Aeternum: The Journal of Contemporary Gothic Studies

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Introduction: A Place for Contemporary Gothic

In recent years, Gothic Studies has evolved into a solid and distinctly academic field of study. "Gothic" as a critical term has the potential to bring together perspectives and has historically attracted scholarship from many areas within the cultural studies umbrella, including literature, film, music, fashion, and architecture. Starting from the premise that Gothic cultures have a world-wide impact, it is necessary to re-evaluate the place of the mode and its generic incarnations in the post-2000 era. *Aeternum* provides such an opportunity.

The desire for a new venue for academic scholarship has been particularly inspired by the formation of the Gothic Association of New Zealand and Australia (GANZA), which has thrown into sharp focus the need to focus on our contemporary moment, paying particular attention to cultural and geographical differences, and integrating the Gothic into disciplines which exist outside the literary paradigm. GANZA is interdisciplinary and transnational in nature. *Aeternum*'s interest in "contemporary Gothic" stems from the nature of the papers presented at the inaugural conference, held in January 2013, and the multiple conversations carried out between researchers who identified this as a gap in current publications.

It is important to signal the changes and directions in contemporary Gothic scholarship. In spite of the interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transnational impact of the Gothic as an important manifestation of style and genre, most Gothic-orientated scholarly publications have given a distinct attention and priority to works of literature – or, at best, cinema and television– testifying to the clear textual legacy of the mode. And while literature remains one of the most influential areas of Gothic study, the

multidisciplinary impact of the Gothic is difficult to ignore. There is a need, therefore, to find a place for "the new" and "the contemporary", as well as "the interdisciplinary", in Gothic Studies, highlighting the transnational influence of the Gothic mode itself in the still nascent twenty-first century.

In our contemporary moment, it is virtually impossible to ignore the relationship the Gothic holds to popular culture. The sheer quantity of "Gothic texts", in their varying gradients of "authenticity", that are currently available is astounding. The list is long and far-reaching, from television's *American Horror Story*, *Hannibal*, and *Penny Dreadful*, to cinema's *The Conjuring* and *Mama*, and popular fiction's *Black Dagger Brotherhood*, *The Vampires Diaries*, and *Twilight* sagas (to mention but a few). In a way, it is difficult to even consider the thematic and textual preoccupations of the wider popular culture scope without having at least some knowledge of the Gothic aspects within it. This connection makes us attuned to the importance of contextualising the Gothic as part of a contemporary framework, for what lies beneath the surface of ready concepts such as "entertainment" will be revelatory in outlining the part played by the Gothic in socio-cultural, historical, and, of course, economic structures.

Nonetheless, giving a definition to "contemporary Gothic" is a difficult endeavour. The temptation would be to simply make the distinction based on chronology, deeming "contemporary" only that which is conceived and produced in our millennial period. This, however, would be simplistic and, overall, reductive. While one of the aims of this Journal is most certainly to provide critical perspectives on the recent, the evolving, and the "new", as an important area of development for Gothic Studies, it also sets out to provide contemporary perspectives on established, often canonical texts, that belong to the pre-2000 period. The merging of the two is essential for recognising the interdependent structures – conceptual, stylistic, and metaphorical – that highlight the Gothic as a multi-faceted, tentacled, and networked entity.

As well as placing a flexible focus on the post-2000 era, the rationale for *Aeternum* extends to the desire to signal the cultural and conceptual impact of the Gothic on non-canonical fields of practice and study for the Gothic itself, including animation, digital humanities, dramaturgy, cultural history, food studies, and pedagogy. While providing discussions into the way in which the Gothic mode is developing, *Aeternum* aims to offer a prognostic guide in identifying the different courses that new trends in Gothic scholarship are taking. The articles raise critical questions relating to how we can move forward in academic scholarship, by providing "directions" for this critical journey into the Gothic.

This inaugural issue of *Aeternum* establishes the workings patterns of the Journal, and the exemplification of its rationale. The articles provide "contemporary" scholarship not only because they focus on the "here and now", to use an expression that is so appropriately postmodern, but also because they re-evaluate the place that

canonical Gothic texts have to play in our contemporary structures of meaning. Michael Sean Bolton's paper considers "posthuman Gothic" in terms of genre and characterisation. Using Ridley Scott's 1982 film *Blade Runner* and Mark Z. Danielewski's experimental novel *House of Leaves* (2000) as pivotal examples, Bolton unravels an analysis of terror and horror in relation to the postmodern, and the part played by "monstrous technology" in the disintegration of the human subject. Also pursuing the manifestation of postmodernity in relation to the Gothic, Dennis Yeo's paper contextualises contemporary paranoia in David Fincher's films. Yeo considers how, through multiple displays of "games", Fincher's work explores issue of un/reality, schizophrenia, and fallen perception. The pushing of limits, in relation to what is known, "speakabale", and writable, is also the centre of Maria Beville's paper on Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea*. Placing the novel in a postmodern framework, Beville discusses the role of the Gothic in voicing the subconscious concerns of the Irish Famine as a difficult and highly contentious moment in the nation's history, while re-evaluating its metaphorical place in literary frameworks.

The idea of "re-evaluating" known Gothic texts is central to Hannah O'Connor's paper. Offering a contemporary view on 19th century Gothic, O'Connor reconsiders the figure of the "monster" in both Stoker's *Dracula* and Shelley's *Frankenstein* by offering a reading mediated by postcolonial and queer theories. Identifying paradigms that have been, arguably, overlooked in these famous Gothic novels, O'Connor's discussion pursues incarnations of the "queer postcolonial", and its use as a framework for studying the Gothic. The fascination with re-inventing, re-discovering, and re-forming the Frankenstein monster is also instrumental in Doreen Bauschke's paper. Considering its place as a re-write of *Frankenstein*, Bauschke's analyses the corpus of Shelley Jackson's now well-known *Patchwork Girl*, and uncovers how the medium of hypertext works with Gothic tropes. Jackson's electronic text is revealed as "haunted" by the intertextual connection with Shelley's "original". In similar vein, Emily Gray's paper reveals the tropic connections between "Nordic Noir" and Gothic narratives. Gray unravels a discussion of the Scandinavian television series *The Bridge* in relation to an understanding of liminality and negative aesthetics. The metaphor of "the bridge" as an in/between space conveys the social isolation and psychological disconnection that is evident in the characters, and their place in wider cultural structures.

The issue then concludes with an exclusive interview with D.B. Reynolds, author of popular fiction series *Vampires in America*. Reynolds provides us with a pointed view into her fascination with vampires, and her choices – in terms of both genre and representation – when it comes to crystallising her own vampire characters. Discussing gender, wealth, and "romantic love", Reynolds pinpoints the part played by popular fiction in de/constructing the Gothic in the 21st century. Reynolds' insights work as an apt conclusion for the inaugural issue of a Journal that is concerned with contemporary Gothic. The suggestions of "re-evaluation", "inclusion", and "expansion" linger in the air, and, just like Reynolds' vampires, they insinuate the possibility of old and new

merging, and generating a "product" that is contextual as much as it is visionary and nostalgic. The fascination with the Gothic, one might want to suggest, is as innovative and it is reactionary, and therein, perhaps, lies its longevity.

Editor Details

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Monstrous Machinery: Defining Posthuman Gothic

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to develop a definition for the subgenre of Gothic literature called posthuman Gothic. The article examines features that some works with posthuman characters and themes share with the wider genre of Gothic literature, as well as marking distinctions that set posthuman Gothic works apart from other subgenres of the Gothic, particularly postmodern Gothic. The posthuman Gothic distinguishes itself as a subgenre in which instances of terror and horror arise from inevitable and uncanny integrations of human subjects and technologies, rather than from the disintegration of the human subject at the hands of monstrous technologies. An examination of the changes made from Ridley Scott's 1982 film Blade Runner *to his 1991 director's cut of the film demonstrates key distinctions between postmodernism and posthumanism. And Mark Z. Danielewski's experimental novel* House of Leaves *(2000) is analyzed as a paradigm example of the subgenre of posthuman Gothic.*

Over the past two decades, recognition of the many confluences of Gothic and postmodern literature have led critics to formulate several subgenres of the Gothic in order to address contemporary works. Fred Botting's notion of the postmodern Gothic shares postmodernism's concern with "[t]he loss of human identity and the alienation of the self from both itself and the social bearings in which a sense of reality is secured" (Botting 1996, 157). This loss of identity manifests "in the threatening shapes of increasingly dehumanised environments, machinic doubles and violent, psychotic fragmentation" (Botting 1996, 157). Allen Lloyd Smith sees postmodernity's dehumanization of the social environment as resulting from a "[c]ontemporary

scientific materialism [which] opens the possibility of what exceeds our understanding; the system running itself, for itself; and hence generates antihumanism, plots beyond comprehension" (Smith 1996, 16).

Maria Beville, in developing a definition for "Gothic-postmodernism," notes frequent depictions of "[s]pectral characters, *doppelgängers*, hellish waste lands, and the demonised or possessed," as well as a common concern with "the deeper issue of the lingering emotion of terror as it relates to loss of reality and self" (Beville 2009, 10). Catherine Spooner's notion of the contemporary Gothic similarly notes a focus on issues of the fracturing of subjectivity, including, "the radically provisional or divided nature of the self; the construction of peoples or individuals as monstrous or 'other'; the preoccupation with bodies that are modified, grotesque or diseased" (Spooner 2006, 8). For each of these theorists, the postmodern and the Gothic intersect most significantly at the point at which a sense of the monstrous and the uncanny overwhelm and disrupt the integrity of human subjectivity. Essentially, each of these subgenres of Gothic literature connects with the postmodern fear of the disintegration of the human subject.

The concern with the fate of the human subject in these couplings of the Gothic and the postmodern certainly provides one explanation for the increasing popularity of Gothic-themed literature, films, and television programs—not to mention the rising interest in Gothic scholarship—in the late 20th- and early 21st centuries. The above critics each note the ways in which recent Gothic works confront mainstream fears of external threats from the alien other, faceless terrorism, and technological annihilation. However, some recent works indicate a shift in concern from external to internal threats to subjectivity and human agency. In order to address this shift, there is a need to further examine another form of Gothic literature: the posthuman Gothic. Whereas subgenres coupling the Gothic and the postmodern often derive horror and/or terror from fear of the eradication of humanity at the hands of monstrous technologies, the posthuman Gothic finds instances of terror and horror arising from the interfaces and integrations of humans and technologies; specifically, in the inevitability and exigency of these unions as a matter of the continued existence of the human subject reconstituted as posthuman.

A few writers have begun to explore themes of posthumanism in Gothic literature. Pramod K. Nayar considers posthuman Gothic—or "species Gothic"—as a subgenre that "offers a critique of what we see as horror by suggesting a different way of tackling difference" (118), particularly difference between human and non-human species. Dongshin Yi's "Cyborgothic" examines conjunctions of science fiction and the Gothic that are "committed to the imaginative development of an aesthetical ethics of posthumanism" (3), Yi's "aesthetical ethics" is drawn from the anti-anthropocentric posthumanism of Cary Wolfe and others.[1] Both of these authors explore issues of

human prejudice against non-human species, and recent Gothic literature's challenges to these prejudices. Utilizing the monstrous figure of the cyborg, they each focus their investigations on questions of species ethics and on trans-species themes. However the subgenre suggests a broader range of thematics, especially as regards human engagement with technology.

To broaden the scope of the posthuman Gothic in this way, it is necessary to identify the features that distinguish the posthuman Gothic; as well to demonstrate how a literary work defines itself, not only as Gothic, but specifically as posthuman rather than postmodern Gothic. To this end, two works will be examined: alternate versions of the film *Blade Runner*—the original 1982 theatrical release and the 1992 director's cut—will demonstrate key distinctions between the postmodern and the posthuman; and Mark Z. Danielewski's experimental novel *House of Leaves* (2000) will provide a paradigm literary work of the posthuman Gothic. Each work, in its own way, addresses anxiety over the loss of humanity as human memory is externalized and interfaced with technology.

At its most basic, posthumanism can be defined as the investigation into what, if anything remains of the human beyond the disintegration of the liberal humanist subject in postmodernity. Jason C. Smith observes, "[W]hat previously seemed to constitute the subject position of a 'human being' has been threatened, infiltrated, deconstructed, or denatured" (Smith 2004, par. 3). Ivan Callus and Stefan Herbrechter link this threat to a sense of the uncanny much like that found in the Gothic: "[P]osthumanism is a discourse which in envisaging the beyond of the human opens onto openness itself. It is the unknowable itself, the unthinkable itself" (Callus and Herbrechter 2009, 3). This practice of thinking past the dissolution of the human subject and confronting the unknowable that lies beyond marks an important distinction from the more apocalyptic postmodern Gothic. The source of dread in the posthuman Gothic lies not in the fear of our demise but in the uncertainty of what we will become and what will be left of us after the change.

This distinction highlights an important difference in the role that technology plays in each of the subgenres. Definitions of posthumanism most often involve some aspect of the relationship between humans and their technologies. Katherine Hayles explains that "the posthuman view configures the human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines" (Hayles 1999, 3). This aspect of posthumanism is essential to a definition of posthuman Gothic that considers the works' examinations of the technological other. However, simply noting a focus on technology as a form of the monstrous other is not sufficient for distinguishing the

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[1] Many recent accounts of posthumanism focus on issues of animality and view the posthuman situation as one in which anthropocentric concepts and attitudes are no longer desirable. See, for example, Cary Wolfe's *What is Posthumanism?* (2010) and Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet* (2008).

subgenre. After all, the relationship between the Gothic and technology traces back to the beginnings of Gothic literature—for example, in the works of Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley. What changes is how the Gothic employs technology in its exploration of human subjectivity and values. In the case of postmodern Gothic works, for example, human values are no longer defended against religious superstition or belief in the supernatural, as with earlier Gothic literature, but against an absence of any values at all. Therefore, a focus on the amorality and cold efficiency of technology is often a feature of the postmodern Gothic. In postmodernity, works such as the *Alien* and *Matrix* film franchises continue to use Gothic elements and themes to shore up the humanist values of the Enlightenment in contrast to valueless technologies. The villains in such works are not immoral or evil so much as morally vacant, and machines are often presented as perfect exemplars of absolute amorality. In these works, "it is ideas of human individuality and community that are sacralised in horrified reactions to science" (Botting 1996, 157). Creatures of technology are monstrous precisely due their lack of human feelings and their abnegation of human values. The source of fear in the postmodern Gothic is the threat of the annihilation of humanity and its values as it is overwhelmed by technologies often of its own creation.

Such works continue to draw a clear dividing line between machines and humans, supposing that humanity is irretrievably lost in the process of technological supplementation and replacement. The threat in the posthuman Gothic, however, is not that of consumption by the machine but of subsumption into the machine. The horror in these works arises not from a fear of eradication but from a fear of continued existence beyond integration with the technological other. Human values, though not abolished, are altered to serve a posthuman world. Botting notes a similar source of terror in many postmodern Gothic works in which "humans glimpse themselves in the machine, the same and yet different, duplicatable and dispensable, replicatable and replaceable" (Botting 2005, par. 17). However, these works continue to emphasize the threat of the machine duplicating and replacing the human. Even in his discussion of Nick Land's notion of "cybergothic," Botting maintains the binary of human and machine, writing that "'cybergothic' describes the machinic economic and biotechnological systems that have escaped the control of human agents and institutions" (Botting 2008, 58). In contrast, posthuman Gothic works focus on the horror generated as the human becomes incorporated into the machine, interfacing with and evolving into the technological other.

Subsequently, sources of fear in the posthuman Gothic are not solely external, but also internal. There is a tacit understanding that such interfaces cannot take place without some level of complicity on the part of the human. Barton Levi St. Armand offers a useful distinction between the external nature of terror and the internal nature of horror: "Terror expands the soul outward; it leads us to or engulfs us in the sublime, the immense, the cosmic. […] Horror overtakes the soul from the inside; consciousness shrinks or withers from within" (St. Armand 1977, 3). In posthuman Gothic works, the

terror of the threat from outside integrates with the horror of the threat from inside. While a sense of terror arises from the external fear of being transformed into a machine-creature, a sense of horror emerges from the internal dread that the technological other already inhabits the human subject, that the subject is betrayed from within. The monstrosity of these interfaces has as much to do with the human component as with the technological.

Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* explores a number of questions concerning humanity in relation to technology. Botting specifically references *Blade Runner* as an example of twentieth-century Gothic (1996) and of "cybergothic" (2008), foregrounding the postmodern elements of the film—particularly the conflict between humanity, represented by the film's protagonist, Rick Deckard, and the technological other, represented by the replicants that Deckard hunts. However, some significant alterations appearing in the 1992 director's cut of the film indicate a shift from the postmodern to the posthuman and help to demonstrate distinctions between the two.

In the 1982 theatrical release of the film, human qualities are constantly privileged over the ruthlessness and incompassion of the replicants, genetically engineered androids created as off-planet labor. Though identical to humans in appearance, the replicants are created with superior strength and intellect and, thus, pose a threat to humanity if they turn rogue. Deckard is a blade runner, a police officer who specializes in "retiring" such rogue replicants that return to Earth illegally. The use of the term "retire" rather than "execute" or "kill" emphasizes the view of the replicants as artificial, nonhuman life forms. Deckard's humanity and human instincts allow him to overcome the physical and mental superiority of the replicants, as well as to inspire a human-like compassion in the replicant leader, Roy Batty, at the film's climax. After Batty somewhat inexplicably saves Deckard's life, and then dies himself, Deckard's voiceover supposes: "Maybe in those last moments he loved life more than he ever had before. Not just his life, anybody's life" (*Blade Runner* 1982). The voiceover implies that Batty achieves a sort of empathy for Deckard's human fear of mortality and, thus, simulates human values concerning the sanctity of life. At the end of the film, Deckard also opposes the heartless bureaucracy of the police organization he works for, as he rescues his replicant lover, Rachael, from the death sentence placed on her by his superiors.

This version of the film reflects a theme that Botting identifies as common to twentieth-century Gothic works:

> Located in a thoroughly secular world, science signifies the oppressive domination of technological production, bureaucratic organisation and social regulation. What is lost and recovered in the confrontation with scientifically-inspired machines, mutants and inhuman, automated worlds is a virtually religious sense of human wholeness and agency. (Botting 1996, 157)

Deckard's victories over the inhuman replicants and his resistance to an uncaring bureaucracy clearly represent the triumph of human values over the cold, ruthlessness of technology. After all, it is Deckard's most human moment in which he faces his own mortality, which inspires Batty to discover in himself the human quality of compassion.

