and/or entrapment; and horrifying treatments. In this, we are not criticizing Gothic narratives for their content or how mental illness is represented in these texts as works of art and imagination, but are, instead, proposing that the Gothic is a powerful tool in the quest to destabilize influential prevailing fears and stigmatizing behaviours. This is, at least in part, due to the vividness and compelling nature of Gothic narratives, which explore enduring cultural anxieties (Picart and Greek 2007). This is also because such Gothic narratives can be read as cautionary tales – offering social observation, reflection and warnings about what can happen when disorder, chaos and inhumanity are given free rein in the world (Picart and Greek 2007). As Fred Botting (2002) argues, the Gothic offers a powerful commentary, as central "Gothic figures" in such narratives represent anxieties associated with turning points in cultural historical progress and, thus, "Gothic conventions" can, as Anne Williams suggests, identify "possible fissures in the system of the symbolic as a whole" (1995, 67).

Mental illness – usually expressed as "madness" or "insanity" is, as many commentators state, a common theme in Gothic literature (see, for instance, McGrath and Morrow 1993, xii, xiv). Punter and Byron, for instance, use madness as one of the key characteristics of the Southern Gothic subgenre, describing it as that literature which

> is characterized by an emphasis on the grotesque, the macabre and, very often, the violent, investigating madness, decay and despair, and the continuing pressures of the past upon the present (Punter and Byron 2004, 116-17).

Boyd continues this linkage of the grotesque and fearful and insanity – similarly finding that Southern Gothic fiction is "characterized by grotesque characters and scenes, explorations of abnormal psychological states, dark humour, violence, and a sense of alienation or futility" (Boyd 2002, 311). In many cases, as Punter and Byron suggest above, dark pasts of mental instability – personal or generational – haunt the present in these narratives, such as in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (see, Beattie 1996) and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (see, Thormahlen 1997), while another characteristic of mental illness, "hyperbole and excess" (Becker 1999, 121) drive many Gothic dramas. Another Gothic trope, alienation, that "sense of abjection, the suspension between connectedness and separation" (Becker 1999, 121), is also a characteristic of mental illness. The mistreatment of the insane, and the desolate locations where the deranged are incarcerated (and there, hidden, can be neglected and abused) also often appear in

Gothic texts whether in classic or modern incarnations. These depictions are so powerful that the horrors of the insane asylum in Gothic fiction echo across the collective imagining and into contemporary renditions (as in the Royal Perth Show example with which we opened this discussion), and it is easy to summon up images of tortured, despairing and desperate inmates suffering the cruelties of staff who are supposed to be tending to, and caring for, them. Contemporary mental health settings, however, as they are represented both in this Gothic literature and in contemporary films, bear little physical resemblance to their fictional counterparts and this cognitive dissonance is, therefore, a good starting point in order to investigate whether there is there any connection in the settings represented in these works of Gothic fiction, with the settings that operate in real life. And if so, we ask, what is the nature of that connection, and what significance does it have for the public, patients and mental health clinicians? In considering this topic, we also ask, therefore, what can be learned by a closer examination of the embedded Gothic tropes?

Madness and the Movies

In this investigation, we focus on three popular contemporary films that image mental illness and treatment using recognizably identifiable Gothic images, themes and tropes. These works represent three different filmic genres: *Shutter Island* (2010) (a thriller), *The Ward* (2010) (a horror film) and *Girl, Interrupted* (1999) (a psychological drama). This small selection – while certainly not representative of filmic representations of mental disorder and treatment – can, however, function indicatively in terms of the way the Gothic operates in such filmed narratives. Alshatti noted, for example, that when, in 1765, Horace Walpole subtitled his novel *The Castle of Otranto* "a gothic story or romance", the elements Walpole used in this text – the "gothic castle, Catholic feudal society, damsel in distress, tyrannical patriarchal figure, labyrinthine and subterranean passages, live burials, doubles or doppelgangers" – were identified by other writers as useful and "were appropriated and deployed in multifarious ways" (2008, 11), resulting in the Gothic becoming defined as a genre. In her book *Fashioning Gothic Bodies*, Catherine Spooner notes "a range of characteristic Gothic themes: sensibility, imprisonment, spectrality, haunting, madness, monstrosity, the grotesque" (2004, 5). We can see all of these Gothic themes at work in these films, even the one that would be seem to be the most distant from these modern depictions of mental health care – the hierarchies of feudal society operating in the asylums presented.