The director's cut of the film, however, introduces two complications that transform the film's themes from postmodern to posthuman. First, the narration is removed from the film, serving to remove many of the implications of Deckard's humanity. For example, his musings on Batty's final act of rescue are absent in the director's cut, as is his final comment of regret that "[a]ll I could do was sit there and watch him die" (*Blade Runner* 1982). We are left only with the visual of Deckard's perplexity. Without the voiceover, Deckard's reaction displays less a sense of regret at Batty's death and more a sense of relief at his own survival.

The second alteration is the addition of a short scene which re-colors the penultimate scene of the film and reveals that Deckard is, in fact, a replicant. The added scene is a dream sequence in which Deckard dreams of a unicorn. The scene seems arbitrary and out of context until the end of the film when, as he and Rachael make their escape, Deckard discovers a unicorn figure left by his fellow blade runner, Gaff. The figure evokes the unicorn in the dream and implies that Deckard's memories are implanted, like Rachael's. The scene, then, changes from an explanation of why Gaff did not retire Rachael (possibly another moment of human compassion in the original version) to a warning that the police will be coming for Deckard as well as Rachael.

The revelation that he is a replicant necessitates a reassessment of Deckard's actions throughout the film. In the director's cut of the film, his ability to hunt and kill replicants may well be due to his implicit understanding of their motivations, as well as to a certain inhuman ruthlessness on his own part. His superior, Bryant, refers to him as a "goddamn one man slaughterhouse" (*Blade Runner* 1982 and 1992), and his ability to not only track, but to gun down the replicant Zhora through a crowd of people on a city street seems superhuman.

Perhaps the most telling scene is one in which Deckard immediately recognizes the significance of several photographs he finds in an apartment recently occupied by the rogue replicants. Of course, his recognition might be due to past experience in tracking down replicants. But his own collection of photographs, displayed on the piano in his apartment, seems to indicate a shared obsession with artifacts of the past. These photographs are, in effect, externalized memories. As Giuliana Bruno observes: "Leon's preciously kept pictures serve no purpose other than the documentation of the replicant's existence in history. Deckard understands this motivation when he finds the photos" (Bruno 1987, 72).

At the root of *Blade Runner's* Gothic uncanniness is the film's exploration of memory as a determinant of human and/or inhuman identity. Memories are intrinsic in humans and drawn from life experience. Memories create the narratives of human subjectivities. Replicants, however, have very short life spans and limited experiences by which to define themselves. Replicant memories therefore tend to be externalized, as in the forms of photographs. Human memory establishes identity through its fluidity, as an unbroken sequence. Replicant memory, in contrast, is piecemeal and not necessarily sequential. Bruno describes the replicant problem as one of "fragmented temporality" and notes a "dispersal in representation" of their subjectivities (Bruno 1987, 68 and 69). Photographs seem an ideal representation of replicant subjectivity. Though they can be arranged to create humanlike narratives, they are fragments that can also be re-sequenced, thus, destabilizing identity.

The film complicates the issue of identity by introducing the implantation of human memories into newer replicants, simulating the fluidity of human memory and rendering replicants equipped with these implants nearly indistinguishable from humans—they are posthuman hybrids rather than simply machines. Replicants who have implanted memories, such as Rachael and, in the 1992 version of the film Deckard, are themselves initially unaware of their nonhuman status. The moments of revelation of these characters' true natures are disturbing both for the characters themselves and for the film's viewers.

Furthermore, these implanted memories provide Deckard and Rachael with emotions similar to, though not the same as, human emotions. Deckard's status as a replicant significantly changes his emotional relationship to Rachael. Both versions of the film, offer a pivotal scene depicting a developing intimacy between them. In the 1982 version, Deckard teaches Rachael about human love, albeit somewhat violently. Ostensibly, the forcefulness of his seduction is necessary in order to get past Rachael's doubts about the validity of her feelings. However, if Deckard is also a replicant, the awkwardness and aggression of the seduction makes more sense. In the director's cut, both Rachael and Deckard are struggling to come to terms with feelings drawn from implanted memories and not from instinct. Their emotions only simulate human emotions. The lack of gentleness Deckard displays may be a characteristic of replicant love. We later see a similar, though more aggressively passionate, interaction between Batty and Pris. Batty further displays the same unrestrained animalistic emotion when he discovers Pris's corpse. The relative restraint in the emotions of Deckard and Rachael may well be their human memories tempering replicant passions.

Ultimately, the new replicant design represents a threat of integration with technology rather than eradication by technology. Deckard is a posthuman hybrid, essentially a human consciousness uploaded into a replicant body. A posthuman, rather than a postmodern, dread arises at Deckard's realization that his memories and identity are not entirely his own and that he is as closely related to the replicants he has been

tasked to hunt and destroy as he is to the humans that hired him. Furthermore, his emotions and his values are also hybrid—something between human feeling and machine ruthlessness. The ending of the film is no longer an act of human compassion toward the replicant other, but one of self-preservation of a new kind of posthuman creature that is both human and other.

Danielewski's *House of Leaves* provides a similar posthuman thematic of the destabilization of subjectivity through externalizing memory. Throughout, the novel, characters' memories and subjectivities are externalized in various forms of inscription, including not only photographs but also film, architecture, tattoos, and especially a multitude of written texts. What, in fact, makes *House of Leaves* an exemplary work of posthuman Gothic literature is its insistent conflation of subjectivity and narrative, as well as its obsession with the materiality, the machinery, of the texts that narratives inhabit. The novel itself represents the ultimate narrative-bearing machine; a machine that not only integrates the subjectivities of the characters it contains but interfaces with and integrates the subjectivities of its readers.

In his 1996 study of Gothic literature, Botting notes that the horror of postmodern Gothic fiction arises from both the psychological disintegration of the characters and the effects of narrative fragmentation on readers. From these narratives, he argues, "there emerges a threat of sublime excess, of a new darkness of multiple and labyrinthine narratives, in which human myths again dissolve, confronted by an uncanny force beyond its control" (Botting 1996, 170). Had his study been written a few years later, Botting may well have used the previous sentence to specifically describe *House of Leaves*. Spooner, discussing the novel as a paradigm of "mock Gothic," characterizes it as "a bewildering collection of documents, a textual labyrinth" (Spooner 2006, 41). The instability of the Navidson house, the novel's physical labyrinth, both produces and results from the instability of the narrative that contains it. The structure of the narrative features three levels of footnotes attached to the main text—which occasionally overwhelm the main narrative—as well as a number of appendices including such various texts as letters, poems, journal entries, and photographs. The footnotes invite readers to incorporate many of the appendices into the narrative, but the appendices can also be read separately after finishing the main narrative. This design allows for extensive restructurings of the reading sequence and seemingly endless possible reading experiences. The result is that the narrative requires a substantial amount of reader interactivity, even requiring readers to physically manipulate the position of the book in order to read it.

As the book's title suggests, the house doubles the material form of the narrative; and, in turn, the narrative manifests the transformations and disintegrations of the house, especially in the labyrinthine chapter IX. This interplay creates in readers the same feelings of dislocation experienced by the house's inhabitants. The labyrinths, be they the Navidson house or the various texts within which the house is manifest, are

constructed only during interactions with their human inhabitants. Zampanò cites a fictional critic who suggests that the permutations of the Navidson house reflect the shifting psychological states of the characters within: "Ruby Dahl, in her stupendous study of space, calls the house on Ash Tree Lane 'a solipsistic heightener,' arguing that 'the house, the halls, and the rooms all become the self—collapsing, expanding, tilting, closing, but always in perfect relation to the mental state of the individual" (Danielewski 2000, 165). Nele Bemong similarly observes that "the house primarily seems to externalise the psychic problems and anxieties of its inhabitants in its architectural structure" (Bemong 2003, sec. 2 par. 2). But assigning a one-way causal connection in which the house reacts to the psychological states of the characters seems overly simplistic. The quotation from the fictional Dahl implies a more interactive and interdependent relationship between the labyrinths and their inhabitants.

Zampanò's footnote to the quotation reads: "Curiously Dahl fails to consider why the house never opens into what is necessarily outside of itself" (Danielewski 2000, 165 note 202). He does not comment further on this curiosity; but the suggestion is that the house *cannot* open into to what is outside itself, but can only influence and be influenced by those who interact with it. The situation is not simply that the house contains and reacts to its inhabitants, but that it shapes itself in relation to them. Similarly, the interrelations between the various textual labyrinths and their characters create the closed system that is the novel, albeit, an inherently unstable system that constantly shifts and transforms, just as the Navidson house does. Readers, then, stand in the same relation to the novel as the characters to the house. According to Spooner, "The power of the text to cross the invisible boundary between page and reader is a constant theme of *House of Leaves*" (Spooner 2006, 44). Readers are drawn into a textual system that is constantly mutating around them, disorienting them and continually disrupting the reading experience.

These narrative effects certainly meet Botting's criteria for postmodern Gothic narratives. However, the novel does more than create unstable narrative forms that dislocate its characters and readers. It's multiple narrative layers— the film of *The Navidson Record* and the three levels of commentary attached to it—generate a system in which the various commentaries and footnotes feedback on one another and blend together. Through the material elements of the novel, the voices and perspectives of the narrators become entwined and confused. The material form of the text, thus, produces dispersed subjectivities, not so much fractured as extended into one another's narrative threads, i.e. into the machinery of one another's material texts. Johnny Truant's autobiographical footnotes, for example, become confused with the footnotes of Zampanò's pseudo-scholarly manuscript. Truant's inability to find any trace of *The Navidson Record* suggests that the film itself may only exist in the description given in Zampanò's exegesis, thus, also conflating those two documents. Ultimately, the sense of the uncanny in Danielewski's novel arises not from postmodern disintegration, but

from a posthuman integration of the various subjects in the novel with the machinery of the texts, the externalized memories, of others.

Such integrations lead to a sense of self-dispersal, as Truant explains, "[T]his terrible sense of relatedness to Zampanò's work implies something that just can't be, namely that this thing has created me; not me unto it, but now it unto me" (Danielewski 2000, 326). The theme of self-dispersal becomes the central crisis of the novel as Will Navidson experiences a simultaneous self-annihilation and self-liberation through the act of burning the pages of *House of Leaves*—a case of the novel appearing and disintegrating within its own pages.

This act, taking place in the center of the house's labyrinth, reflects a profound sense of lack, which contributes to the uncanny character of the house and the novel. Hayles observes that "the house confronts those who enter its mysterious interior with the threat of nothingness that, far from being mere absence, has a terrible ferocious agency" (Hayles 2008, 178-79). This "ferocious agency" manifests as a bestial growl heard within the house's labyrinth, as well as in Truant's memories and hallucinations. However, the beast is less an external threat than an outward projection of internal horror, something inseparable from the humans both inside and outside the novel: "a nonhuman creature whose agency is completely enmeshed with that of the characters, the author, the reader" (Hayles 2008, 182). And Spooner supposes that "Danielewski deliberately allows the source of horror to remain nameless, shapeless, so that it can be shaped to the individual fears brought to the text by the reader" (Spooner 2006, 46). This shapeless "nonhuman creature" is a manifestation of a monstrous other, an unrepresentable presence generated from the conflations and permutations of the various material texts of and in the novel. Botting argues that appearances of monsters in Gothic literature can operate as manifestations of textual instability: "The ambivalence of the monster is always, given its retrospective function, something of a metaphor providing form for what is formless. It inhabits texts as much as nature. A strange biotextual entity, it marks a crossing where the real and the world of symbols confound each other" (Botting 2003, 345). In demonstration of this idea, each of the three narrators of the novel encounters the beast only in relation to the texts with which they engage. And these encounters reflect their struggles and failures to bring form to the resistant texts.

Though Navidson observes traces of the beast in earlier explorations of the house, his personal encounter takes place only upon his final return to the house. Each of the three theories the novel offers regarding Davidson's return point to his need to create an order, a coherence, out of his impossible experiences of the house. Navidson's own letter of explanation for his return—itself full of gaps and incoherence—suggests his need for order and meaning: "I need to go back to that place one more time…I'm starting to see that place for what it is and it's not for cable shows or National Geographic" (Danielewski 2000, 390). The documentary film Navidson has created "for

cable or National Geographic" is one attempt to impose order on his experiences. But as the letter indicates, it fails to provide such an order. It only showcases the mystery of the house and leaves others to try to make their own sense—as Zampanò and Truant attempt to do. Navidson must return to interact directly with the house to find an ordering principle that he associates with God. In the letter he writes "What I mean to say is that our house is God" (Danielewski 2000, 390), suggesting that returning to the house will somehow put his life in order.

Only when Navidson reaches the center of the house's labyrinth can he interface with the text that the place reflects: "Taking a tiny sip of water and burying himself deeper in his sleeping bag, he turns his attention to the last possible activity, the only book in his possession: *House of Leaves*" (Danielewski 2000, 465). This, of course, is the same book written by Zampanò and put into order of a sort by Truant, a book describing Navidson's film and containing a variety of other texts that try to bring meaning to that film. Here, in a space of meta-fictional reflexivity, Navidson confronts the beast in the labyrinth, the lack at the center of the house and the novel. Hayles writes: "Overwhelmed by the cacophony of competing and cooperating voices, the authority of voice is deconstructed and the interiority it authorized is subverted into echoes testifying to the absences at the center" (Hayles 2008, 186). Rather than finding an ordering principle at the center of the house, Navidson is confronted with an absence of order, one that exposes the instability of his subjectivity.

Navidson is left in a place that is not a place: "All that remains is the ashblack slab upon which he is standing, now apparently supported by nothing: darkness below, above, and of course darkness beyond" (Danielewski 2000, 464). His only remaining point of reference is in the pages of *House of Leaves*. In order to complete the act of reading the book, Navidson must burn the pages he has already read for illumination. As Spooner notes, "by burning *House of Leaves* Navidson is also in effect burning down his own house" (Spooner 2006, 43). However, since he exists both inside and outside of the text, acting upon and being acted upon by its machinery, the burning of the book is also a self-immolation. The absence at the center of the house, and the novel, becomes Navidson's absence. Navidson confronts and becomes identified with the labyrinth's monstrous other, as Truant will also do.

The conflation of the two characters, Navidson and Truant, is driven home when, in Truant's own narrative, he reenacts the burning of *House of Leaves*: "The book is burning. At last. A strange light scans each page, memorizing all of it even as each character twists into ash" (Danielewski 2000, 518). As he also destroys the book that contains him, Truant's immolation cannot be separated from Navidson's. One event does not echo the other, nor do they parallel one another. The text that each burns contains the other as well as himself. The burnings are the same act happening at different levels of narrative.

This sort of character conflation resulting from interfacing with texts occurs between Truant and Zampanò as well. For each of them, the absent presence of the beast manifests outside of Navidson's film and beyond the walls of the house's labyrinth. Due to the claw marks found scratched into the floor of his apartment, we are tempted to believe that the creature may have had a part in Zampanò's death. However, neither he nor Truant indicate that he encounters the beast anywhere except through Navidson's film and the texts that discuss the creature's presence in the film. Nevertheless, as Truant notes, "Zampanò has attempted to eradicate the 'Minotaur' theme throughout the *Navidson Report*" (Danielewski 2000, 336 note 298). From chapter IX onward Zampanò draws a parallel between the beast in the Navidson house and the Minotaur imprisoned in Daedalus' labyrinth; although as Truant tells us, he later covers over these references as if to exorcise the beast from his manuscript. It is as if he is trying to prevent the beast from escaping Navidson's film by barring its entry into his own text.

But through Truant's recovery, "with a little bit of turpentine and a good old magnifying glass" (Danielewski 2000, 111), the beast is reinstated, though now under erasure. Truant uses a strike through edit to represent the recovered text, suggesting that Zampanò's Minotaur is both absent and present. It is an uncanny and unstable feature in both the manuscript and the film that can be repressed but not eradicated.

The sense of textual instability heightens as Truant identifies himself with the Minotaur figure in Zampanò's manuscript. In a footnote, Zampanò reminds his readers that "King Minos did not build the labyrinth to imprison a monster but to conceal a deformed child—his child" (Danielewski 2000, 110 note 123). Truant not only relates to the role of the abandoned child, being left essentially orphaned by his father's death and his mother's institutionalization, but he is himself called "beast" by his abusive foster father. His identification with the Minotaur deepens his suspicion that he might somehow be a creation within Zampanò's text. He expresses a feeling that "I am nothing more than the matter of some other voice…possessing me with histories I should never recognize as my own; inventing me, defining me" (Danielewski 2000, 326). This suspicion becomes further complicated when Truant identifies with another manifestation of Zampanò's Minotaur as the Brass Bull of Perilaus: "I can see myself clearly. I am in a black room. My belly is brass and I am hollow" (Danielewski 2000, 338). And he further reveals that Zampanò is trapped inside. Hayles observes:

Experiencing himself incarnate in the bull makes Johnny an artifact created by Zampanò, yet in another sense he creates Zampanò by ordering and remediating his notes into a publishable manuscript. When figured as the bull's artificer, Zampanò becomes the source of Johnny's words instead of the narrator encapsulated by Johnny's commentary, an inversion flipped yet again when Zampanò is imprisoned inside his creation. (Hayles 2002, 801)

As Hayles points out, these inversions and re-inversions result in a destabilization of the hierarchical status of the narrators and their texts. One text can no longer be viewed as a commentary upon another but all of the texts and their narratives become confused.

The novel offers readers material distinctions between these narrative levels—the writings of Zampanò and Truant are distinguished by different fonts and Navidson works in the medium of film and not writing. However, the interrelationships between these narratives turn out to be very complicated and not always discrete. Zampanò only encounters Navidson through the film, and that is only supposing that Navidson and the film exist at all. Navidson may only be a fictional creation of Zampanò. Truant only encounters Zampanò through the exegesis of the film. In this case, we know that the exegesis exists, as it comprises most of the main text of the novel. But it is possible that it was written by Truant and not Zampanò. Zampanò and Navidson may both be Truant's creations. Supposing the discrete existence of each of the narrators, Truant never encounters Navidson except through Zampanò's writings. And Navidson only encounters the other two through his reading of *House of Leaves*. The relationships between the narrators are always mediated by the texts with which they interact.

As Hayles notes, "in *House of Leaves*, consciousness is never seen apart from mediating inscription devices" (Hayles 2002, 784). The main characters of the novel conjure and confront psychological creatures of horror and trauma through their various interfaces with tools of inscription, of mediation and re-mediation. Readers provide another level of re-mediation as they re-order and re-construct the narrative form of the novel, much like Truant does with Zampanò's writings. The posthuman Gothic aspects of the novel derive precisely from the unsettling and decentering effects of the interactions between the machinery of these various texts and the characters and readers of the novel. "*House of Leaves*," Hayles observes, "uses the very multilayered inscriptions that create it as a physical artifact to imagine the subject as a palimpsest, emerging not behind but through the inscriptions that bring the book into being" (Hayles 2002, 779). A dread arises, in both characters and readers, from the realization that as they create and recreate these texts, the texts destabilize and recreate them as well. And the beast that threatens the characters and the readers of *House of Leaves* is as much an internal as an external monstrosity.

House of Leaves evinces an increasing concern with issues of posthumanity that can be seen in a number of recent Gothic and Gothic-related works, such as David Wong's novel *This Book Is Full of Spiders* (2012), Ridley Scott's *Alien* prequel *Prometheus* (2012), and the television series *The Walking Dead* (2010). Each of these, like *Blade Runner* and *House of Leaves*, generates dread from the uncertainty of our human future and confronts the fear that the threat from within us is as great as that from outside. Works such as these suggest that developing and broadening the subgenre of posthuman Gothic might prove very useful to scholarship in the Gothic, as interests turn from

anxieties about human extinction to new questions about how technology is changing us and what we might be changing into. Ruth Bienstock Anolik observes that one of the essential functions of the Gothic is to represent "the fearful unknown as the inhuman Other: the supernatural or monstrous manifestation, inhabiting mysterious space, that symbolizes all that is irrational, uncontrollable and incomprehensible" (Anolik 2004, 1). But what if the Other is not inhuman but posthuman? What if the "fearful unknown" is our future selves? The posthuman Gothic begins with these questions.

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Gothic Paranoia in David Fincher's *Se7en*, *The Game* and *Fight Club*

ABSTRACT

Unlike Tim Burton or Cronenberg, David Fincher has been rarely studied as an auteur of Gothic movies. An analysis of Se7en *(1995),* The Game *(1997) and* Fight Club *(1999), however, reveals the three controlling themes of the Gothic that David Punter identifies: the barbaric, paranoia and the taboo. All three movies exhibit a sense of victimisation, persecution and distrust that characterises a perpetual state of potential endangerment. "Because not knowing is the primary source of Gothic terror, the essential activity of the Gothic protagonist is interpretation" (DeLamotte 1990, 24). The paranoia that the Fincher protagonist experiences is a removal of all his sure and secure bearings in the world which results in an epistemology of uncertainty that necessitates a game of perception, reading and re-construction. Beginning with the reading of clues in* Se7en *and the semiotics of signification in* The Game *to the deception of representation in* Fight Club, *the three films examine the entropic nature of reality, identity and narrative. As a simulation of danger, the Gothic movie renders its protagonist, the viewer, schizophrenic and paranoid as well.*

David Fincher, unlike Tim Burton or David Cronenberg, is seldom regarded as an *auteur* of the Gothic movie. And yet, the controlling themes of the Gothic that David Punter (1996, Vol 2, 183-184) identifies pervade Fincher's early movies: the barbaric in *Se7en* (1995), paranoia in *The Game* (1997), and the taboo in *Fight Club* (1999). Misha

Kavka notes that although the Gothic is particularly suited to the cinema as "there is something peculiarly visual about the Gothic" (2002, 209), there is as yet "no established genre called Gothic cinema or Gothic film" (2002, 209). According to Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy, one of the most neglected areas of Gothic scholarship is the "ways in which Gothic is dispersed through contemporary non-literary media" (2007, 2). Gothic conventions are often used to quickly create a setting of horror, or mock-horror, but not all horror movies are Gothic and vice versa. In general, horror movies, including teen slasher movies and psychological thrillers, lack the Gothic tendency to fakery, representation and simulation. The central emotion of the Gothic is not fear, as William Patrick Day (1985, 5) suggests, but the uncertainty, which creates that fear. In postmodern times, this uncertainty is a product of a loss of all referential certainty and meaningful signification. Leona Sherman posits that "the primary motivating fear is of nothingness or non-separation" (Kahane 2004, 280). In *Se7en*, the proliferation of signs and the slippage of meaning indicate that the promise of any monologic narrative is a mirage as the spectrality of textuality defers any interpretative closure. In *The Game*, this anxiety is further heightened when the façade of carnivalised surfaces is revealed to hide the chaos and entropy of existential emptiness. This "sickening descent into disintegration" (Baldick 1992, xix) culminates in the destruction of the self in *Fight Club* which is symptomatic of "the awful spectre of complete social disintegration" (Botting 2001, 5). An analysis of the early films of Fincher's *oeuvre* reveals an undeniable strain of Gothic paranoia, which stems from the Fincher protagonist experiencing "a removal of all his sure and secure bearings in the world, … precipitating him into a final and catastrophic decline as his subjectivity disintegrates under the pressure of paranoid fantasies" (Punter 2004, 276).

Devoid of any objective point of reference, the viewer experiences vertigo – a crisis of uncertainty, which compels the individual to rethink his epistemological and ontological condition. The concept of Gothic vertigo posits that the Gothic is not characterised by an indulgence in evil but by an interrogation of definitions, particularly our notions of reality, identity and narrative. The Gothic is more enigmatic than malevolent as "the text *appears* ... to be about the 'hideous' because it is really about the 'hidden'" (Punter 1996, Vol 1, 59). The Gothic text poses a puzzle by placing the viewer in an in-between space of delay, ambivalence and incertitude. To Margaret Carter, the essence of the Gothic is "'hesitation' between two or more alternative interpretations of events" (14). Although this may echo Tzevetan Todorov's concept of hesitation in the fantastic, the Gothic effect is focussed on the viewer, rather than the protagonist of the text. The effect of Gothic vertigo works as long as the viewer defers closure and allow both scenarios equal credibility or regard both with equal scepticism, thereby sustaining and prolonging his doubt and unease. By postponing revelation and resolution, the tension of liminality compels the viewer to actively engage in making meaning of a narrative that resists interpretation and determinacy. Fincher believes "there's only two constants: entropy and chaos" (Horsley 2009, 236). The presence of

both these constants evokes reactions of paranoia in the viewer that reflect the enclosed, solipsistic conundrums that Fincher realises.

The Onset of Paranoia – *Se7en* (1995)

The Gothic origins of crime fiction can be traced through William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), the detective stories of Poe, the underworld of Dickensian London to the dual nature of the criminal in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Stevenson, 1886). In film, the visual style, themes and characterisation of *film noir* express a pessimistic worldview of moral ambivalence, criminal complicity, and psychotic disturbance that is analogous with the Gothic. In *Se7en*, the Gothic space of the castle has evolved into the seedy underworld of the urban cityscape. The Gothicised metropolis of *Se7en* is representative of any city or time period. The art design intentionally rendered the locations anonymous and timeless with nameless street signs, and unmarked police transportation. Besides allegorising Dante's Hell, this displacement of time and space into an alternate other-world reality is characteristic of the Gothic. Applying a novel re-silvering process, cinematographer Darius Khondji made the film stock more grainy, black and gritty, especially in the interior scenes of Doe's lair and the crime scenes of Gluttony and Sloth. The labyrinthine passageways, low ceilings and grimy windows produce dimly-lit corrosive spaces which are claustrophobic, disconcerting and repelling, reflecting the social decay and spiritual degeneration of the city.

Although Mills is the one who eventually kills Doe, the movie is really about Somerset. Somerset begins and ends the movie and registers a change in perspective which is not seen in the character of Mills. Like other Gothic protagonists, Somerset establishes a rigid orderly routine to keep his life in check. His clothes and accessories are meticulously arranged before dressing and the steady regularity of his metronome soothes him against the city. Unlike Mills who wants to solve the crime by identifying the killer, Somerset uncovers what the crime signifies. Somerset's belief is that Doe would not "risk the time to do this unless the act itself has meaning". Thinking like the villain in order to catch him inadvertently makes Somerset a Double of Doe. His description of Doe as "methodical, exacting and … patient" applies equally to himself. Although he is well aware that he is merely "picking up the pieces" and that "even the most promising clues only lead to others", he reads Doe's books to penetrate the psyche of Doe. Unlike other detective movies where clues are left behind unwittingly, Doe deliberately leaves signs for Somerset to decipher as he wants to be caught and brought to justice.

Typical of Gothic texts, *Se7en* implicates the audience in its narrative. By customising each death to fit the crime and "turn each sin against the sinner", Doe's metaphorical inventiveness fascinates and repels the audience, an effect characteristic of the Gothic. The primacy of body horror is the presentation of human carnage "in an emotionally detached manner so that what fascinates is not primarily the suffering of

the victim but her or his bodily ruination" (Pinedo 2004, 92). The forensic examination of the corpse of Gluttony emphasises both the grotesque physicality and aesthetic spectacle of the human body. The SWAT team describes Sloth as "some kind of freaking wax sculpture". Just as the forensics team reads the evidence of a crime scene in order to reconstruct the crime, the cadaver becomes a text to be interpreted. The murders are representations and the sleuth is a semiotician who pieces together a narrative from the clue-signs. Unlike most other slasher movies, the audience does not see cross-cut glimpses of the killer at work and is strictly confined to only the point-of-view of the investigation. By identifying with the role of the detectives who arrive at the crime scene only after the crime has occurred, the audience is subject to the psychological trauma of dwelling upon the hideousness of the murders, reconstructing and replaying the crimes in their minds. By leaving the violent act unseen, we are left to imagine it and make it real for ourselves. This psychic visualisation of violence proves more powerful than actually showing the audience the murders.

Structuring the movie on the premise of seven murders representing the seven cardinal sins over seven days sets up audience expectations and elicits audience collusion. The pleasure of the viewer is in playing detective, reading the clues and discerning the pattern of the serial killer. This prescribed script is completely rewritten in *Se7en*. Just like Doe, Fincher constructs signs to manipulate the generic knowingness of his audience. When the SWAT team is assembled after two murders, the audience knows that it is too early in the film for them to find the killer. In so doing, the audience expresses a desire to see another murder committed in order for the pattern to be completed. Likewise, in the chase sequence, the audience does not expect Mills to catch Doe as this will not provide an opportunity to explore Doe's lair and understand his motives. On the one hand, the audience expects and will only be satisfied with the completion of all seven murders. On the other, the predictability is hardly exciting. By beginning the movie on 'Monday', the movie sets a timeline and when only five murders have been played out by Sunday, the question of how the movie will round off with two murders in one day is at the back of the audience's mind. Similarly, in an inversion of the established generic code of the killer being identified and caught, Doe gives himself up. From this point on, the audience is in uncharted territory. The identification of uncertainty, anxiety and suspicion that the audience shares with the detectives as they leave with Doe captures the essence of the effect that the Gothic induces. We no longer feel in control as we have no idea what to expect any longer and do not know how the movie is going to end. By showing up on his own volition, Doe asserts his complete mastery over the situation rather than concedes it. As the author of the plot, he is playing games not just with the detectives but with the audience as well. The audience has wrongly assumed that our familiarity with the serial killer genre has prepared us well for what is to come. Given the intensity of the murders, the climax must be more shocking than everything we have encountered so far. Besides not knowing how Doe is going to outdo himself, the audience actually wants him to complete the pattern so that we achieve closure. "Our desire to know is sinful" (Dyer

1999, 32) as "the fulfilment of the film's structure is the consummation of deadly desire" (Dyer 1999, 34). In anticipating the worst, the audience becomes accomplices encouraging Doe to show us what could be more excessive than what we have already seen.

The criminal personifies the deviance, unlawfulness and audacity of the Gothic enterprise. Crime is itself concerned with transgression, social boundaries and taboo. The serial killer is the modern representation of the Gothic monster, unrecognizable, inscrutable, and incomprehensible. The police subscribe to the mythology of the serial killer when describing Sloth as having a strict religious upbringing and an isolated lifestyle. Given the nomenclature reserved for unidentified bodies, "John Doe's monstrosity hyperbolically literalises the dread produced by the anonymity and illegibility of real-life serial killers as the 'abnormal normal'" (Thompson 2007, 116). The erasure of his existence, having no past, name, fingerprints or identity, renders him more enigmatic than evil. Punter observes that the "villain was always the most complex and interesting character in Gothic fiction" (1996, Vol 1, 9). Instead of repulsion, the Gothic affiliates the audience towards acceptance and inclusion of the defamiliarised Other. The audience considers Doe a monster dreaded by society until, like Frankenstein's creature, he is allowed to have a voice. When he does, he attains the status of a Gothic hero-villain, a Messianic agent of God who is arguably the most moral of us all in meting out judgement and "forced attrition" in a society so plagued with sin we have remained apathetic to it. Although we might not agree with the means, we are persuaded by his prophetic discourse. The notion of the rabid serial killer is overturned by the calm rationality and lucidity that he displays. Fully aware that "it's more comfortable for [us] to label [him] insane", like freaks "doing evil deeds they don't want to do", Doe defies categorisation. His dead-pan denial of responsibility concerning the decomposing dog along the road -- "I didn't do that" – is almost witty and that laughter aligns the audience with Doe in his mockery of the detectives. The charm and brutality that Doe displays is reminiscent of that offered by classic Gothic anti-heroes. Edmundson puts forth that "*fin-de-siècle* culture has invented the serial killer as avenging angel, society's scourge ... monsters of morality, enforcing a certain ethic" (1997, 16). Doe's revolt against social, human and divine precepts is a threat to order; yet the audacity to defy conformity and assert his individuality is almost laudable. In describing his "work", Doe reverses crime as law enforcement, while his murders are art exhibits and religion becomes a motive for community service. The balance has shifted. "The greatest fear Doe represents is that he might be right" (Gates 2006, 279). In order for the movie to end, the pattern must be completed and Doe must be proven right. The desire of the audience to see the plot come full circle is fulfilled at the cost of the only uncontaminated element of the movie. The horror of Tracy's violent death signifies the death of innocence and the unredeemable social breakdown that is inevitable. Up to now, the victims were representative and necessary plot devices. We distanced ourselves from their lifeless corpses in the same way the police treated their

cases. Tracy's demise brings Doe's violence home to someone the audience knows, can relate to and perceives to be virginal, non-violent and blameless.

Se7en establishes itself as a metaphysical detective story which has "the intention, or at least the effect, of asking questions about mysteries of being and knowing which transcend the mere machinations of the mystery plot … unanswerable questions about identity, reality and knowledge" (Gates 2002, 188). This anti-detective movie evokes the impulse to detect merely to frustrate any attempt to make sense of the clues and solve the crime. By turning himself in and going unpunished, Doe refuses the police the satisfaction of restoring any sense of order.

The Experience of Paranoia -- *The Game* (1997)

Paranoia is the product of a lack of information and a loss of control. In *The Game*, Nicholas Van Orten, a "manipulative fucking control freak", finds the structure which he needs in order to function slowly dismantled. The play-maker of the Game appears to have complete omnipotence over his life, masterminding a flat tyre and even redirecting telephone signals. The frustration of losing command of his life drives him on a quest to regain definition, order and certainty. This paranoia begins with a threat to personal space and security. As a Gothic film, *The Game* is primarily concerned with the relationship between the individual and society. Like a Byronic hero, Nicholas is comfortable in the isolation and incarceration of his mansion. His world is his house, his club, his office and his car. His venture to participate in the Game takes him out of his comfort zone. By releasing information about himself, he exposes and cedes himself to the exploitation of the Game, which encroaches closer to his person, first in his club, then in his office and then at home. As the Gothic castle is representative of the Gothic protagonist, the break-in of his mansion is the penultimate violation of his personal space. As a storehouse of nostalgia, the castle hides a family secret. In the home movie footage, the Senior Van Orten is depicted as a strong silent authoritarian figure who symbolically walks off into the darkness, leaving the young Nicholas standing alone in his place. This notion of inheritance is symbolised by his father's watch. Nicholas is a Double of his father. It becomes apparent that Nicholas, having seen his father jump to his death but being powerless to stop it, feels a need to compensate for this by taking on the role of the father figure.

The notion of the unconscious suggests a gap between surface text and hidden text that is bridged by interpretation. While Nicholas' secretary dismisses Conrad's call as "obviously some sort of prank", Nicholas reads the signifier "Seymore Butts" to mean the signified Conrad. The name "Seymore Butts" is itself a pun and alludes to the real-life moniker for Adam Glasser, an adult film producer. Pornography, which depicts the sex 'act', is "exciting only because it *isn't* anything like real life" (Black 2002, 29). This hints to us that in this movie, nothing is as it seems and that Nicholas, and the audience, will need to avoid being misdirected by false impressions. The motif of role-

playing, costumes and masks are central to the "elaborate pranks" that CRS plays. The performance begins when Nicholas finds a clown puppet dressed like his father's body which hearkens back to his childhood birthday party. The clown evokes a sense of coulrophobia by hiding its real face behind a painted smile; a puppet is an automaton that imitates and parodies life while being manipulated by a hidden puppeteer. The movie persistently examines the imitation, replication and substitution of the human presence. The animation of a non-living entity is a common Gothic motif but the movie does a double take by dehumanising humans into automaton and then animating them again in a semblance of human identity, evoking an uncanny return of the familiar. The people around Nicholas are unimportant to him and merely play roles in his life. CNN provides Nicholas with his only semblance of human company. The individuality of the newscaster is consigned to the role he plays as he is merely the simulacrum of a disembodied human voice that can be controlled with a remote. Thus when the newsreader is brought to life later and mentions Nicholas' name, he hardly notices it. The irony is that the white noise of the techno-newscaster has become so commonplace that humanising him results in an uncanny effect. In interacting directly with Nicholas, the boundary between the two-dimensional television screen and Nicholas' world is transgressed, but by using Daniel Shorr, who is an actual CNN newsreader, the border between Nicholas' cinematic reality and our own is blurred, and his experience becomes more real to the audience.