While other narratives could certainly be analyzed in this way, these films are, moreover, highly useful in this context as each explores and imagines what happens in many contemporary situations of mental illness; when individuals reach the limits of their reason, when family and group structures are no longer able to function with the stressors confronting them, and the individual 'cracks' and moves into a world which is Gothic in the way it is described and experienced. These stories obviously, therefore, although fitting into different overall filmic genres (as above), can also, we propose, be described as Gothic in their approach to mental illness (Picart and Greek 2007). While

obviously not representative of all imaging of mental health treatment in contemporary popular culture, these particular narratives have also been chosen for the ways they deal with narratives of decay and chaos on both the individual and social level. This involves the loss of personal autonomy and maintenance of well-being, a loss of trust in the caring function of medicine/nursing, and a loss of faith that modernity (or the State) can ease personal burdens and solve problems – and each of these are highly instructive for our purpose. These films are also riveting contemporary popular culture narratives that are worthy of scholarly consideration that adds to that already in place.

Shutter Island (2010)

Martin Scorsese's film is an adaptation of the Dennis Lehane novel *Shutter Island* (2003). Both novel and film are complex thrillers that, at their cores, investigate man's inhumanity to man, and that deception and evil-doings have terrible consequences and can cause emotional damage so deep that any hold on reason is destroyed. As Lehane states, he was inspired to write the book because of a series of questions about violence in society, including, "What is it about human nature where we feel the need to harm other people?" (Lehane, qtd. in Piccalo 2010). The film opens with a menacing musical score reminiscent of Scorsese's earlier film, *Cape Fear* (1991). The story is set in the early 1950s just after the second world war, and opens with the main character, Teddy Daniels, on his way to Shutter Island on a lurching ferry that makes him seasick. Not only is a dark and stormy Gothic setting evoked, the ferry is itself rendered like a ghost ship. Chains and handcuffs swing ominously from the rafters in empty rooms and the vessel seems empty and abandoned except for a solitary character standing smoking on the deck looking out to the horizon. Early in the narrative, the viewer learns that Daniels is a US marshall and war veteran who was involved in the liberation of Dachau, and is now on his way to the poetically-named 'Ashecliffe' hospital for the criminally insane to investigate the disappearance of Rachel Solando, a patient admitted after drowning her three children. The man on deck turns out to be Daniels' new partner, Chuck, a seemingly loyal and deferent colleague. When the pair arrive on the craggy and inhospitable island, they are driven to a large and daunting-looking asylum complex where shackled inmates are involved in mundane pursuits overseen by somnambulistic white coated male attendees. Evoking the shock of an encounter in a nightmare, as they approach the entrance, Daniels notices a female patient dressed in a light dress and cardigan. She is not, however, a welcoming girlish figure, but is instead a decrepit and almost fiendish presence, whose limp hair hangs around her ghostly pale face in sparse tufts. As their eyes meet, she grimly puts her fingers to her lips in a silent warning, and then flashes a broad, grotesque, coquettish smile at him. This moment foreshadows that people and things may not be as they seem – in Gothic terms, drawing on Freud's notion of the return of the repressed, and the Gothic's ability to "help us negotiate and deal with traumas that might otherwise lay buried or unresolved" (Reyes 2015, 15).

In all these three films, psychiatry and 'modern treatments' for mental illness are treated suspiciously. Jim Hansen (2011) has characterized a sense of suspicion as Gothic in both classic and modernist novels and a vivid example of this suspicion in *Shutter Island* can be clearly located in the scene where Daniels and Chuck meet the seemingly cultured and humane head psychiatrist, Dr. Cawley. At this time, they discuss the paintings on the doctors' office wall, comparing the depictions of the barbaric treatment of the insane in the eighteenth century with contemporary approaches. As the scene unfolds, however, a tension builds, suggesting that the modern treatments are just as cruel.

> Dr. Cawley: It used to be the kind of patients we deal with here were shackled and left in their own filth. They were beaten, as if whipping them bloody would drive the psychosis out. We drove screws into their brains, we submerged in them in icy water until they lost consciousness or even drowned.
> Chuck: And now?
> Dr. Cawley: We treat them, try to heal, try to cure. And if that fails at least we provide them with a measure of comfort in their lives, calm.
> Teddy: These are all violent offenders, right? They've hurt people, murdered them in some cases.
> Dr. Cawley: In almost all cases, yes.
> Teddy: Then personally doctor I'd say screw their sense of calm.