Paranoia stems from an excessive over-reading of signs and is a product of interpretation, misinterpretation and re-interpretation based on one's knowledge or lack of it. "Because not knowing is the primary source of Gothic terror, the essential activity of the Gothic protagonist is interpretation" (DeLamotte 1990, 24). Every detail may convey secret import, every sign is potentially significant, every event becomes a signifier. The audience's familiarity with cinematic cues deceives us into thinking that we have an edge over Nicholas. When he happens upon the CRS office or overhears the conversation at the club, the frequency of coincidences gives the audience an inkling that the Game has already started. The ingenuity of the script is that the audience may suspect an anomaly as the plot progresses, but will only read its significance later in retrospect. For instance, Dr Feingold casually tells Nicholas to keep the CRS pen. This action is of no importance until the pen leaks causing him to change his shirt which he eventually finds later in the hotel room. When a stranger accidentally knocks into Nicholas at the hotel, the audience immediately suspects that this action is purposeful. It is later revealed that the stranger planted the key to a hotel room. The audience congratulates itself for reading the signs right and is spurred on to be alert to other signs. In so doing, the audience becomes as paranoid as Nicholas, reading signs where there may not be any. As Nicholas walks into the airport, the director cues the audience to feel the paranoia that Nicholas is experiencing. By decreasing the film speed, using close-ups and a sound track that isolates and accentuates specific sounds and conversations, he conveys to us the heightened sensibilities that render everything and anyone suspicious. As Nicholas waits for his flight, a man coughs and drops his

newspaper leaving behind a clown motif similar to the clown in the driveway. The audience reads the cough as a signal to draw Nicholas' attention to the clue the man is leaving behind for him. This reading is however proven false when a lady picks the clown up and reveals it to be a baby's rattle. Still, one is never certain if the lady is herself part of the Game. Like Nicholas, the audience is going through a crash course on how to "find meaning in things that don't have meaning" (DVD Director's Commentary 54:31). When Nicholas notices a stranger signalling to him, the audience suspects that this is part of the Game as we have been cued to be alert to any unusual behaviour. Although it eventually turns out that he merely wants to tell Nicholas about the ink stain, we are never certain if he was planted or if he was a stranger who happened to notice the ink stain. There is thus a constant rise of expectations and a subsequent bathos of what appears to be normal. More importantly, the audience is never certain if what is normal or appears to be normal is actually planned and fabricated. The end of this sequence of events firmly establishes Nicholas' paranoia when he rejects the man who pleads with him to hand him some toilet paper. This is a symbolic dismissal of all that may appear to be normal and an acceptance that nothing can be trusted.

Paranoia is inherent in the cinematic interpretation of *The Game* because within the economy of the film, every shot is purposeful. For most of the movie, the audience is only privy to Nicholas' perspective. At other times, the audience is provided with information that Nicholas is unaware of. The Game is played as much with the audience as it is with Nicholas. When Nicholas hails a random taxi after his car breaks down, both he and the audience do not suspect that the cab is part of the Game. The audience's familiarity of cinematic convention also aids our interpretation of signs. We are alerted by the accentuation of sound and the close-up when the doors are locked but Nicholas only realises his plight when he notices that the taxi is from California Regal Sedans. The pseudo-acronym CRS is a signifier that appears again when the nondescript van Nicholas parks next to belongs to Cable Repair Specialists. At other times, our reliance on cinematic convention works against us. A man collapsing in front of Nicholas is recognised as part of the Game as it is too coincidental. Nicholas expresses the audience's suspicion when he questions its authenticity. The audience dismisses their reading when the police and ambulance arrive. Thus, it comes as a surprise to the audience later when it is revealed that the entire set-up was fake. Consequently, the audience is made to feel a sense of paranoia as we are unable to trust what we are seeing onscreen any longer.

This causes the audience to become aware of ourselves as viewers who are ourselves in a cinema making meaning from signs on a screen. Fincher admits, "This is not a movie about real-life; this is a movie about movies" (DVD Director's Commentary 74:45). In order to partake of the Game of Cinema, the audience assumes that what we see onscreen is real when we are fully aware that the reel world is one that is created by actors and props, somewhat like the one Nicholas is experiencing. This play is thus

reflective of a postmodern sensibility in the Gothic narrative. The instantaneous conversion of the hospital emergency bay into a subterranean car park conveys to the audience the complete fabrication of the reality of the cinematic world. When Nicholas explains that everything is a prop, the line between reality and what we perceive to be reality onscreen is blurred. Christine's house is a set with mere props, a simulacrum of appearances which, for the purposes of the movie, *is*, indeed, a set of props. This blatantly exposes the artifice of the *mise-en-scène* of the movie. The question Christine asks Nicholas "What did you really, really see this whole time?" is also addressed to the audience. Like Nicholas, we assume the special effect squibs are real bullets and Feingold has been shot. When Nicholas shoots Conrad with "a real gun", we are shown his bloodied shirt and the reactions of Christine and Feingold who declare him dead. At this moment, the audience is unsure of what is real and what is not, forgets the premise that no one can be trusted and believes the tragic end of Conrad is the result of a game gone too far. Like Nicholas, we are taken in by what appears real even though we have been explicitly told that it is not. By interrogating the question of what the audience believes to be real, the movie interrogates the assumed premises upon which we perceive our own reality.

Likening the puppet-master relationship to that of the actor-director, Fincher self-reflexively displays the cinematic machination of costumes, sets, props, effects and casting to a point where nothing is real and reality is an illusion. By exploring the idea of life as role-play, masquerade and performance, the movie interrogates the disjunction between appearance and reality. Confronting a reality which is itself a signifier raises epistemological concerns of our identity and humanity.

The Expression of Paranoia – *Fight Club* (1999)

Schizophrenia in the Gothic manifests itself in alter egos, twins, clones, mirror images, shadow selves and other forms of the double life. As an incarnation of repressed, thwarted cravings for the forbidden, the Doppelganger represents the threat of invasion, violation and usurpation. The association of *Fight Club* with the Gothic is made explicit in Marla's description of Jack as "Dr Jekyll and Mr Jackass". Jack describes his Shadow, Tyler, as a "night person", his libido, who is "free in all the ways that [Jack is] not". Fincher alludes to this imaginary sub-conscious persona by splicing split second inserts of Tyler in the early part of the narrative signifying Tyler's existence on the periphery of Jack's consciousness. These disruptions of Jack's ego are thus manifested through the breakdown of the cinematic form itself. The first embedded image of Tyler appears when Jack describes his somnambulant state, that "with insomnia, nothing's real … everything's a copy of a copy of a copy". Just before he meets Tyler, Jack asks, "If you wake up in a different time, different place, could you wake up as a different person?" as the camera tracks Tyler on the airport travellator. Representing the Everyman of the late 1990s, Jack lives a postmodern schizoid reality wandering between reality and reverie, sleeping and waking, and lucidity and

delusion. As the castle is an external representation of its master's interior state, the dilapidated "shithole" which Jack and Tyler live in is so run down, "turning on one light meant another light in the house went out", a fitting analogy of how Tyler appears whenever Jack sleeps. Tyler explains to Jack the reason for his existence. He posits "I look like you want to look, I fuck like you want to fuck … all the ways you wish you could be – that's me". Tyler is the persona that Jack both desires to be and is afraid of being, "the image of everything that is at once desired and dangerous in the world of the narrator" (Stirling 2004, 87). In this way, Tyler is a projection that ameliorates Jack's banal existence.

Like *Se7en* and *The Game*, the semiotics of signification in *Fight Club* present the Gothic as a mystery to be solved. The achievement of *Fight Club* is the balance it maintains between keeping the revelation of Tyler Durden a surprise and providing the audience with enough visual and dialogue cues for them to perceive his nature before it is revealed. Jack accedes that "sometimes Tyler spoke for me", as he repeats the words fed to him by Tyler, who sits blurred in the background. By using a narrow depth of field and the technique of racking, Fincher manipulates diegetic space by foregrounding either Jack or Tyler and placing the other in the background, literally creating a visual Shadow on the screen. Although this is a recurrent visual motif, the audience, who is familiar with such cinematic technique, does not realise its narrative import. Another configuration is having one stand aside and observe the actions of the other. They only have private conversations and do not talk to the same person at the same time nor do they address each other in public. Another telling sign of this doubling is how Tyler and Jack have shared knowledge or make shared decisions. Jack says "I know this because Tyler knows this". The collective pronoun 'we' is also used to hint at their unitary personality. "We started Fight Club together. Remember?". The idea that both Tyler and Jack "have the exact same suitcase" is dismissed as a coincidence. This duality is particularly difficult in the negotiation of their relationship with Marla. In her initial encounter with Tyler, the viewer attributes her enthusiastic response and readiness to leave with him to the effect of the Xanax. In the sex scene, the face of Marla's lover is distorted but the audience assumes that it is Tyler since Jack wakes up and finds condoms in the latrine. Tyler's request that Jack does not mention him to Marla suggests the typical love triangle yet "Tyler and Marla were never in the same room". Still these images, turns of speech and allusions remain subtle and inconclusive unless read together or seen again in retrospect. It is only when he realises the nature of Tyler that Jack pieces together the fragments of flashback scenes to fill the narrative lapses and comes to a more complete picture of his self.

Fincher parallels Fight Club to the self-help meetings Jack frequents. As a bogus victim, Jack lives vicariously on the edge of life and death, confronting and containing pain and disease, while remaining untouched by either. His narcissism exposes any delusion that such therapy groups offer any genuine comfort and intimacy. *Fight Club* is a film about masculinity in crisis. Fight Club functions like Jack's testicular cancer

group by drawing men together to assert their masculinity. The chant "we're still men" is a vain attempt to convince themselves of their manhood despite their monstrous bodies, phallic inadequacy and "bitch tits". This feminisation of the male body signals a castration complex and a fear of losing gender distinctions. The hugging sessions, close physical contact and male bonding inevitably border on expressing repressed homoerotic undertones. Before their first fight, Tyler tells Jack to "cut the foreplay and just ask" if he could move in. The routine of daily life provides little opportunity to feel pain and to feel like men. At Fight Club, the men strip themselves and regress to the Gothic excess of barbaric violence. To Fincher, that "violence is a metaphor for feeling" (Moses 1999). Societal emasculation necessitates re-birth and self-actualisation. The fights take on Gothic significance as they fuse creation and destruction to become the means for the men "to reacquaint themselves with what it is like to actually feel something, even if that something must be pain". The one-on-one encounters, turn-taking and visceral excitement of Fight Club is metaphorically sexual and sadomasochistic, transforming the fights into orgies of violence and violation. *Fight Club* is a deconstruction, not a glorification, of violence. The physical fight is an objective correlative of the interior struggle between Tyler and Jack. Tyler's corporeality is so tangible that even when Tyler re-appears in the hotel room, the audience readily accepts the idea that the two of them are talking to each other until it is revealed that Jack is speaking to an empty chair. The understanding that Tyler is a "fucking hallucination" allows Jack to eventually reject his alter ego. Unlike the typical Gothic narrative, the termination of the Other does not result in the death of the protagonist. The death of Tyler signifies that Jack no longer has need for his nemesis to define his self. It may appear that Jack's weakness requires Tyler to prop him up but the reality is that Tyler is born from Jack's acknowledgement of his empty, automaton life and the hopeless meaninglessness of our postmodern existence, unlike the rest of us who choose to ignore or deny this state.

In this light, Jack creates Tyler to save himself. In the Gothic, "doubling then is not simply a convention but is the essential reality of the self" (Day 1985, 21). Confronted by the realisation that "this is your life and it's ending one minute at a time", he prays for "a crash or a midair collision … anything" and instead finds Tyler next to him when he wakes up. Tyler addresses the inauthenticity and mediocrity of his life. Contrary to being nihilistic or existential, the viewpoint that Tyler proposes is one that celebrates and cherishes life. The philosophy Tyler espouses is notably similar to that of the Gothic. He tells Jack "know not fear, know that someday, you're gonna die". The two questions posed to the viewer are "What do you wish you'd done before you died?" and "If you died right now, how would you feel about your life?" This is best illustrated when Tyler compels a grocery storeowner at gun-point to fulfil his original dreams. Paradoxically, the closer Jack is to vicariously experiencing pain and death, the more alive he feels. Fight Club has a similar effect as he feels "you weren't alive anywhere like you were there". The regression to the primal self is a return to the extremities of excess. To help him hit "rock bottom", Tyler pours lye on Jack's hand and

tells him not to escape the pain but to engage it. This "near-life" experience of excessive pain has the converse effect of intensifying the experience of life. Similarly, Jack's ability to let go of the steering wheel signals his readiness to lose everything. In finding his self, Jack has no more use for Tyler who disappears. This reckless disregard for life creates a mixed response from the viewer – one of disbelief, awe and envy. In this way, the movie makes the viewer feel he is living a lesser life or only a semblance of life and encourages the viewer to risk more to experience more. In the light of this, "refusal to risk life is worse than its destruction, and is the fundamental nihilism" (Horrocks 1999, 46). In so doing, the movie raises epistemological questions of one's existence, individuality and significance.

Conclusion

David Fincher plainly states "I'm always interested in movies that scar … I want to work the subconscious. I want to involve you in ways in which you might not necessarily want to get involved" (Moses 1999). The sense of victimisation, persecution and distrust that characterises paranoia produces a perpetual state of potential endangerment that necessitates "an epistemology of uncertainty: we only know that we do not know" (Pinedo 2004, 99). By giving monstrous forms to real primal fears, "the Gothic allows us to manage the nightmares of a world in which control seems increasingly tenuous" (McGrath 1997, 153). Beginning with the reading of clues in *Se7en* and the semiotics of signification in *The Game* to the deception of representation in *Fight Club*, paranoia is progressively intensified and internalised to demonstrate the entropy of interpretation in the Postmodern Gothic.

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Delimiting the Unspeakable: Gothic Preoccupations in Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea*

ABSTRACT

A particularly interesting aspect of the Gothic is its capacity for dealing with the unspeakable and the unrepresentable, whether that be an encounter with the sublime, the experience of terror or similarly, of the uncanny. The Gothic as such has been adopted as a metaphorical superstructure and also as a dominant aesthetic in much literature that concerns itself with pushing the limits of that which is unsayable or unwritable. In postmodern literature, the terrors of the postmodern condition are often heard in Gothic tones. Similarly, trauma literature often draws upon the symbolism of the Gothic in endeavouring to represent the unimaginable horrors of genocide and its repercussions for identity, national and personal. This paper will analyse a recent Irish postmodern novel, Star of the Sea *(2004) by Joseph O'Connor to discuss the role of the Gothic in voicing the unspeakable events of the Irish Famine, an event which remarkably is largely absent in the major Irish literature of the* fin de siecle *and the twentieth century alike. It will suggest that the Gothic, as the subconscious of literature, and as it functions in this novel, opens a unique space for illustrating such a difficult topic in Irish national memory.*

The Gothic is widely recognised for its concern with the unspeakable. Critical writings on the Gothic, particularly those which acknowledge the power of the sublime, stress

the importance of this focus so much so that the Gothic has come to be generally acknowledged as a literature of the unsayable; a literature of the unconscious. Steven Bruhm insightfully considers the Gothic the voice for events that cannot be spoken (2002, 171), highlighting the important social significance of the mode. To further this point, I would argue that, as a key aesthetic experience of Gothic literature, the uncanny is intrinsically related to the Gothic voicing of the unsayable. The uncanny is an experience that plays upon the notion of limits and crosses the margins of both consciousness and cognition and as such, in Gothic writing, it has provided a basis for much philosophical enquiry. This paper will examine an Irish postmodern novel, *Star of the Sea*, by Joseph O'Connor and the place of the Gothic in this text as it works toward a presentation of the unspeakable events of "The Great Hunger". The Gothic is often a transhistorical and transcultural literary mode and in O'Connor's novel *Star of the Sea*, the subversive attitude of the Gothic works toward avoiding "grande narrative" approaches to the unwritten personal stories of the famine period (c1845-51). I will argue that the presence of the Gothic in the novel and its insistence upon the uncanny, emphasises the inaccessibility of the past while offering a discursive site for considerations of how history might be written. In this way, the Gothic delimits that which cannot be spoken in the text. In posing this argument, the presence of the Gothic in the text will be traced, focusing on how the uncanny operates in a strategic manner as a historical metaphor across the narrative, linking textual and extra-textual issues and reflecting the Gothic and postmodern facets of the text.

It is important to understand both the taboo and unspeakability that surround the Irish famine in the context of its being a notable "limit event": a point of fracture in historical and cultural narrative. As Simone Gigliotti explains, a limit event is "an event of such magnitude and profound violence that its effects rupture the otherwise normative foundations of legitimacy" (Gigliotti 2003, 164). One might consider September 11th as such an event, given its repercussions for narrative, ideology and reality as outlined by many critics including Nicholas Royle, Jacques Derrida and Jean Baudrillard, to name but a few who have critically analysed the void of language that surrounds the event[1]. Limit events overwhelm standard perception and forms of narrative, and as such a traumatic event, the famine can be recognised as bound by unspeakablity. This could account for why it is, remarkably, largely absent from major Irish literature of the last hundred and fifty years[2]. In terms of its unspeakability, the famine is not only a sensitive event in that it involved the death of approximately one

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[1] According to Derrida, 9/11, as an 'ineffable', 'unqualifiable' and 'undeniable event', resulted in an impossibility of understanding the *thing* itself. We cannot get past naming and dating because 'in the end we don't know what' it is. See. Borradori, Giovanna. 2003. 25-30, 33-4, 85-90, 100-02. This example is not intended to draw any parallels between the Irish Famine and the terrorist attacks of September 11th beyond the fact that both incidents can be seen to have had the same impact on narrative and discursive responses.

[2] There is a notable silence on the famine in Irish literature. In certain works of Maria Edgeworth, Patrick Kavanagh and John Banville, the issue is certainly present, yet these examples represent a small minority within the grand scale of Irish literary output in the modern period.

million Irish people through starvation and the emigration of one and a half million during a five year period – all of this occurring while large quantities of alternative food supplies were being exported in colonial taxation – it is a historical event that because of political developments in Ireland in the twentieth century, has been deprived of an adequate forum for its speaking. To speak of this atrocity and its repercussions for Irish language and culture would have, up until quite recently, in many forums, been taken as a nationalist gesture. Arguably, this would not have been "relevant" to the cultural and political rhetoric of a "diplomatic" and "economically advancing" state. It is also worth considering the impossibility of literary representation in the wake of such a large-scale traumatic national event. If we cautiously refer to Adorno's idea that poetry after an event such as this would be barbaric, or grotesque[3], we can see that there are not only political issues at stake but cultural and artistic concerns too. In any discussion of the mass starvation and death that resulted from the famine, there is simply a sheer absence of words to adequately encompass both the personal horrors and the shock impact that it had on Irish history, identity and language. Attempts at writing a literary account would run a high risk of negating artistic value. So, further to the lack of words to encompass the trauma is the taboo and artistic difficulty that surrounds its representation.