When Daniels experiences a blinding headache, he is helpfully offered tablets by the seemingly kindly doctor – a moment at which the audience is primed by this overarching atmosphere of suspicion to think, "Don't take the pills", and this seemingly helpful act does turn out to be manipulation rather than care.

Later, meeting the asylum's nurses and orderlies in order to question them about Rachel's disappearance, Daniels discovers that most are apathetic, unreliable and not be trusted. When, his suspicions obvious, he quizzes the staff about Rachel's movements they show their true colours:

> Teddy: Miss Solando was put in her room for lights out. Does anyone here know what she did before that? Anyone? *[nobody answers]*
> Teddy: Come on! Anyone? Anyone? Anyone? Anyone?
> Nurse Marino: She was in a group therapy session.
> Teddy: Huh. Anything unusual occur?
> Nurse Marino: Define unusual.
> Teddy: Excuse me?
> Nurse: This is a mental institution, Marshal, for the criminally insane. Usual isn't a big part of our day.
> Teddy: I will rephrase. Did anything happen last night, during group therapy that was more, let's say ... I don't know ... memorable than ...
> Nurse Marino: ... normal?

Teddy: Exactly.
Nurse Marino: No, sorry.
Teddy: Did Miss Solando say anything during group therapy?
Nurse Marino: She was worried about the rain and she hated the food here. *[all the staff laugh cruelly]*
Nurse: Complained constantly, last night included.

In this seemingly mundane exchange, it is revealed that the mental health staff are not as caring and kindly as Dr. Cawley had boasted and this disclosure can also be read as a parallel reflection, and criticism, of practice today – and how the past continues to affect the present – where mental health treatments are purported to be modern and humane, but paternalism, and absence of empathy prevails (Frances, 2013). Another example of this overall mood of distrustful suspicion relates to a doctor (Dr. Sheehan), who appears to have information that could clarify Rachel's motivations for escaping, but who is, himself, missing. A brief discussion regarding his whereabouts also reveals how the doctors in this hospital behave in an elitist hierarchical manner, believing themselves to be not only superior to others, but also beyond the law. When Daniels asks to speak to Sheehan, Dr. Cawley responds:

Dr. Cawley: I'm afraid that won't be possible. He left on the ferry this morning. His vacation was already planned, he'd been putting it off too long.
Chuck: You're in a state of lock down. A dangerous patient has escaped and you let her primary doctor leave on vacation?
Dr. Cawley: Well, of course. He's a doctor. [*the staff laugh*]

In a later scene, Cawley attempts to educate the agents about the style of psychiatric treatment he subscribes to, not only describing modern procedures in this haughty manner, but also alluding, quite terrifyingly, how these can turn people into the walking dead:

Dr. Cawley: Do you know the state of the mental health field these days, gentlemen?
Teddy: No, not a clue doctor.
Dr. Cawley: War. The old school believes in surgical intervention, psycho-surgery, procedures like the transorbital lobotomy. Some say the patients become reasonable, docile. Others say they become zombies.
Chuck: And the new school?
Dr. Cawley: Psychopharmacology. A new drug has just been approved called Thorazine, which relaxes psychotic patients, you could say tames them.

By now, the viewer is highly suspicious of Cawley's motives and, by association, his 'modern' approaches – and are reminded of memorable Gothic doctors such as Jekyll, Frankenstein and Moreau. Viewers, indeed, soon learn that he is trialling a radical form of what he calls 'reality therapy', which is designed to persuade patients of the

implausibility of their delusions by allowing them to play out their fantasies to their inevitable conclusions. This approach is not only doomed to fail, but also horrifying in its possibilities.

As the complicated plot develops, it reveals duplicitous, damaged people, a possible government conspiracy, and an uncertainty about who is sane or insane. Scenes are set in a series of creepy settings alongside that of "Ashecliffe" itself. These include a sinister graveyard, an abandoned lighthouse and eerie underground tunnels, amid frightening natural conditions – howling winds, falling trees and waves lashing onto punishing rocks. Perhaps most terrifying of all the locations on the island is Ward C – the ominous place where the most dangerous inmates are housed. In this ancient building, dating back to, and recalling, the horrors of the American Civil War, the hospital-as-prison, prison-as- hospital duality resembles the unsettled surrealism of an Escher painting. Ward C, is seems, defies rational space, and comprises a maze of levels and barred rooms, with corridors leading nowhere. The naked patients who are trapped there are reduced to the base and animalistic – as wild, savage and unpredictable as the monsters who people Gothic narratives (Hogle 2012).

The film also contains a series of what could be called Gothic effects, including surreal dream sequences, flashbacks to Nazi concentration camps and scenes of scurrying rats, but at the centre, the most unnerving scenes are those involving a series of disfigured, monstrous people who are physically and/or psychically damaged. While the monstrous is a trope of the Gothic (Halberstam 1995), its representation in this filmic narrative work principally to not only invoke what Ruth Bienstock Anolik terms "the horrifying representations of invisible pathology" (2010: x) but also to show how liminal those with mental illness are in Western society, and how horrifyingly tenuous the hold on sanity can be. The characters in this film embody this and, as the film progresses, Teddy has joined the inmates and staff of the asylum as one of Jerrold Hogle's Gothic "ghosts of counterfeits" (2012, 500) as a liminal and persecuted character. This is because it is not clear, and remains unresolved at the end of the film, whether he is an innocent victim or a deeply damaged and unhinged killer.

The Ward (2010)

John Carpenter's horror film, *The Ward*, takes on all the Gothic tropes of the mental asylum discussed above. The establishment scene shows the familiar stark, imposingly large and impersonal institution, and the camera zooms slowly down a dimly lit wide corridor and into a room filled with surgical equipment and an ominous empty gurney. Muffled sounds of growling are heard and, then, thunder cracks, as nature underscores the danger ahead. The slow pan continues, the lighting flashes on and off, and now a limping footstep carries us forward towards a single room. A young woman sits perched on her narrow bed, gripping a thin blanket around her to provide feeble protection against whoever (or whatever) is approaching the door to her room. As she cowers in the corner of the room, the door squeaks open, and she screams, and then

screams again. Viewers then see a shadow throttling her, and such is her attacker's strength that her feet are lifted from the floor. The camera pans backward and the opening credits appear. Reminiscent of the images discussed above, a series of black and white images scroll across the screen, beginning with antique bedlam paintings depicting treatments similar to those featured on Dr. Cawley's wall in *Shutter Island*, photographs of people being given electric shock and other early twentieth century treatments, through to contemporary images of distress. Overlaying this is a pane of shattered glass, clearly signifying even before the credits have ended, the way the human mind can be fractured, and evoking the Gothic liminal again in the image of the window, the window being "a potent symbol of liminality … [which can] symbolize the thin and transparent veneer between truth and paranoia, as well as between agency and helplessness" (Brien 2015, 156).

As the credits finish, the black and white imagery changes to colour through the shattered glass, although this is brown and washed out. The sepia tones, like an old coloured photograph that is fading, suggest the lapsing of time. A police car is seen making its way down an empty open road in the middle of seemingly endless dry plains. Viewers are then advised, via a text line, that this is 1966, in North Bend, Oregon. Here, Carpenter has provided a clue that what is about to transpire has something to do with the past and that whatever occurred then is not resolved – a clear example of the past haunting the present. This is both a plot device, and a comment on the cause of the major mental illness that is about to be revealed. A dishevelled young woman (who we later learn to be named Kristen) dressed only in a nightgown, and thus suggesting the distressed Gothic female in peril, is seen running through the woods. She gets to a house and strikes a match, but instead of looking around her, sets the billowing curtains alight, then sits and watches as the house is engulfed in flames before finally dropping to her knees in exhaustion. The police drive up and take hold of her, a clear example of the monstrous feminine who needs to be controlled and contained (Creed 1993). She screams and struggles in vain to escape, but is taken to the North Bend Psychiatric institution, where she is strip-searched, allocated patients' garb and incarcerated in a locked room. As in *Shutter Island*, and many other narratives featuring psychiatric staff (de Carlo 2007), this asylum is staffed by disengaged male orderlies and cold-hearted nurses.

While the nurses demand strict compliance with rules, the psychiatrist (complete with the familiar aristocratic accent) conveys a superficial warmth, and displays his superior rank by sanctioning a nurse's callousness. In an interview with Kristen, he at first appears collaborative, educative and kind, but viewers' learned response to be suspicious imbues this seeming care with fear for her future:

> Doctor: How are you feeling? Have you met the others yet?
> Kristen: Why am I here?
> Doctor: I'm hoping we can get to the bottom of that mystery together. Let's discuss what happened yesterday. What's the first thing you remember?