In this way the famine, in a sense, is an event that "de-negates" itself. As Derrida discusses in "How to Avoid Speaking", "there is a secret of denial [*dénégation*] and a denial [*dénégation*] of the secret. The secret *as such*, as secret, separates and already institutes a negativity; it is a negation that denies itself. It de-negates itself" (Derrida 1989, 25). Using Derrida's idea to interpret that avoidance of speaking about the famine in a literary context, the narrative of the famine responds to a limit event and subsequently de-limits itself. Speaking of the event, like speaking of a secret, is simultaneously limited and unlimited. There are boundaries prescribing what cannot be said, yet in its own right as an unmentionable thing, the event itself is without boundaries, and this raises important issues for literary representation. This idea of delimitation unveils an interesting idea that can be seen to drive O'Connor's narratives forward. It highlights the fact that the relationship between word and event is problematic for history but that it is invigorating to fiction. Here, in *Star of the Sea*, the space between history and fiction, is where the negativity of the event can cancel itself out. It is the ideal space wherein the novel can illustrate its concerns with narrating the unnarratable and where its Gothic tendencies increase in terms of their symbolic potential.

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[3]Adorno (1951) in 'Cultural Criticism and Society' wrote that '[t]he critique of culture is confronted with the last stage in the dialectic of culture and barbarism: to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric, and that corrodes also the knowledge which expresses why it has become impossible to write poetry today' highlighting the invalidity of aesthetic responses to a history and reality that has been permanently changed. This conceptualisation of the problems of art and literature after such historical trauma offers a useful tool for understanding artistic silence on the subject of the famine.

Star of the Sea: **an uncanny history**

O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* is a complex novel that is distinctly postmodernist in its approach to history and also in its formal plurality which mixes and combines multiple historical and fictional modes. It is also an interesting example of a clear interaction between Gothic and postmodernist poetics, and its own formal hybridity reflects its content which is a multilateral perspective on Irish identity and history during the mid-nineteenth century. A postmodern self-consciousness underlies the novel's dealings with the uncanny nature of history and subjectivity, and this becomes increasingly evident through the novel, which depicts the twenty six day Atlantic voyage of the ship named "Star of the Sea".

During the ship's passage to the United States from Ireland, a number of mysteries unravel while the destitute immigrants on board perish from starvation and disease and come to be listed in the captain's daily log. Conjoining a number of the many stories present in the novel is the enigmatic figure of Mary Duane, a maid-servant with a secretive past. She connects the narratives of the primary characters, namely: "the Monster" (Pius Mulvey), Lord David Merredith, and American journalist and writer, Grantley Dixon (who is allegedly the author of the novel we are reading). Significantly, the novel takes on an epistolary structure which is ideal in O'Connor's effort to represent the complex and enmeshed versions of history associated with this troubled period. Echoing many earlier Gothic novels which adapted and developed this literary form (Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, being of note), the novel is a collection of fictional and non-fictional texts: newspaper clippings, historical documents, political cartoons, folk songs and poems. The "historical" narrative that results is one compiled from personal memory, public media reports, propagandist illustrations, professional records and a fictional rendering of a dramatic narrative.

Maeve Tynan has explicitly outlined how the novel operates as a standard model of Linda Hutcheon's concept of postmodernism as "historiographic metafiction" (Tynan 2009, 79). Furthering Tynan's reading, I would argue that a postmodern self-consciousness underlies the novel's dealings with the uncanny nature of history and subjectivity, and this becomes increasingly evident through the narrative where the novel's postmodernist attitude is expressed in Gothic tones. There are many obvious postmodern gestures to the Gothic in *Star of the Sea*, including, most notably, intertextual references to *Wuthering Heights*. The figure of Captain Lockwood parallels with Bronte's narrator and a playful anagram is included as a coded message toward the end of the novel which spells out "Get him right sune, else be libel". This translates to read as "Wuthering Heights" and the official pseudonym of the author, "Ellis Bell". One can also find playful references to *Jane Eyre* in the text, and the Monster as the character whom we meet first in the novel provides an interesting nod to Gothic themes. The atmosphere of superstition and brooding evil, as well as the significance of the sublime powers of nature during the icy passage across the North Atlantic imply a

strong Gothic undercurrent to the novel. If we pay further attention, the standardised Gothic domain of the old ruinous manor house of the Merrediths, the remote past setting, and the interaction of old aristocracy and a catholic peasantry, come to reveal implicit Gothic elements in the narrative. However, while these "superficial" Gothic elements are important to understanding how the novel uses the Gothic mode, it is more productive to focus on the discursive qualities of the Gothic as they are present in the text. Of these, most important is the uncanny. The sense of the uncanny that pervades the novel is unambiguous and it is intricately connected to the idea of the perception of otherness in relation to history but also to identity. Interestingly, the narrative, which forms in the compilation of varied perspectives, is a story of mystery and suspense. Its dark nuances tell of not just the dramatic events of the culturally complex group of passengers but also of a potentially supernatural or evil presence among them. This is embodied in the curious uncanny figure of Pius Mulvey, or "the Monster", as he is referred to in the title of the preface to the book. Enigmatically, the Monster engages in unusual patterns of walking the deck of the ship in "the vaporous darkness" of the night in silence and his ghostly presence is eerie and weird, arousing superstition among the passengers and even the captain and his crew. Further to this, there emerges a general superstition on board the ship relating to "the power of dark things" (O'Connor 2005, 152) and this intensifies the sense of fear and fascination that develops around Mulvey's character. Captain Lockwood comments: "[a]ll night long he would walk the ship from bow to stern, from dusk until quarter light, that sticklike limping man from Connemara with the dropping shoulders and ash-coloured clothes" (xi).

Significantly, in the captain's log, it is recorded that the Monster carries with him some of the standard physical traits of the devil as he is known in Irish folkloric tradition. Cautious and furtive, he is always alone and he walks with his left foot dragging behind him "like an anchor" (O'Connor 2005, xi). The captain describes the Monster's "threadbare stateliness" and his "mournful" "disfigured" face and also how his presence was often felt even in his absence evoking terror among some of the sailors on board (ibid). In this regard, he bears a resemblance to the devil of European tradition and the Goethan character of Mephistopheles in particular is playfully invoked in Mulvey's injured leg[4]. Similarly, his aimless wandering is reminiscent of Defoe's Satan, the pitiable fallen angel who relates directly to the folkloric demonised character of "the wandering Jew". These devilish features are often echoed in the Gothic tradition and importantly connect to the concept of doubling and of an intrinsic strange familiarity that surrounds such curious features[5]. In addition, in the case of Mulvey, a macabre uncanny atmosphere is hinged to his monstrous being and his presence is accompanied

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[4] The Junker Woland in the *Urfaust* text injured his leg during an orgiastic encounter with a group of witches in the Brocken Hills on the Walpurgis Night some time during the eighteenth century. See: Goethe. J.W. 1999. *Faust - A Tragedy in Two Parts and the Urfaust*. London: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.

[5] One could consider Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or Bram Stoker's *Dracula* for example.

by a mysterious putrefied odour. In typical Gothic fashion this horrendous stench infects the ship to the point at which the captain writes the following in his log: "there is a very strange and horrible smell about the ship tonight. I do not mean the usual odour emanating from our steerage where the poor people must contend as well as they can, but something much worse and quite pestilential. *It beggars description*" (152). The result of this uncanny presence of Mulvey, whose presence is doubled in and through his familiarity but inherent strangeness to all on board, is that a heightened sense of suspense and anxiety begins to terrify the ship's crew and passengers. The captain too expresses his fear and growing superstition in noting that "[t]he middling day of any voyage is regarded as unlucky, as on its own is the thirteenth day. For both to fall together as they do this day, is regarded as particularly ill-fated by seamen" (152). As the day progresses he acknowledges that "the stench now became very evil indeed" (155). We are told that one of the crew, Thierry-Luc Duffy of Haiti actually refused to leave his quarters for fear of witchcraft and voodoo.

While incredibly entertaining and highly symbolic, this portrayal offers no ordinary literary account of the uncanny. Being beyond words, this foul imposition on the senses is untraceable and as such is immediately interpreted as paranormal. It invades the ship as an abject and uncanny shadow of the Monster. As such it takes on theoretical aspects that extend outward to extra-textual issues. We can see this in the significant parallel that is immediately recognisable between the terrible nameless odour that seems linked to the devilish Mulvey and the very real and terrifying odour of the fungus *phytophthora infestans* that caused the rotting of the potatoes during the famine. The illusivity of this sensory horror in the novel echoes the unspeakability of the mass death that was heralded by the arrival of the overpowering foul smell of rotting and decay caused by the potato eating fungus. Associated at the time with the devil through discourses of Irish folklore the stench as it is manipulated in O'Connor's novel comes to function as a crucial historical metaphor. It presents the unrepresentable in an abstract and symbolic manner, circumventing the problem of verbal communication through a reliance on the sensory power of an odour. It does this while also reinforcing a Gothic atmosphere in the novel whereby the reader's suspicion and superstition is aroused and the story itself comes to enforce a particular kind of reading pattern.

Arguably, language in its own right, whether spoken or unspoken – and in particular in the case of the writing of history – is an example of the uncanny. The production of an inexact double is the result of all language and all history writing. In generating history, to gain objectivity, plurality and multiple perspectives are a necessity. This is an idea that is thematically present in O'Connor's novel where a sense of dislocation from history is achieved through a pervasive uncanny atmosphere which is inflected in a self-conscious and intertextual narrative. Toward the end of the novel there is a quotation from Lord Merredith included as an epigraph to a chapter dealing with history which states that "history happens in the first person but is written in the

third. That is what makes history a completely useless art" (386). The simultaneous sense of proximity and distance involved in the uncanny is here reinforced. This exemplifies Nicholas Royle's point that the uncanny is to do with what is not ourselves, not assimilable to ourselves, despite being something that is only experienced by ourselves (2003, vii). There is a difficulty in writing history as a collective narrative when history is personal and its writing, subjective. To refer to Paul Riceour on this, history is also related to the uncanny in terms of its ontological relationship to death. History, like memory involves "death" and as such the presence of the past in the present is haunting and both strange and familiar (Riceour 2004, 39). Like memory, the inexact replication of narrative in the process of writing history is defined by otherness and this is what makes it an ideal subject for postmodern literary analysis. The "truth" of history, is an unattainable goal, beyond all attempts to write it and the ephemerality of history renders it uncanny. But the history of the emigrant seems to be even more deeply imbued with a sense of the uncanny. According to Royle, "uncanniness entails a sense of uncertainty and suspense. However momentary and unstable. As such it is often to be associated with the experience of the threshold, liminality, margins, borders, frontiers" (2003, vii). The inbetweenness of the passage of the ship, of the migrants on board who are about to renegotiate their identities as immigrants in the United States, and of the novel itself, which lies somewhere on the border of fiction and history, brings the uncanny to the heart of the text.

In terms of understanding the importance of form to the novel's rendering of the inaccessible and haunting past, postmodern and contemporary issues are seen to be evident in the layering of reference that we can uncover in what appears on the surface as a straightforward attempt at generating a weird and ominous atmosphere through the image of the monster and the mysterious unidentifiable stench that invades the ship. Arguably too, the postmodern and the Gothic are closely related in this interesting readerly gesture. Importantly, this is not something that is exclusive to O'Connor's novel. The Gothic and the postmodern complement each other in many ways and in many texts. In much postmodernist literature, the terrors of the postmodern condition can be heard in Gothic tones. David Punter and Glennis Byron agree that the postmodern is essentially a place of haunting, and "the distortion of perspective; the hallmark of the Gothic finds a home in postmodernism" (2007, 53). In postmodernist fiction we find a number of standardised Gothic literary devices such as embedded narratives and strong narrative self-consciousness which places the reader in a position of uncertainty about the nature of the real. A significant intersection can also be demonstrated through a reference to Patricia Waugh, who claims that a key to postmodernism is the "construction of fictional illusion and the laying bare of that illusion" (1984, 17), and this, as we know from Ann Radcliffe and others is a central feature of Gothic suspense narratives. We also find in postmodernism, a concern with the fabulous and fantastic which operates in a manner typical of Gothic literature to deconstruct ideology and binary notions of otherness.

Postmodern theorists and critics turn consistently to the rhetoric of the Gothic. Michel Foucault in "A Preface to Transgression", includes commentary on Radcliffe, the Marquis De Sade and Immanuel Kant (Brown 2004, 172). Derrida and Baudrillard alike, embrace the symbolic power of the spectre, the monster, and death in their respective dealings with hauntology and the postmodern culture of death. Many of the issues that are explored separately in the Gothic and postmodernism (both in text and theory), are one and the same, namely: crises of identity, fragmentation of the self, the darkness of the human psyche, and the philosophy of being and knowing. These important theoretical and formal overlaps are present in O'Connor's novel. Metafictional and genre bending in form, it plays with notions of reality and history in its content and it is overtly concerned with the darkness of identity and colonial history in its themes. In O'Connor's postmodernist text a further illustration of this relationship between the Gothic and postmodernism is evident in his handling of an unspeakable past. And this relationship evolves, as I interpret it, because the Gothic, as the subconscious of literature provides a unique discursive space for postmodern perspectives on historiography as it contends with the trauma of the famine in Irish cultural memory.

The Gothic and the unspeakable

The most pervasive aspect of Gothic writing is its capacity for dealing with that which cannot be said and that which is unsayable. This is generally visible in the textual presence of the Gothic sublime, which revels in the depiction of experiences of fear of the unknown and unknowable. Such depictions rely heavily on the notions of extremes and thresholds, with depths and heights; essentially, limits and their traversal. According to David Morris, "in contrast to the eloquent silences favoured by neoclassical writers on the sublime, Gothic sublimity explores a terror of the unspeakable, of the inconceivable, of the unnameable" (1985, 312). Here the Gothic sublime is understood to be an inherently dark or negative sublime; that which is at once fearful and stimulating but which is beyond the conceptual range of the linguistic subject. This insistence on the importance of the relationship between the sublime and the unrepresentable, has origins in Kantian aesthetics which have been reinterpreted through Hegelian thought whereby the sublime is not just inspired by terror but is also evocative of terror. While the cognitive faculties conceive of the sublime object, the imagination experiences frustration at the inability to conceptualise and represent it in its totality. A stimulating situation of simultaneous fear and fascination results, driven by a void of epistemology. For this reason Edmund Burke, in his early consideration of the concept deemed terror – fear of the unknown – as "the ruling principle of the sublime" (1998, 101). Its limitless power of suggestion and its capacity as a catalyst to the imaginative drives of the individual was thus developed as a key feature of much Gothic fiction.

But the Gothic also has a penchant for dealing with the unrepresentable in relation to taboo and to the inaccessible corners of the human psyche. And the uncanny

in Gothic writing is often a means of accessing the dark and unknowable aspects of the subject; those that are ultimately strange but intrinsically familiar to us as encounters with otherness. Punter suggests that we often misrecognise the operational space of the Gothic, or as he refers to it, "the literature of terror". In presenting us with experiences of terror, the Gothic delivers the "real world" "in inverted form" often represents "those areas of the world and of consciousness which are, for one reason or another, not available to the normal process of representation" (Punter & Byron 2007, 15). Those areas of existence that are unrepresentable in the "normal" sense can be said to be uncanny. We can encounter the uncanny on many levels and as Morris notes, "the terror of the uncanny is released as we encounter the disguised and distorted but inalienable images of our own repressed desire… [it is derived] not from something external, alien or unknown but – on the contrary – from something strangely familiar which defeats our efforts to separate ourselves from it" (307). Arguably, our inability to separate ourselves from the uncanny thing means that it is sublime in the conventional sense, connected, importantly, to an impossibility of naming. We can never say precisely what it is that is uncanny. Royle, in discussing the economy of the uncanny asserts that everyone's experience of the uncanny is his or her own (2003, 26). So while the theoretical idea of the uncanny is speakable, the actual subjective experience of it is not and thus hinges on the sublime. The inaccessibility and inherent otherness of the uncanny encounter is what renders it as central to Gothic aesthetics and to the strategies that the Gothic relies upon in speaking the unspeakable.

Uncanny Spaces

In *Star of the Sea*, the central metaphor of the ship reveals further Gothic preoccupations of the novel in relation to the unspeakable and the uncanny. Telling of O'Connor's playful style and use of expansive metaphor, the ship itself is an uncanny site and is doubled in its naming as "Star of the Sea" which is a direct reference to the Virgin Mother in Catholic tradition as the Hebrew translation of the name Maria. Importantly, the ship in its own right as a vessel at sea and as a doubled space in its naming, symbolises a typical Foucauldian heterotopia. It "contains" many figures of otherness while reflecting a microcosmic alternative to contemporary society. In most cases, the depictions of the characters on board revolve around a significant recognition of otherness, whether it be in relation to personal identity, encounters with "other" uncanny figures or in the very experience of the transitional space the immigrant passage.

Fred Botting claims that the heterotopia is an important feature of much Gothic writing as it operates as a liminal site for the displacement of the other: "a site where subjects and behaviours that fit only partially within dominant norms can be both contained and excluded" (2004b, 242). Labyrinths, graveyards and mental asylums provide examples of this, mirroring Foucault's initial example of the ship at sea as a "counter-site, an enacted utopia in which real sites, all the other real sites that can be

found within a culture, are simultaneously represented and contested" (243). According to Foucault the heterotopia is simultaneously real and unreal and the ship is "the heterotopia par excellence". "[T]he boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea" (Foucault 1967). As such it functions, on the margins of culture and society as a reflection and inversion of all other social zones. He adds that since the sixteenth century the ship has been the "greatest reserve of the imagination". The liminality and otherness of the heterotopia are in plentiful example in *Star of the Sea* and the ship thus comes into force as an uncanny site. "Others" on board, include, interestingly, Lord Merredith, whom we discover is not who he thought he was, but the illegitimate son of his landlord father and a peasant Irish woman from the local village. Other, "other" characters might be seen not to exclude the Maharajah, who exists as an orientalised exotic whose presence is not much more than spectral across the various narratives. We also meet the Caribbean seaman Thierry-Luc Duffy, who is most probably, as the name implies, a Creole man of Irish and French descent. In addition to this mix of hybrid and "other" characters, there are a number of figures whose otherness is made evident in their complete evasion of definition. The Monster, already described, is such a character and his many names testify to his plural and shifting identity, ranging from Pius Mulvey to "the Monster", the Ghost, Malvey, Murphy and Frederick Hall, to name but a few.