Kristen: Fire. …
Doctor: Burning down that house won't destroy those memories. Let's deal with it together ok?
Kristen: (she composes herself and responds stridently) No! ... I don't need your help.
Doctor: Yet here you are. Confused and disturbed.
Kristen: I'm not crazy!
Doctor: We don't like to use that word here.

As in *Shutter Island*, this psychiatrist initially conveys an air of kindness and concern, and ostentatiously boasts of a modern treatment approach, yet viewers soon plainly witness treatment that is controlling, barbaric and cruel, and would not be out of place in the asylums of classic Gothic fiction. Carpenter's message, like Scorsese's, could be that psychiatry remains a thinly veiled continuation of earlier barbaric treatments, and if this system is indicative of the wider social structure, then any idea of progress in caring for the vulnerable and damaged is a myth. Here again, the psychiatrist is trialling an experimental therapy – "futuristic kind of stuff" one of the patients discloses – which viewers later learn is hypnotherapy. Here, again, is a modern doctor who shares the failings of the Gothic doctors of classic fiction and, who, like Dr. Moreau, not only has the power to make monsters of his charges, but does this in a cruel and most degenerative inhumane manner (Hurley 2004, 18). This criticism of psychiatry is not dissimilar to postmodern psychiatry which consider that treating unhappiness, which derives from socio-political causes, as if it is a biological state, not only diverts society from the real causes of discontent but also enriches capitalist entities directly (i.e., doctors and medicine, as well as pharmaceutical and insurance companies) (Ghaemi 2006).

Similar again to *Shutter Island*, all in this film is not what it seems. When Kristen enters the mirthless recreation room, she meets a group of teenage girls, not dissimilar from those in *Girl Interrupted*, which is discussed below. Some of the girls are defiant, worldly and edgy, while others are more vulnerable. One is curled up with a soft toy rabbit, frightened of the smallest trifle. Despite their seeming innocuousness and lack of agency, a mood of suspicion and fear of what might occur pervades any interactions between these inmates. An erratic and mischievous young woman, Emily, for example, appears to make no sense in her interactions with Kristen. In one instance, Kristen wants to know who it was that came into her room the previous night. Instead of responding, Emily mirrors the question back in a song, singing "someone came into my room", and wanders away repeating the melody. Later, a more composed patient, Iris, advises Kristen to ignore Emily, for she never makes any sense. She also warns Kristen, "Listen. Don't let this place get to you. You stay locked up long enough, you start to believe that you're nuts". The scene conveys the familiar Gothic notion of the uncanny (Royle 2003) and how those that appear sane may not be, and vice versa.

Alone in the communal shower after the other girls have left, an apparition appears out of the steam and disappears. Kristen turns around and is gripped around the throat by that traditional Gothic figure, a zombie-like ghost. Her screams bring the staff running. She cries that something that was not human attacked her, but (predictably) is not believed. The haunting continues, and despite other patients being gruesomely murdered, the staff are disconcertingly unconcerned. This is another use of the uncanny, for even if psychiatric staff can be predicted to act harshly, they are also usually portrayed as efficiently assessing and controlling the environment (Anderson 2003, de Carlo 2007). To act indifferently, is out of the ordinary and the viewers' suspicions are further aroused.

Compelled to find out the truth, Kristen finds clues about someone called Alice Hudson and begs the doctor to tell her what is going on. He responds impassively that he cannot provide the answers and that she must find them out herself and, thus, the remainder of the film becomes Kristen's quest to find the truth. What she, and viewers, learn is that the horror lies within – within Kristen and within a society in decay, for it is eventually revealed that the girls are all parts of the fractured psyche of a single character, Kristen/Alice. She has dissociative identity disorder, and the zombie is what has become of her following sustained and vicious childhood trauma. Her only chance of recovery, according to the doctor, is for her to solve the mystery of her unknown selves, and bring them back together under the control of a superior and integrated self. As Senf (2014) explains, an important function of Gothic texts is to recognise how the power of the past, the irrational and the violent, continues to influence the world. This is, interestingly, both the overarching subject of *The Ward* and a prominent theory relevant to understanding dissociative identity disorder. Current thinking in the treatment of this disorder is not as absolute as that which the psychiatrist wants to impose on, or achieve for, Kristen. Rather than achieve integration, the aim is for people like Kristen to come to know and accept their many selves (ISSTD 2011). As we learn in the film's climactic scene, this is not possible for Kristen.