As an uncanny space for these others, the ship, "Star of the Sea" fulfils at least five of Foucault's outlined principles of heterotopic space. It is a "multifunctional site" as Foucault defines it, testified to by its recognition as a coffin ship while simultaneously being bound to the concept of rebirth in the symbolisation that the name of the ship involves through its connection with the Virgin mother. It is linked to "a slice in time" (Foucault 1967). The passage itself, being othered by the superstition of the number of days involved, hints at a series of events that take place when time is effectively "out of joint" (ibid) during the inbetween and transitionary phase of the voyage. The "Star of the Sea" also "juxtaposes in one real space, several spaces that are incompatible" (ibid): the various locations of narrative on board the ship include the steerage hold below deck; the deck itself, where the Monster roams at night; the lock up; the dining hall; and the captain's cabin, all of which function in their own right as spaces where identity can be defined in various ways. And finally, it fulfills its role as a heterotopia; a space for otherness that relates "to all the space that remains" (ibid). It provides a microcosmic reflection of British society and challenges the identity of that society in its own radical otherness and marginality.

Interpreting the ship as a heterotopia links it back directly to Gothic concerns with representations of subjectivity and otherness; this ties to the novel's engagement with history and representation. The idea of history as uncanny comes to the fore again as we consider the place of such characters in the official historical record. The Gothic here returns to its position in the novel as an important transhistorical and transcultural

literary mode in which the concept of the unspeakable is an eminent narrative force. The subversive nature of the Gothic is rendered in the challenging uncanny space of the heterotopia as it works to counter nationalist, imperial, and/or fundamentalist approaches to this silent moment in Irish history. As such, the otherness and inaccessibility of the past are reinforced while at the same time a discursive space is opened up for consideration of how that past might come to be spoken of. Essentially, the questions of silence, of silencing, and of censorship seem to counterpoint the tremendous sense of disempowerment experienced when encountering the unimaginable and unrepresentable as it pertains to such a large scale traumatic event. In positing this idea, *Star of the Sea* as a postmodern novel, draws largely upon the Gothic literary tradition to present an account of a traumatic history that is haunted by a sense of its own otherness. The novel unites both literary modes, postmodern and Gothic, in its concerns with the illusive nature of the past and the unwritable dimensions of trauma. It presents a fluid and heterogeneous account of a history that has consistently proven itself to be unwritable. In its blending of the Gothic and the postmodern, the uncanny saturates the novel to the point that it is suggested that the writing of history itself is an uncanny process. The setting of the novel is a Gothic heterotopia where otherness is encountered in various forms, not just to intensify the Gothic atmosphere but again to comment on the plural nature of identity and culture and the inaccuracy of a unified narrative of a limit event. Furthermore, the collective perspective of the novel on this elusive historical period is an attempt at speaking the unspeakable, in which the Gothic offers a theoretical and metaphorical structure for the text's aesthetic discourses. As such, the Gothic, in *Star of the Sea*, can be seen as again asserting itself as a site for the delimitation of the unspeakable in contemporary postmodern fiction.

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Queering the Mainstream Monster: Demonstrating Difference and Deviant Sexuality in Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Stoker's *Dracula* (1897)

ABSTRACT

The creation of the Gothic monster, such as the re-animated creature in Shelley's Frankenstein *and the vampire in Stoker's* Dracula, *blurred the established binary opposition of human and monster, as well as the boundaries between heterosexual and homosexual. Gothic narratives largely relied on the colonial discourse of Othering and its dichotomous classification of difference in their portrayal of the sodomitical subject. This threat of the queer monster continued to haunt the Gothic novel, characterised by its visual signifiers of difference and abject appearance. Postcolonial approaches to nineteenth-century Gothic texts can, therefore, usefully illuminate queer readings of the monster. This paper aims to provide an original reading of the homosexual subject in* Frankenstein *and* Dracula *via postcolonial theory, notably Homi Bhabha's notions of hybridity, appropriation and mimicry. Whilst there have been studies dedicated to both postcolonial and queer critical approaches to these narratives, the intersection of "queer postcolonial" remains an underdeveloped research area, with few publications dedicated to the subject. By setting these two seemingly opposing theoretical approaches in dialogue, this paper seeks to identify a paradigm that can encourage new readings of previously overlooked Gothic texts.*

The nineteenth-century Gothic novel provided the perfect breeding ground for a plethora of new, hybrid identities, particularly with regards to gender, sexuality and the

body. The creation of the Gothic monster, such as the vampire in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and the re-animated creature in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, blurred the established binary opposition of human and monster, as well as the boundaries between heterosexuality and homosexuality or familiar and foreign. In the nineteenth century, the negotiation of queer identities in medico-legal and cultural discourses rendered the – albeit spectral – sodomitical monster as the Gothic beast du jour. George Haggerty notes in his pioneering volume *Queer Gothic* that:

> If the spectre of the hidden sodomite looms so large over late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century culture, then that might be in part because the stakes of sexual identification are so much higher in the cultural moment when sexuality and sexual identity, as well as subjectivity and gender, are being codified. (2006, 51)

In additional to sexological and criminological discourse, Gothic narratives like *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* can afford an insight into queer – or non-normative – sexuality during the nineteenth century. There is a growing body of scholarship in contemporary Gothic Studies dedicated to queer readings of the monster both novels.[1] In his analysis of Shelley's narrative, Haggerty examines the "homoerotic force of originary desire" and most notably the creation and subsequent foreclosure of the male-male bond between Victor Frankenstein and his creature (53). James Holt McGarvan situates the monster as both Frankenstein's "homosexual self and love object," noting that he is the embodiment of same-sex desire in the novel (2008, 62). Seminal studies on the vampire have also posited Queer Gothic readings of the vampire in nineteenth-century narratives. In *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, Nina Auerbach outlines the homoerotic connotations of the vampire in *Dracula*, stating that "the British 1890s were haunted not only by the Undead, but by a monster of its own clinical making, the homosexual" (1995, 83). Christopher Craft argues that the vampire's "desire to fuse with a male […] subtly and dangerously suffuses this text" (1984, 110). Owing to his perceived perverse or non-normative desires, the Queer Gothic monster is situated as a marginal or foreign figure.

In order to gain an insight into the significance of markers of difference - particularly corporeal or visual signifiers - in the depiction of the queer monster, it is first necessary to consider the etymology of the word monster, derived from the Latin *monstrum* (meaning an unnatural omen or portent). Whilst is it has been argued that the original stem of the word is the verb *monere*, meaning to warn (Heiland 2004, 100), it would be negligent to overlook the significance of the verb *monstro* (to show). The

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[1] As queer identity is a comparatively modern construct, the term queer in this essay refers primarily to forbidden or deviant sexualities in a nineteenth-century context, with an emphasis on non-normative and especially homoerotic desires or attachments. The term is employed not exclusively to refer to distinct contemporary constructs of homosexual identity but also signifies difference or perceived abnormality with regards to desire or sexuality.

association of monstrosity with visible signifiers of difference in Gothic narratives has been noted in the growing body of scholarship dedicated to Postcolonial readings of the mode. In both *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, monstrosity is also characterised by visual signifiers of difference, particularly through the depiction of the body and bodily fluids. I argue that contemporary queer readings of the nineteenth-century Gothic monster can be usefully illuminated by postcolonial approaches to the texts. Published at the height of British Imperialism and political control in the East during the early nineteenth century, *Frankenstein* reflects social anxieties regarding difference and belonging of the period. H. L . Malchow argues that Shelley's monster is "constructed out of a central tradition of the threatening other – whether troll or giant, gypsy or Negro – from the dark inner recesses of xenophobic fear and loathing" (1993, 103). Malchow also notes Shelley's interest in colonial literature by Mungo Parks and Bryan Edwards recorded in her journal shortly prior to writing the narrative. Gayatri Spivak also examines the discourse of Imperialism and the deconstruction of difference in her analysis of the novel (1999). Published several decades later in 1897, Stoker's *Dracula* is deeply preoccupied with anxieties regarding colonial dominance, ethnicity and masculinity. Stephen D. Arata especially notes the centrality of anxieties surrounding reverse colonisation in the narrative (1994). Despite their distinct contextual relationships to British colonial history, both narratives rely on the adoption of nineteenth-century constructions of difference and marginality in their depiction of the queer monster.

In *Gothic & Gender: An Introduction*, Donna Heiland suggests that the "gothic" construction of nationhood can be read in terms of the relation between the cultural centre and the colonies:

> The relation between mother country and colony is not just one of difference, but also one of likeness, an uncanny doubling that is by definition gothic, and that makes clear the uncertain ground on which terms like "nation," "mother country," and "colony" really stand. (2004, 130)

Nineteenth-century conceptualisations of self and other also arguably stem from this tension, as the colonial subject or "other" becomes an uncanny double of the self through their mimicry of the cultural centre's behaviour and identity. The portrayal of the Gothic monster that shows difference through visual signifiers, such as skin or features that appear foreign, stems from the genre's "intimacy with colonial issues" and colonial anxieties surrounding the "relationships between Self and Other" (Hughes and Smith 2003, 1). Heiland notes that Homi Bhabha's notion of the "unhomely" effect of cross-cultural contact is a "powerful model for thinking about uncertain identities produced by the colonial experience" (2004, 130). Whilst, Heiland notes the significance of the female subject in his analysis, I would argue that uncertain identity can also afford an understanding into the complex construction of colonial masculinity. The notion of uncertain identity, particularly with regards to the hybrid subject that is "almost the same, but not quite" in both appearance and behaviour, proved a

significant threat to established binaries during the nineteenth-century (Bhabha 2004, 122). The hybrid identity poses a complete breakdown between the self and other, suggesting the erosion of established boundaries dictating difference.

During the nineteenth century the ideals of masculine identity were shifting, owing to developments in discourse surrounding sexuality and degeneration, as well as moral panic caused by widely-publicised homosexual scandals. Andrew Smith argues that a "new form of masculinity, one associated with Empire, for example, therefore became constructed during the period" (2004, 2). In his analysis of Orientalism, as defined by Edward Said (1979), and homoeroticism, Joseph Boone notes the threat of foreign non-normative or forbidden sexualities to Western assumptions of masculinity, particularly "the spectre of male-male sex that lurks in their fantasies of a decadent and lawless East" (2001, 45). In *Dracula*, the homoerotic scene in which the vampire expresses his desire to vamp Jonathan Harker significantly takes place during his trip to the Count's native land, Transylvania. The simultaneous fear and desire associated with queer masculinities is also reflected in the perceived allure and threat of Gothic monster. Like the foreign other, the queer monster is portrayed as a threat to the boundaries between sameness and difference, or self and other. Gothic narratives largely relied on the colonial discourse of Othering and its dichotomous classification of difference in their portrayal of queer sexualities. Contemporary postcolonial approaches to nineteenth-century Gothic texts can, therefore, usefully illuminate queer readings of the Victorian Gothic monster. This essay examines the significance of the postcolonial concepts of hybridity and mimicry in the depictions of the queer subject in *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. My analysis aims to provide an original reading of the monster in both texts via postcolonial theory, notably Bhabha's notions of hybridity, appropriation and flawed colonial mimicry. This essay argues that by situating the queer monster as a foreign figure through the use of colonial discourse, both narratives reflect the complex commingling of xenophobia and homophobia in nineteenth-century society, suggesting the queer subject's marginalisation and inability to belong. Whilst there have been studies dedicated to both postcolonial and queer critical approaches to the Gothic novel, it should be noted that the field of queer postcolonial remains a comparatively underdeveloped research area, with few publications dedicated to the subject.[2] By setting these two theoretical approaches in dialogue, however, it is possible to identify a paradigm that may nuance our understanding of queer monstrosity in Gothic literature.

Creating a (Queer) Monster: Physical Difference and Degeneracy

Shelley's novel, published in 1818, charts the obsessive desire of protagonist Victor Frankenstein's attempt to create life by (re)animating a creature created from the organs and tissues of corpses. The narrative explores the consequences of Frankenstein's

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[2] John C. Hawley's edited collection *Postcolonial, Queer* (2001) examines this theoretical intersection. It does, however, focus primarily on contemporary narratives and neglects to consider any such approach to the Gothic.

creation and subsequent rejection of the monstrous being, who desires to forge a bond with his maker, which destabilises the boundaries between parental and homoerotic attachments. The danger of the scientist's non-normative, and even queer, desire to reproduce his masculine ideal in the reanimated creature is emphasised in its grotesque product. Moreover, in keeping with the aforementioned postcolonial notions of otherness, the monster's difference is also emphasised by his abject appearance, which signifies both excess and otherness. Mair Rigby argues that the Gothic "signs and codes" of monstrosity in *Frankenstein* double as "tropes within the language of sexual deviance" (2009, 38). Shelley's use of colonial tropes emphasising physical abnormality, such as corporeal signifiers of difference and especially the skin, also double as queer tropes. That is to say, the sexual deviance of the queer monster is reflected in his physical deformity. In the nineteenth-century society, the notion that "the perverted morality of one generation [...] found literalization in the deformed bodies and minds of the next" was widespread (Hurley 2004, 68). Anxieties arose from the notion that the degenerate child would be engrained with a greater disposition to the sin of the previous generation. Degeneracy was considered to be "progressive in its effects," as any original contamination intensified in the offspring and "manifested in the increasing mental and physical deformity of each generation" (Hurley 2004, 68). These fears surrounding progressive degeneracy are particularly evident in Frankenstein's statement of remorse, "I had been the author of unalterable evils; and I lived in daily fear, lest the monster whom I had created should perpetrate some new wickedness" (Shelley 2012, 62). In *Frankenstein*, the protagonist's desire to mimic the heteronormative process of procreation results in the creation of the queer monster, which is unable to adhere to the social and moral conventions of society.[3]

The signifiers of physical difference in the narrative are also reminiscent of the nineteenth-century colonial discourse of othering, in which the body – and more specifically the skin – becomes a "semiotic of monstrosity" (Halberstam 1995, 7). The depiction of the queer monster in *Frankenstein* is constructed primarily through these visual signs of difference, as is evident by Shelley's use of grotesque corporeal imagery:

> His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips (35).

The contrast between light and dark, which highlights the body as a signifier of difference, apparently reflects the dichotomous classification of the other in colonial discourse. The sibilant description of the "yellow skin" that "scarcely covered" (35) the

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[3] The term heteronormative, employed throughout the paper, is intended to denote the prevalent world view that promotes and prioritises heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation, therefore situating the same-sex sexuality as the "other."

creature's internal infrastructure of soft tissue, however, is arguably more allusive to hybrid threat of the monster and anxieties surrounding the oriental "other." The creature destabilises the boundaries between human and monster owing to his in-between status, suggesting the threat of non-normative reproduction. The creature is situated as almost human "but not quite" to cite Bhabha (122). Shelley's portrayal of the skin, which is depicted as barely containing the organs and bodily fluids that lie beneath, can be illuminated by the Kristevan notion of the abject as a transgression of borders (Kristeva 1982, 4). The anxiety surrounding bodily fluids and their lack of respect for corporeal borders is reflected in the image of the overly tight skin, which Judith Halberstam (1995, 7) argues is the "ultimate boundary," dividing the internal from the external. This emphasis on the potential transgression of corporeal boundaries, which may be easily ruptured exposing the bodily fluids beneath, alludes to the dangers of non-normative and unnatural reproduction. This abject image emphasises his status as a "biological unnatural" or "misfit" (Malchow 1996, 198-9). The visual difference of the yellow skin, which does not belong in the dichotomous categorisation of light and dark, suggests the marginalisation of the monstrous hybrid subject and his inability to belong within normative social structures.

In *Dracula*, Stoker also situates the queer monster as the other figure through repeated references to visual markers of abnormality. The novel, which follows the infiltration of British society by a foreign, aristocratic vampire, emphasises late-Victorian anxieties of atavism and regression. Stoker's narrative also reflects fears of the invading foreign other and the threat to moral values and established notions of masculinity in the dominant colonial centre, represented by the Crew of Light. In this respect, postcolonial theories of otherness can certainly illuminate Stoker's depiction of monstrosity and difference. The figure of Count Dracula represents queer threats, such as homoerotic desires, atavistic regression and non-normative reproduction. In nineteenth-century society, degeneracy was associated with visible signifiers of difference, implying that the body revealed the moral nature of the subject (Hurley 2004, 93). The initial description of the Count reflects this discourse of criminal anthropology, focusing on visual stigmata such as the abnormal facial features. The reference to his "aquiline nose" and "lofty domed forehead" (Stoker 1997, 23) with the receding hairline reflects Cesare Lombroso's account of the born criminal. The language of criminal anthropology mirrors the nineteenth-century colonial discourse of othering, particularly the dehumanising comparisons to animals or savage races¸ which typically focused on the "barbarism" and "foreign aggression" of the colonial subject (Chamberlain 2009, 214). This aggression and barbarism perhaps alludes to the hypermasculinity typically associated with constructions of foreign masculinity, which was also associated with a threatening excess of male desire and virility, as well as animalism. The description of the Count's "lizard fashion" (39) also reflects the dehumanising colonial discourse of the period:

But my very feelings changed to repulsion and terror when I saw the whole man slowly emerge from the window and begin to crawl down the castle wall over that dreadful abyss (39).

The alliterative foregrounding of the verb "crawl" suggests not only the perceived animalistic nature of the Count but also his retrogressive tendencies, signifying the monster's degeneracy and difference. Similarly, the focus on the "peculiarly sharp white teeth" (23) and their protrusion also mirrors the use of animalistic imagery in colonial discourse. The use of dehumanising imagery in the narrative emphasises the perceived threat of the foreign monster.

However, the foregrounding of the fangs also alludes to the vampire's bite, which affords an insight into the nature of his transgressive desire. Although the vampiric exchanges in the novel are not exclusively homoerotic, the Count's implied desire for Jonathan Harker (52) certainly contributes to his position as a queer threat to normative ideals of masculinity.[4] By the nineteenth-century, the verb "bite" already carried homosexual connotations; the antiquated phrases "bit a blow" or "put the bite on somebody" meant to arrange a sexual encounter with another man (Norton 2009). This association between the bite and same-sex desire situates the vampire as a monstrous queer figure. Additionally, the foregrounding of the fangs also provides a visible signifier of the vampire's bloodlust. Whilst this vampiric desire to consume blood can certainly be read as a transgressive sexualised act, this exchange or even appropriation of human blood also marks the attempt at forming a hybrid identity.[5] Gelder notes that the vampire's lineage is "thoroughly mixed" (1994, 12). This miscegenation situates the vampire as a hybrid figure, destabilising his implied foreign appearance in the opening of the novel. Whilst the vampire's origin is certainly foreign, the mixing of bloodlines suggests a rather more hybrid identity, destabilising the boundaries between the foreign and the familiar. The statement "in our veins flows the blood of many brave races" is in keeping with the postcolonial notion of the hybrid subject (33). Unlike in J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), another vampire narrative deeply concerned with queer sexuality, the blood-line in *Dracula* is not a "closed loop" (Sage 2004, 198). Stoker's vampire desires the blood of other ethnicities and classes. This appropriation of bloodlines results in the creation of a new monstrous hybrid identity, in which both the foreign and the familiar are fused. Through this blending of blood, the vampire is able to "create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons" (53-4)

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[4] In the notes to the Norton Critical edition of the text, Nina Auerbach and David Skal outline the difference in this homoerotic scene between the British and the American versions of the novel (52). Whereas the British version merely implies the vampire's desire to bite Jonathan, in the 1899 American edition he explicitly states "To-night is mine."

[5] Existing scholarship on the novel has considered the eroticised potential of vampiric seduction as a sexual act. For further discussion of sexualised readings of the vampirisation scenes, see Christopher Craft's essay '"Kiss me with those red lips": Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*' and Ken Gelder's analysis of vampires and perversion in *Reading the Vampire* (69-72).

that are almost human, "but not quite," in keeping with Bhabha's notion of the hybrid figure (2004, 122). Harker's anxiety surrounding this non-normative vampiric reproduction, which threatens the traditional family model, reflects typical nineteenth-century fears of progressive degeneracy in the next generation of vampires. This abject "in-between" or "composite" (Kristeva 1982, 4) vampiric identity enables the queer monster to infiltrate mainstream society through shared bloodlines, in spite of its physical difference.

Of Mimicry and Monster: Assuming (Hetero)Normative Behaviour

Whilst Bhabha overlooks homosexual identity in his analysis of hybrid identity, his notion of postcolonial mimicry, in which the marginalised figure attempts to mimic the normative behaviour associated with the dominant social and cultural behaviour, can also illuminate the portrayal of queer monstrosity in both *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. The role appropriation particularly with regards to language, for example, is central to the queer monster's mimicry of heteronormative convention, in the nineteenth-century Gothic novel. Frantz Fanon also notes the role of language in "assum[ing] a culture" in his seminal volume *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967, 18). This notion is particularly significant in Shelley's depiction of linguistic appropriation in the process of heteronormative mimicry or "passing" in the dominant cultural centre. In *Frankenstein*, the monster attempts to infiltrate the family of cottagers by becoming "master of their language," hoping this will enable him to transcend the "deformity of [his] figure" (78) and its social limitations. Despite the creature's eloquence, emphasised by the alliterative statement, "these thoughts ... led me to apply with fresh ardour to the acquiring the art of language" (79), Shelley conveys the visible difference of the monster as the flaw in his attempted infiltration of the family model. This is particularly evident in the acknowledgement "that they would be disgusted, until, by [his] gentle demeanour and conciliating word, [he] should first win their favour, and afterwards their love" (79). The foregrounding of the creature's physical deformity renders him a subject of difference that is "almost the same, *but not quite*" (Bhabha 2004, 123), in keeping with postcolonial notions of otherness. The attempts to emulate both literary heroes and members of society that are "strangely unlike" (89) the creature, afford him only a partial representation, thus merely emphasising his marginality and difference. Additionally, the use of the term *strange*, which already connoted homosexual desire during the nineteenth century (Robb 2004, 3), implies the queer nature of his difference. The monster's recognition of his Otherness, therefore, emphasises the gulf between the heterosexual family model and the queer social outcast, ultimately implying the futility of his flawed efforts to pass within society.

Following his rejection by society, the creature aims to recreate the heteronormative process of reproduction with Frankenstein in a grotesque mimicry of

procreation.[6] As he is unsuccessful in winning the affection of both his creator and potential surrogate family of cottagers, he expresses the desire to create a potential companion alongside Frankenstein. Having already "ruptured" normative social and family structures with his initial creation (Hoeveler 2003, 58), the scientist embarks on another queer act of reproduction. In this second attempt at creation, Shelley further subverts the traditional family model by placing the two male characters in a parental role. In temporarily displacing this desire for companionship, which was originally directed toward his creator, onto a female creature, the monster also mimics heteronormative social convention. The text suggests, however, that this mimicry is ultimately flawed, as is evident by the admission that the male and female monster may be incompatible:

> They might even hate each other; the creature who already lived loathed his own deformity, and might he not conceive a greater abhorrence for it when it came before his eyes in the female form? (119)

The alliterative end-focus of the monstrousness of the "female form" and the creature's perceived "greater abhorrence" for it implies its inability to detract from his longing "for the love and sympathy of man" (103). Haggerty notes that the object of this longing is not mankind, but rather specifically Frankenstein, and that this denial of love and the desired male-male bond is the stem of the creature's monstrosity (2006, 54). Shelley also implies the ultimate failure of his heteronormative mimicry with the foreboding statement "You will return, and again seek their kindness, and you will meet with their detestation; your evil passions will be renewed" (103). Following the destruction of the female creation, this mimicry is also then completely undermined by the creature's subsequent passionate pursuit of his creator. As the promise of a female monster to offset these "evil passions" does not come into fruition, the creature's pseudo-parental homoerotic attachment to Frankenstein remains at the foreground of the narrative.

Stoker's depiction of monstrosity and difference in *Dracula* can also be usefully illuminated by Bhabha's postcolonial theories of mimicry and appropriation. As in *Frankenstein*, the monster's mimicry is also initially enabled by the appropriation of the English language. In the initial exchanges between the Count and Jonathan Harker, the process of language learning is likened to invasion or conquest through imagery pertaining to movement, such as the statement "I am but a little way on the road I would travel" (26). Additionally, the association of movement and mimicry by linguistic appropriation suggests its passing function. This is also emphasised by the juxtaposition of the verbs "move" and "speak," which highlight this notion of linguistic passing as enabling movement within society:

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[6] For further discussion of the rupture of heteronormative family structures, see George Haggerty's analysis of the text in *Queer Gothic* and Hoeveler's essay "Frankenstein, feminism, and literary theory."

'Not so,' he answered. 'Well I know that, did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would know me for a stranger. That is not enough for me. Here I am noble; I am *boyar*; the common people know me, and I am master. But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one; men know him not – and to know not is to care not for [...] (26).

The appropriation of established biblical discourse, particularly Exodus 2:22, likening the Count to Moses, highlights this notion of invasion or colonisation, suggesting a migration of the vampiric race to a new, "strange land." Stoker's inclusion of syntactical errors in Dracula's dialogue, however, emphasises the flaw in the Count's attempt at mimicry. Similarly, the alliterative foregrounding of error, evident in the statement "I would that you tell me when I make error, even of the smallest, in my speaking," (26) is particularly reflective of his difference. The repetition of the terms "stranger" and "strange" also place emphasis on the association between foreignness and queer desire, particularly if we are to consider the nineteenth-century significance of the word "strange" as a euphemism for queer desire and the notion of homosexuals as "sexual strangers" in Victorian society outlined by Graham Robb (2004, 254). Whilst Michael Kane (1999, 127) argues that the term "stranger" refers to Dracula's foreign or uncertain origins, it would be negligent to overlook the homosexual connotations of the adjective. The dual signification of the term situates the vampire as both a foreign and a queer threat to the dominant cultural centre.

As in *Frankenstein*, the queer monster in Stoker's narrative also mimics heteronormative convention, particularly during the vampirisation scenes of the novel. Despite his well-documented desire to possess Jonathan Harker in his native land, following his infiltration of British society he preys on female characters. Whilst these vampire bites are depicted primarily as heterosexual exchanges, the scenes can also be considered as attempts at heteronormative mimicry. Bhabha notes, however, that such imitation produces a "slippage" or sign of excess that destabilises the appropriated discourse (2004, 123). The issue of linguistic slippage may not only be applied to the dialogue attributed to the Count, but also to the descriptive passages in the narrative. Like the adjective "strange," the terms "languid," "queer" and "earnest" each already carried homosexual connotations by the 1890s (Robb 2004, 262). Stoker transposes this queer vocabulary, which is usually associated with portrayals of homosexuality, onto female characters either during or after the vampirisation scenes. Following her exchange with the Count, for example, Lucy is described using not only Levitican discourse, such as "unclean" and "unholy," but also as "languorous" (188). Similarly, following her vampirisation Mina is described as "cold, and exhausted and languid" (299). The end-focus of "languid" in the clause contributes to the queer undercurrent of the text by alluding to the homoerotic nature of the desire to possess Harker, which has been projected onto his wife. The repetition of these terms throughout the narrative also highlights the flawed nature of the Count's attempt at mimicking heterosexuality.

Conclusion

Through their use of typically colonial tropes and visual markers of abnormality to indicate difference and degeneracy, both Shelley and Stoker provide a precedent for the portrayal of the queer subject in modern literature. The nature of the beast changes alongside shifting cultural anxieties surrounding the marginalised other in contemporary society, although its visual signifiers of difference remain. In *Postcolonial, Queer*, John C. Hawley notes that the term "postcolonial" describes "a matrix of shifting components" as complex and conflicting new, hybrid identities emerge (2001, 2). Similarly, the term "queer" also poses a challenge to many of the traditional binary oppositions that dictate the expression of sexuality. Both postcolonial and queer identities, however, are constructed primarily through visual signifiers of difference, often inviting the dominant cultural centre to label them as the monstrous other. Although these two critical approaches have often been considered quite distinct, even opposing, both theoretical standpoints can effectively illuminate these nineteenth-century Gothic narratives' complex mingling of homophobia and xenophobia in the depiction of marginalised, monstrous figures. With this in mind, my analysis has sought to create a dialogue between postcolonial and queer theoretical approaches to *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, providing a hybrid reading of the texts. By blurring the established boundaries between these different approaches to reading the nineteenth-century Gothic queer monster, this essay has sought to outline a new paradigm for reading and understanding the complex depiction of homoerotic desire in Gothic literature.

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Reviving and Revising Mary Shelley's Haunted Progeny: Haunted Bodies in Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*

ABSTRACT

The Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl *(1995) is a digital rewrite of Mary Shelley's* Frankenstein *(1818). Its electronic corpus is haunted by a profusion of intertexts and constitutes an uncanny embodiment of the theory of intertextuality, which turns all writers into ghostwriters who are possessed by the literary and linguistic phantoms of the past. In this article, the close reading of* Patchwork Girl *is going to demonstrate that Shelley Jackson employs the medium of hypertext to ingeniously fuse theories of intertextuality with the Gothic. She does so by harking back to the Gothic trope of the haunted, which she applies to the architexture of texts in order to foreground the* somatic *quality of such intertextual patchworks.*

In the 1930s, the Russian literary critic and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin presciently lamented in his treatise "Discourse in the Novel":

> The resistance of a unitary, canonic language, of a national myth bolstered by a yet-unshaken unity, is still too strong for heteroglossia to relativize and decenter literary and language consciousness. This verbal-ideological decentering will occur only when a national culture loses its sealed-off

and self-sufficient character, when it becomes conscious of itself as only one among other cultures and languages. (Bakhtin 1994, 370)

In the meantime, a host of paradigm-shifting theories ended the indisputable reign of unified singular texts and subjects; theories such as poststructuralism, postmodernism, and gender studies have raised awareness and caused a relativization of literature, language and subjectivity. As a consequence, compositional heterogeneity, which Bakhtin called *heteroglossia*, has become a valuable quality today; fragmentary, multiple, even mutable (textual) bodies have established themselves as equally valid, if not more desirable to some, at least within large circles of the academic world.

Shelley Jackson's computer novel *Patchwork Girl*, published in 1995, was created in the wake of the linguistic turn in the humanities and influenced decisively by its thought-provoking theories. It is, therefore, little surprising that this electronic work was shaped by the belief that an awareness of the inherent plurality of language and of the hybridity of contemporary identities demands changes in our art. That *Patchwork Girl* was affected by this conviction is, for instance, mirrored in a passage of her computer novel which states that "[t]his existential realization [of the incompleteness of riven experience] necessitated the devising of an equally discordant prose and painting style" (Jackson 1995, body of text/ mixed up/ riven[1]).

In line with that notion, Shelley Jackson selected the writing and reading space of *hypertext* to materialize her novel *Patchwork Girl*, since the structural specificities of this medium are ideally suited for representing pieced texts and patched identities. According to George Landow, one of the leading theorists in the field of digital literature, *hyperfictions* are inherently and explicitly fragmented, since their computerized corpus is divided into individual blocks of text, called *lexias*, and hyperlinks. Moreover, the links between lexias are frequently multiple, resulting in branching reading paths (Landow 2006, 3). In the case of Shelley Jackson's *hyperfiction*, already the electronic title page of her computer novel provides multiple possible entry points to its readers: "Patchwork Girl; or, A MODERN MONSTER. By Mary/Shelley, & HERSELF". The lower part of the title page containing the words "a graveyard, a journal, a quilt, a story, & broken accents" serves as *hot words* that are linked to the hypertextual corpus of *Patchwork Girl;* each functioning as a portal to one of the five main sections of Jackson's digital novel. No matter which of its five possible beginnings a reader clicks upon, each of these five parts starts with an image which is followed by an individual reading unit, a lexia. The content of such a window of text may range from a single word to several paragraphs. Each lexia is then connected through links to another separate block of text or occasionally another graphic. Since many of *Patchwork*

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[1] As a hypertext, Jackson's computer novel is not paginated. Therefore, instead of page numbers, the reading path that leads to a particular quotation is cited when quoting passages from an electronic novel. In the current example, the reading unit called "riven" is embedded within a subsection of the main section "a body of text" which is titled "mixed up."

Girl's lexias offer two or more succeeding windows of text to its readers, as is common with hyperfictions, Jackson's computer novel allows for *multicursal* reading paths (Aarseth 1997, 44). Differently put, each reader has to choose her or his individual reading path though Jackson's textual network, whenever he or she reaches one of its many hypertextual crossroads, at which the narrative tends to either branch off into other main sections or subsections or to fork into alternative storylines. In total, Jackson's hyperfiction consists of 323 lexias and 462 links.

It is, of course, anything but a coincidence that Roland Barthes term *lexia* (Barthes 1974, 13) was chosen to denote the individual reading units into which a hyperfiction is fragmented. After all, the textuality embodied by such computer novels closely corresponds to Barthes's vision of the text, as theorists of hyperfiction have perpetually asserted (cf. Bolter 1991, 161; Landow 2006, 1-6, 53, 54). Barthes employs the word *lexia* in *S/Z* for the fragments into which he cut Balzac's *Sarrasine* (Barthes 1974, 13). In Barthes's textual analysis, the purpose of the lexias is to break up the seemingly unified text in order to bring the plurality of its signifiers to the forefront that its singular linear structure attempted to hide.

In a hypertext such as *Patchwork Girl*, however, its readers do not have to perform such a surgical reading like Barthes's dissection of *Sarrazine* in *S/Z*, mainly because a hypertext is already inherently as well as explicitly fragmented, since its hypertextual corpus is divided into lexias and links. Yet, *Patchwork Girl* itself is actually the offspring of such a scrupulous surgical reading of another unified text, since its underlying aim is to cut open and study Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) for its hidden meanings, as already the title page of Shelley Jackson's hyperfiction suggests. There its full title reads *Patchwork Girl, Or, A Modern Monster*, which is a telling modification of Mary Shelley's full title *Frankenstein, Or, The Modern Prometheus.* While Shelley's print classic focuses on the now renowned modern Prometheus Victor Frankenstein, Jackson's revision tells the story of a previously anonymous monster named Patchwork Girl, as the variation in the title indicates.

As *Patchwork Girl*'s narrative reveals, this formerly nameless and unacknowledged monster is actually the female creature from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. As one might remember, the male monster in *Frankenstein* coerces Victor Frankenstein into creating a female counterpart for him. Yet, prior to her completion, Victor retracts his promise and destroys the female monster. Afterwards, he places the female creature's remains into a basket, weighs down the body parts with a great deal of stones and casts them into the sea (Shelley 1818, 161, 165). In Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*, however, this entire disposal scenario described in *Frankenstein* is put into question:

> Has it not struck you as odd that the whole of a female stature commensurate with that of her monstrous intended (not to mention a 'great quantity of stones')

could be hoisted by one man and borne out to sea in a *basket*? (Jackson 1995, a story/ M/S / basket).

This is the premise of Shelley Jackson's digital rewrite of *Frankenstein*. It is explained in Jackson's revision of Shelley's Gothic novel that *one* man could hardly be strong enough to do the following *alone*: first, haul a basket laden not only with the chopped-up, oversized body parts of the female monster but also with a lot of heavy stones from his hut into a skiff; and, then, to heave all that over the side of the boat into the water. Thus, it is unearthed in *Patchwork Girl* that the death of the female creature and the disposal of her remains in *Frankenstein* was in actuality a scam; a cover-up story, fabricated by Mary Shelley, meant to hide the fact that her brainchild not only lived but was also set free to roam the world (Jackson 1995, a story/ M/S/ scam).

The following close reading of *Patchwork Girl* is going to demonstrate that Shelley Jackson employs the medium of hypertext to ingeniously fuse theories of intertextuality with the Gothic. She does so by harking back to the Gothic trope of the haunted, which she does not apply to a house or castle but to the architexture of texts in general and her hyperfiction in particular. In order to demonstrate this, I will, first, illustrate the extent of intertextuality in *Patchwork Girl* and, then, examine the ghostly heterogeneity[2] of such intertextual haunted bodies more closely, in order to, finally, show that their demoniacal plurality is not meant to inspire horror but rather what Cynthia Sugar termed "Gothic desire" (Sugars 2011, 59).

Resuscitating Mary Shelley's Hideous Progeny

What the introduction above hinted at, but did not spell out, is that *Patchwork Girl* is a *hypertext* in more than one sense of that term. *Patchwork Girl* is not only a hypertext in Ted Nelson's usage of the term, who coined this word to designate specific computerized texts that are made up of lexias and links, but it also constitutes a hypertext in Gérard Genette's sense of the term. He explains in *Palimpsests*:

> Hypertextuality refers to any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary. (Genette 1997, 5)

According to Genette's definition, a hypertext is a text which self-consciously derives its material from another pre-existent text. Genette goes on to explain that the underlying purpose of such a specific intertextual relation is always the *transformation* of the earlier text (Genette 1997, 5ff) or, as Julia Kristeva, the mother of intertextuality, would have termed it, its *transposition*, that is the alteration of its enunciative and denotative

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[2] I am indebted to the second blind reviewer for the term "ghostly heterogeneity." (S)he used it in the commentary on my first draft and I adopted it for the revised article, because it wonderfully encapsulates my main argument, offering an alternative to my term "haunted patchworks/pieceworks."

position (Kristeva 1984, 59-60)[3]. In the case of Shelley Jackson's hyperfiction, *Patchwork Girl* grafts itself upon *Frankenstein* in order to amplify certain unstated possibilities of Mary Shelley's Gothic novel. Concretely, Shelley Jackson's computer novel elaborates on what would have happened if the female creature in *Frankenstein* had not been obliterated, by endowing this anonymous female creature with a life of her own within her digital revision of Mary Shelley's print classic.