Girl, Interrupted (1999)

The third film considered here, *Girl, interrupted* (Mangold 1999), based on Susanna Kaysen's bestselling memoir of the same title (1993), is also set in the 1960s. Susanna is aged 19 and, after feeling increasingly dysphoric and disconnected from her family and finding life meaningless, takes an overdose. After a horrifying scene where her stomach is pumped, she finds herself unwillingly hospitalized in Claymoore hospital, a large psychiatric institution. The milieu, even though it is more brightly lit than the other two psychiatric settings, is still that of the Gothic insane asylum. The architecture is rambling and shambolic. There are large Gothic-shaped windows out of which patients can only stare at the world, trapped within this liminal place as they are trapped within their own disorders. In this menacing space, Susanna meets a group of odd young women who, are gathered together like a series of sequestered virginal maidens of nineteenth century Gothic fiction, but all of whom have their own, individual, very

twentieth century, demons and damaged pasts. Like other Gothic narratives, this one deals with a world in chaos (see, for example, Hurley 2004) – this time America in the 1960s. This was a period during which young men were being conscripted to fight in Vietnam, women were experiencing a second wave of feminist protest and liberation and the civil rights movement was building. This disruption to the established order is evident in the young women's lives too as it is revealed how they struggle with violence, incest and gendered exploitation. Lisa (played by a young, blonde and ghostly pale Angelina Jolie) initially appears to be the only normal one of the girls – especially in her rebellion against the institution's rigidities – but then viewers discover that she is actually the most ill – she has been committed for nine years and is frequently out of control, unable to care for herself and hurtful to others.

This film is interesting in this context as, although wearing the usual menacingly unnatural stiff pure white uniforms, some of the nurses and orderlies in this film are portrayed sympathetically. The head nurse has a no-nonsense approach but she is nurturing, while the treating psychiatrist is patient, available and gentle in her challenging of her patients. This means that, despite the clichéd institutional featureless white walls, barred windows, and long echoing hallways that amplify the sounds of loudly locking doors and sobbing patients, the view of psychiatry is more optimistic. In this case, the film suggests that change and liberation is possible, if an individual is willing to explore his- or herself, to talk things through, and begin to map a plan for the future.

Yet, even in this film where mental illness and its treatment is portrayed in a relatively humane and empathic manner, a patently Gothic scene occurs towards the end of the narrative, when Suzanna wakes in the middle of the night to find herself alone. Searching through the eerily lit maze of corridors, tracking the sound of muffled but menacing laughter, she comes upon the group, led by Lisa, reading her (Suzanna's) private diary. Lisa is brandishing a filled needle and appears wild and crazed. Susanna tries to run away and breaks her hand while trying to close a heavy sliding metal door. At this moment, Susanna realises that she can no longer hide and confronts Lisa who, at this moment, personifies Susanna's own demon. Susanna shouts that no one cares if she (it) dies, because she already is dead, her heart is cold. This pivotal Gothic scene – where viewers have sympathy for the demon as well as its victim – is redolent of all others where Gothic monsters are vanquished, and reminds viewers that Susanna's (and, by association, everyone's) demons are not external, but internal. Susanna has not before had the courage to face this reality and, in this moment, chooses life (instead of the previous dissociative liminal state she lived in) and her heart, previously as stony cold as a vampire's (Piatti-Farnell 2014), once again becomes warmed and alive to the world. What is of interest here is not just the Gothic tropes employed at this turning point, but that they are utilized to move what has been (after the dramatic beginning) up to that time, largely a quite gentle film, into a climax of high drama from where the resolution can flow. The adolescents in *Girl, Interrupted* are, moreover, eerie liminal beings, neither children nor women, because they have access to memories and

knowledge as yet unassimilated within the realm of adult understanding. This notion is expressed in this and the other films through the Gothic resurfacing of past traumas, disturbances and difficulties with which the human mind is too fragile to deal.

The Significance of a Gothic Reading of These Texts

In the Gothic narrative, context is vital in establishing and conveying a liminal aesthetic. In all three films, characters are caught in between worlds. For Teddy, the rugged Shutter Island is, like his mind and his trauma, wild and untamed. The asylum for Kristen holds no sense of safety. Around every corner, nightmares intrude and, for Susanna, the hospital is dream-like and drained of colour. While mental health services are no longer usually housed in Victorian mansions, and nurses today rarely wear white uniforms and jangle keys, there are still vestiges of the Gothic in contemporary mental health care that is illustrated in these films that are set in the 1950s and 1960s.

The dark, for instance, is literal and metaphoric. In the liminal spaces of the mental health facility imaged, where the personal is not private, the 'mad' are pictured as liminal beings, monsters who have hurt others and often themselves, and who – like zombies – are alive but decaying. This imaging also underscores the decay of society, which is made both manifest and melancholic in these works as the 'normal', or once known, world becomes strange and unfamiliar. Similarly, each film also explores what lies beyond the limits of rationality and reason, and how this is not the romanticized, euphoric space of poetic creativity and production, but instead only a space of confusion and vulnerability. In real life, today, there are many people who consider mental health services to be dysfunctional and inadequate in how they serve the needs of the population.

Another Gothic trope clearly at play in these examples is the uncanny, as the familiar and comforting (the hospital, and the doctor) becomes the strange and dangerous (the asylum and the psychiatrist). Here, the uncanny mobilizes how "true horror lies in that which is most immediately at hand that the most proximal bears the capacity to contain the utterly unfamiliar" (Chopra 1993). The asylum as secret space – separate from everyday, filled with cavernous undiscovered corridors – is also a metaphor for the mind, and, in this way, the asylum and the "unhinged" minds it contains (often including the staff who work there) are another manifestation of the uncanny. As Royle writes:

> the uncanny has to do with the sense of a secret encounter: it is perhaps inseparable from a apprehension, however fleeting, of something that should have remained secret and hidden but has come to light. But it is not 'out there', in any simple sense: as a crisis of the proper and natural, it disturbs any straightforward sense of what is inside and what is outside. The uncanny has to do with a strangeness of framing and borders, and experience of liminality (2003, 2).

In this way, the normal and comprehensible becomes strange and unfamiliar in these texts. In particular, the nurses and doctors, so highly regarded in other social domains (Morgan, 2014), in this context are unlikely to be trustworthy, indeed likely to cause harm.

Framed, bordered – but barely controlled – by the asylum, the Gothic figure and the idea that the monster lies within are also strong features of each of these narratives. These figures and their actions are the core way that suspense and frisson are built and relayed in each film – as they are at once familiar and unfamiliar; vulnerable and threatening; innocent yet unnervingly inscrutable (Balanzategui 2012). The supreme challenge for each protagonist is to learn to conquer their own demons, and reclaim their human-ness. In *Girl Interrupted*, for instance, there are narrative threads about how grief can unleash ugliness and pain (as opposed to being a redemptive emotion) and how adolescents can be cruel (as opposed to children being innocent and inherently good). In each narrative, there are misfits and those who are clearly criminals, but the characters who are the most damaged are those who, at least at first, appear so integrated and normal. Dissemblance, then, another feature of the Gothic (Hurley 2006), comes into play in each of these topsy, turvy worlds – Malin, for instance, describes the world created in the mental hospital in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) as an "upside-down world" where "insane and sane are meaningless words" (Malin 1962, 81).

Death and decay are powerfully described in these films. The empty halls, and redundant, disused machinery of these institutions evoke a lost past, dysfunctional present and hopeless future. For the individual, the decay of the integrated self is a recurrent theme and is a destabilizing and worrying aspect of each narrative, especially in terms of the anxiety generated around feeling/being simultaneously both normal and abnormal. The decay and demise of the family is a familiar trope in both the Gothic and films featuring mental illness, and is often a cause or symptom of the illness itself. Societal decay is certainly described in Gothic terms in these films. The health service the characters are forced to engage with is no better than the torture chambers of past centuries, while the events that take place there, and actions engaged in, are shallow charades of real life, and include the personal interactions and the seemingly endless, mindless consumption of television.

These films also confront viewers with the abject. Creed suggests that the popular horror film brings about a confrontation with the abject (the corpse, bodily wastes, and the monstrous-feminine), and by so doing re-draws the boundaries between the human and non-human (1993, 1999). In each of these three films, the monstrous feminine – marginal, marginalized, ambivalent and liminal – lies at the centre of the narrative and is central to both the plot and/or dramatic tension. Briganti (1991) charts how women are represented as fragile and insane in the Gothic novel. It is also well known that women and girls have been not well served by the mental health service in the past

(Butler, 1990) and have both feared enforced detention in these treatment centres and the enduring stigma that goes with being identified as someone that needs this care.

Conclusion

This analysis suggests that, despite overt signs of progress in psychiatry, these films reveal how understandable it is that many people hold on to embedded Gothic ideas about mental illness and associated fears and suspicions. Although mental illness is rarely as diametrically opposed to normality as Gothic film and literature would have viewers and readers think, realizing the Gothic in these films, we suggest, may assist in identifying what perceptions require gentle reorientation when we meet people informed by vivid, but wild, imaginations. Considering these narratives is a powerful way to consider what aspects about people and society and the way we live can help us all to reach turning points, and to cease defensive coping mechanisms that cover up personal problems or assist in avoiding reality. Identifying these Gothic tropes and why they are so pervasive in such cultural forms as films and the books they are based on is also useful in seriously (re)considering the sources of the demons afflicting us or others, and what tools are needed to vanquish them, so that we can all begin living the fuller, more peaceful, connected life that is the aim of contemporary mental health treatment.

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BOOK REVIEW

Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Maria Beville, eds. *The Gothic and the Everyday: Living Gothic.* Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014. 272 pp. Hard cover. ISBN 9781137406637.

Reviewed by Kimberley McMahon-Coleman (University of Wollongong)

For many, the notion of "the Gothic" evokes images of Victorian figures that live in the shadows: monstrous beings such as Dracula, Mr Hyde, and Dorian Gray who represent the darker side of humanity. Contemporary Gothic, however, as the editors note, has, in recent years, "travelled across cultural and media landscapes" in a contagion-like manner. Given this regeneration of interest in the Gothic, it seeks to examine the underexplored dimensions of the Gothic in relation to lived experience. As noted in the introduction, the Gothic has been, since its infancy, both a subject and an agent of influence. The contributors explore the role of the Gothic in areas as varied as trauma, postcolonial studies, Indigeneity, film, children's toys, literature, food, housing and the Hallowe'en jack-o'-lantern.

In her chapter, Kristy Butler argues that the assimilationist practices of colonialism created various forms of uncanny doubling, with colonial subjects being assimilated into settler-invader culture, and native culture blending with imperial values to create customs that are at once familiar and strange. This is a theme that is taken up by Lorna Piatti-Farnell in her extensive analysis of how the jack-o'lantern morphed from an Irish folktale involving a man doomed to roam the earth with only a coal-filled turnip as a lantern to light his way, to the ubiquitous carved pumpkin now synonymous with the American observance of Hallowe'en that is increasingly being adopted globally.

Enrique Ajuria Ibarra examines how the Mexican legend of La Llorona—the ghost of a murderous woman who roams the river seeking the souls of children she has killed, but who occasionally mistakenly takes an unsuspecting living child—has been transformed into Andrés Muschietti's 2013 film *Mama*. Susan Yi Sencindiver also considers the figure of the child in her analysis of dolls, noting that it is primarily adults, rather than children, who find dolls to be uncanny. She contrasts the use of animate dolls in fantastic children's literature and film with the ways in which it is readily appropriated by the Gothic and horror.

Tracy Fahey and Donna Lee Brien look at some quite different cultural practices that intersect with the Gothic. Fahey writes of the cultural mapping of the Gothic in Irish homes, where many are still protected by domestic charms and rituals to protect from fairy invasion. On a more earthly plane, Brien focuses on the ironic spectacle of the feast for the dying prisoner, and the inclusion of infamous "last meals" in a recent cookbook. The collection is rounded out by an excellent chapter from Misha Kavka who problematises ideas of Maori Gothic, pointing out that, culturally speaking, spirits remaining near the family is not so much a haunting as a cultural inevitability.

The Gothic and the Everyday: Living Gothic is a useful text for those of us who are interested in contemporary representations of the Gothic, which are, after all, the primary remit of this journal. The only mild disappointment was that a couple of the papers did not embrace the contemporaneity and interdisciplinary nature as solidly as the majority of them, but it is nevertheless a significant work of scholarship.

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