Yet, instead of merely alluding to *Frankenstein*, manifold key passages from Shelley's Gothic novel are cited *verbatim* in Jackson's computer novel.[4] However, as Katherine Hayles also noted in her seminal media-specific analysis of *Patchwork Girl*, "[w]hen Jackson reinscribes Shelley's text into hers, the act is never merely a quotation […]" (Hayles 2000, 38) but rather "a performative gesture" (ibid.). Consider, for instance, the following lexia of *Patchwork Girl*:

> And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper. I have an affection for it, for it was the offspring of happy days, when death and grief were but words which found no true echo in my heart. Its several pages speak of many a walk, many a drive, and many a conversation, when I was not alone; and my companion was one who, in this world, I shall never see more. […] (Jackson 1995, a story/ severance/ hideous progeny)

This textual passage originally stems from the often cited introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* in which Mary Shelley brands her Gothic novel as "hideous progeny" (Shelley 1818[5], 10) while reminiscing about its genesis; the "happy days" (ibid.) spent in the Villa Diodati near lake Geneva in the company of Lord Byron, John Polidori, and, above all, her "companion" (ibid.) Percy Shelley, who died in 1822. Incorporated into the narrative of Shelley Jackson's computer novel *Patchwork Girl*, however, this quotation from Mary Shelley takes on an entirely different meaning: The eponymous Patchwork Girl of Jackson's electronic novel becomes the "hideous progeny" (Jackson 1995, a story/ severance/ hideous progeny) and the "companion"

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[3] When dealing with theories of intertextuality, it is important to notice that each theorist uses his or her own set of terms, which can cause confusion. In Genette's terminology, for instance, *intertextuality* is merely a minor subcategory, whereas this term is used as an umbrella term by the vast majority of scholars. Similarly, Kristeva later advocated the usage of the term *transposition* in place of her earlier cover term *intertextuality*, although the former was used by Genette but merely as a subcategory of his *hypertextuality*. When using the words *intertexuality* and *transposition* in this article, I refer to the broader meaning of these terms.

[4] The subsection "M/S" which explicates *Patchwork Girl*'s intertextual relation to *Frankenstein*, for instance, entails various passages from chapters sixteen to twenty of Shelley's print classic: the male monster's plea for a female companion (Jackson 1995, a story/ M/S/ plea); Victor Frankenstein's conflicted reaction to the monster's desire for a mate (ibid., a story/ M/S/ promise); then his reluctant labor on the female monster (ibid., a story/ M/S/ filthy work); and Victor's final decision to destroy her prior to her completion (ibid., a story/ M/S/ treachery).

[5] The Penguin edition cited here includes both the original preface from 1818 and the later, more popular one from 1831.

(ibid.) with whom Mary Shelley spent many "happy days" (ibid.) prior to her beloved creature's departure from the Old to the New World.

Likewise, when various recycled snippets from chapters sixteen to twenty of *Frankenstein* are incorporated into "M/S", a subsection of *Patchwork Girl*'s main section "a story", they are not merely quoted but immediately juxtaposed with several pieces of text that are grafted onto Shelley's narrative by Jackson, such as the one calling the disposal scenario into question. The effect of this juxtaposition can best be explained by looking at another main section of *Patchwork Girl*, which is purposefully titled "a (crazy) quilt" and in which this patchwork-like composition technique is taken to an extreme. Consider, for example, the following lexia:

> Now, I believed as one should in the principle of identity, of noncontradiction, of unity. All the people I caught myself being instead of me, my unnameables, my monsters, my hybrids, I exhorted them to silence. But the stubborn matter of the Foetus assumed the literal shape of concealed passions. If mothers imprudently yearned for pears or grapes, then identical fantasies coursed through the tiny body; these poor babies became like the things [their mothers] too ardently desired: blurry, several, simultaneous, impure.
> A hideous monster with calf's head and hooves, or that other dreadful person the girl who is all patches emerge from unsuitable sights and mixed fantasies. Through art, one could even breed misfits and transform them into a new species. 'Mosaic' technique of the maternal imagination, mistress of errors; aren't you the very demon of multiplicity? (Jackson 1995, a quilt/ misconception)

A second view option of the same text passage reveals that this block of text was pieced together entirely from appropriated textual snippets without a single ingredient added by Jackson herself:

> Now, I believed as one should in the principle of identity, of noncontradiction, of unity. All the people I caught myself being instead of me, my unnameables, my monsters, my hybrids, I exhorted them to silence. *But the stubborn matter of the Foetus assumed the literal shape of concealed passions. If mothers imprudently yearned for pears or grapes, then identical fantasies coursed through the tiny body; these poor babies became like the things [their mothers] too ardently desired:* blurry, several, simultaneous, impure.
> *A hideous monster with calf's head and hooves, or* **that other dreadful person the girl who is all patches** *emerge from unsuitable sights and mixed fantasies. Through art, one could even breed misfits and transform them into a new species."* Mosaic" *technique of the maternal imagination, mistress of errors;* aren't you the very demon of multiplicity?

Helene Cixous, "Coming to Writing" from "*Coming to Writing" and Other Essays*, translated by Sarah Cornell, Deborah Jenson, Ann Liddle, and Susan Sellers (Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 29-30.

Barbara Maria Stafford, Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine (MIT 1991), p. 311-314 (reworked), p. ? [sic]

L. Frank Baum, *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, first published in 1913. Mine is the Ballantine edition, p. 310.

(Jackson 1995, a quilt/ misconception)

Evidently, Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* is not merely a text in which intertextuality plays a significant role but it actually *embodies* the theory of intertextuality; its computerized corpus manifests the principles of intertextuality in practice. Its pieced text epitomizes and literalizes Kristeva's insight, inspired by Bakhtin, that "any text is constructed as a mosaic [or, to use Jackson's leitmotif and structural metaphor, a patchwork] of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva 1980, 66). In fact, the lexia "misconception" embodies in practice what Mikhail Bakhtin explained laboriously in his essay "Discourse in the Novel" (1934/1935) with his key terms *heteroglossia* and *dialogue*. Stylistically heterogeneous intertexts of various genres, in this case children's fiction and literary theory, are pieced together to form a single patchwork block in this window of text, thus, superbly enacting the Bakhtinian concept of heteroglossia in their structural composition (cf Bakhtin 1994, 261, 288-289, 320ff). The effect of juxtaposing these conflicting voices and discourses within Shelley Jackson's piece-work is that this leads to an *internal dialogization* of this computer novel. More simply put, these voices and discourses enter into a *dialogue* with another, which in turn promotes a plurality of meaning and avoids the single-mindedness of monologue, literally speaking (ibid., 276, 284ff, 327, 366-367, 415).[6] Or, as Katherine Hayles sums up the "performative gesture" (Hayles 2000, 38) conveyed by indiscriminately intermingling fictional and non-fictional fragments from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* with Shelley Jackson's own scribal pieces and recycled snippets of other writers' texts in *Patchwork Girl*:

> Instead of valorizing originality, it [*Patchwork Girl*] produces itself and its characters through acts of appropriation and transformation that imply writing and subjectivity are always patchwork quilts of reinscription and innovation. Rejecting the notion of an author's unique genius, it self-consciously insists on

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[6] The convergence between Bakhtin's theory and the structural make-up of hyperfictions was also noted by various theorists, for instance, George Landow (Landow 2006, 53, 56).

the collaborative nature of its productions, [as already the authorial mention on its title page "BY MARY/SHELLEY, AND HERSELF suggests]. (ibid., 45)

However, such an attack on traditional notions of originality and authorship, as performed by *Patchwork Girl*'s overt compositional heterogeneity, is not always appreciated, as the next subsection of this article evinces.

'The plural of demoniacal texture', Or, Pieced Bodies as Demons of Multiplicity

What appears not only feasible but also natural within the theories of intertextuality is considered monstrous or demonic according to concepts of textuality that desire unity or monologism, as Roland Barthes also points out in his landmark essay "From Work to Text." There he asserts that "for any monistic philosophy […], plural is the Evil" (Barthes 1977, 165), so that "where mono-logism appears to be the Law" (ibid.) overt intertextual piece-works are shunned for "[t]he plural of [their] demoniacal texture" (ibid.). This was also thematized in the lexia "misconception," cited above. Let us therefore reconsider it, but this time for its content, instead of its structure.

> Now, *I believed as one should in the principle of identity, of noncontradiction, of unity*. All the people I caught myself being instead of me, *my unnameables, my monsters, my hybrids, I exhorted them to silence. But the stubborn matter* of the Foetus *assumed the literal shape of concealed passions*. If mothers imprudently yearned for pears or grapes, then identical fantasies coursed through the tiny body; these poor babies became like the things [their mothers] too ardently desired: *blurry, several, simultaneous, impure*.
>   *A hideous monster* with calf's head and hooves, *or that other dreadful person the girl who is all patches emerge from unsuitable sights and mixed fantasies*. Through art, one could even breed *misfits* and transform them into a new species." *Mosaic" technique* of the maternal imagination, mistress of errors; *aren't you the very demon of multiplicity*? [emphasis mine] (Jackson 1995, a quilt/ misconception)

The highlighted passages of this lexia remind us of the (neo)classical ideal of anatomical and textual bodies, the "principle […] of noncontradiction, of unity" (ibid.), which is violated by bodies which are "several, simultaneous" (ibid.). Hence such piece-works are deemed "demons of multiplicity" (ibid.) or "hideous monsters" (ibid.) by traditionalists who abhor such overt patchworks that "emerge from unsuitable sights and mixed fantasies" (ibid.).

 The title character of *Patchwork Girl*, however, constitutes such a monstrous patchwork. Analogous to the electronic corpus of Jackson's computer novel, the physical body of Patchwork Girl also is a literal piecework which consists of a multiplicity of appropriated fragments, but of anatomical rather than textual ones. Like the body of the male monster, the anatomical frame of the female creature was pieced together from the reused flesh, bones and organs of several corpses. Consequently, her

overt heterogeneity is depreciated by traditionalists who value unity, as the following lexia illustrates:

> The Patchwork Girl looked at herself and laughed. Noticing the mirror, she stood before it and examined her extraordinary features with amazement--her button eyes, pearl bead teeth and puffy nose. She bowed, and the reflection bowed. Then she laughed again, long and merrily, and the Glass Cat crept out from under the table and said: "I don't blame you for laughing at yourself. Dufresnoy cautioned artists to avoid 'obscene and impudent particolored objects full of hollows, broken into little pieces' that were 'barbarous and shocking to the eyes.' The impious intermarriage of graphic symbol and letter bred teeming monsters of language. Old stories must not be blended promiscuously and without distinction, as east, west, south, and north in a *chaos-manner*. Aren't you horrid?" (Jackson 1995, quilt/ at the mirror)

The Glass Cat from Frank L. Baum's children story *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* serves as an antithetical character to Baum's as well as Jackson's Patchwork Girl, since she is made of solid glass. Hence, she is the ideal mouthpiece for judging Patchwork Girl's evident lack of unity by citing Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy's influential 17th-century Latin poem "De arte graphica" in which he advised artists not to create pieced or patched objects, since such "chimeras" (Du Fresnoy 1695, 57), as the Latin original states, "corrupt their natural forms" (ibid., 56), according to the English translation by John Dryden. Thus, according to Du Fresnoy's neo-classical dictum and the Glass Cat's aesthetic preference, pieced creations such as Patchwork Girl amount to "barbarous" (Jackson 1995, quilt/ at the mirror) or "horrid" (ibid.) creatures. In fact, this is one of the main themes and conflicts debated within *Patchwork Girl*: Is the pieced anatomy of the title character and the patched architexture of the computer novel horrid, because their *gestalt* qualities violate the ancient ideal of organic unity? Before we return to this question and analyze Patchwork Girl's answer to the Glass Cat, we need to examine the pieced anatomy of *Patchwork Girl*, the computer novel, and Patchwork Girl, the title character, more closely by analyzing how the Gothic trope of the haunted is applied to their pieced bodies.

Piece-works as Haunted Bodies

> […] If a person can have a phantom limb, cannot a phantom limb also have also a phantom person? In fact, it seemed to me that each of my parts brought with it a trace of the whole person who was once attached to it. There was a crowd, a whole gaggle of persons, competing for the space occupied by my one limited body. First one, and then another would take precedence. I'd be overwhelmed by the driving spirit of Agatha, or succumb to the gentle blandishments of Constance. […] (Jackson 1995, a story/ séance/ lives and livers)

In this lexia, the title character herself relates the profound consequences that her necrotic birth has had for her by presenting this ingenious appropriation and extension of the term *phantom limb*. Commonly, this term describes the phenomenon experienced by someone who has had a limb amputated but who has the sensation that the lost limb is still there. Here, however, it is employed to express that Patchwork Girl's body parts still harbor a trace of their former owners' personalities. As a consequence, Patchwork Girl's individual body parts are at times possessed by their donors' identities. For instance, Patchwork's Girl's left leg formerly belonged to a nanny called Jane, "who harbored under her durable grey dresses and sensible undergarments a remembrance of a less sensible time: a tattoo of a ship and the legend, Come Back To Me" (Jackson 1995, a graveyard/ left leg). Due to Jane, Patchwork Girl's left "leg is always twitching, jumping, joggling. It wants to go places. It has had enough of waiting" (ibid.). Thus, as a result of her pieced anatomy, Patchwork Girl's body is haunted.

Analogously, the textual corpus of the computer novel *Patchwork Girl* is also haunted, as the following passage suggests:

> LANGUAGE, VOICES
> Everything I'm [*Patchwork Girl*/Patchwork Girl] made of speaks up from the dead. This language I speak, it's haunted. No, it is a haunting, possession, an unfamiliar voice, dogs growling, in my throat. Stuck succubus, […] It's just a singing, snarling wind blowing through our mouths on its way through time. […] (Jackson 1995, a story/ rethinking/ voices)

This textual haunting, referred to in this window of text, is nothing less than the theory of intertextuality with a Gothic twist. According to the theory of intertextuality, our everyday as well as our literary language is never our own. Instead of being an original invention that stands alone, our words and each author's words are interlinked with the language and literature that existed before us. In Jackson's Gothic permutation of the theory of intertextuality, language is therefore presented as inevitably haunted by the linguistic and literary past, so that those who use language are likened to someone who is possessed by the dead that speak through him or her. This in turn means that all authors become ghostwriters in the literal sense of the word, as the following text passage spells out:

> I [Patchwork Girl] wonder […] Am I a host, phony, a setting for a gemstone? And if so, is that good or bad? […]
> Mary writes, I write, we write, but who is really writing? Ghost writers are the only kind there are. (ibid., a story/ rethinking/ am i mary)

Jackson plays around with the usual denotation of the term *ghostwriter* here. She is extending the ordinary meaning of the concept of ghostwriting cleverly by pointing out that, technically speaking, all writers and all authors are ghostwriters in the sense that

all words and linguistic or literary elements they use have been used before, largely by writers and speakers who are dead now. Thus, when we appropriate their words, style, and other narrative elements, we all become ghostwriters who are possessed by the dead, and we all commit multiple acts of plagiarism, even when all the sources are accounted for, when we speak through this haunted language. Yet, while other texts successfully obscure their patchwork-like construction process once the text is completed, the hypertextual corpus of Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* is a case in point for this uncanny permutation of the theory of intertextuality; its electronic corpus is visibly and purposefully haunted by a profusion of intertexts.

This is little surprising, considering that a "[h]ypertext […] is [not only] a fundamentally intertextual system" (Landow 2006, 55) but that it also "has the capacity to emphasize intertextuality in a way that page bound text in a book cannot" (ibid.). Landow refers to the linkage opportunities of hypertext here, which can be used, as is often the case especially in educational or scholarly hypertexts, to directly attach a link to the materials it relates to intertextually (ibid.). Similarly, *Patchwork Girl* utilizes the specificity of the hypertext medium in order to exemplify that all writers are ultimately ghostwriters who are possessed by literary and linguistic phantoms of the past. In the subsection "M/S", for instance, Jackson attaches links called "footnote" to the extracts from *Frankenstein,* indicating the original source from which the material was borrowed. In the main section "a (crazy) quilt", she offers an alternative view option for all lexias in which each appropriated snippet is marked differently to highlight from which sources the text block was patched together.

Christopher Keep states, "[i]t is not the contents of the individual lexia[s], the fragmentary stories and citations from canonical and not so-canonical works, that constitute Patchwork Girl[sic]'s being, but rather the links that allow the reader to traverse the text from point to point" (Keep 2006, 11). Based on my own close reading of *Patchwork Girl*, I suggest inserting the word "only" into the first half of Keep's statement, since I do not agree fully with Keep's original argument. Keep, possibly inspired by Hayles's media-specific-analysis that informed his article, sees the hyperfiction's links rather than its lexias as the decisive constitutive element of *Patchwork Girl*. My own analysis, however, suggests that the computer novel's patchwork-like quality, its ghostly heterogeneity, is sometimes created *within* its lexias, as is the case the main section "a (crazy) quilt", and at other times *between* its lexias, that is through the hypertextual linkage, for instance in the subsection "M/S."

It is important to acknowledge, however, what Shelley Jackson means to say by characterizing her textual and physical piece-work *Patchwork Girl*/Patchwork Girl as haunted body. She does not imply that such demonical plural patchworks should be shunned, as will be detailed later. Instead, her uncanny permutation of the theory of intertextuality is intended to "insists through its [*Patchwork Girl*'s] appropriations that the past can never be left behind, [while] it also shows through its transformations that

new media create a new kind of literature […]" (Hayles 2000, 57). Differently put, Jackson resuscitates an old kind of literature within a modern medium to enable a more suitable writing space for *Patchwork Girl*'s deviant agenda.

Haunted *Bodies* as Torturous *Somatic* Monsters

As we have seen, both the body of the protagonist and the corpus of the computer novel constitute haunted patchworks, because these piece-works consist of anatomical or textual dead matter which is revived within *Patchwork Girl*/Patchwork Girl. We have also seen that this uncanny body-text-analogy of *Patchwork Girl*/Patchwork Girl is the diametrical opposite of the (neo-)classical body-text-analogy whose ideal was organic unity, since both the monstrous patched physique of the title character and the ex-centric pieced anatomy of the hypertext are multiple and mutable, instead of unified and stable. It is due to this deviation from the (neo-) classical ideal of living and artistic bodies that the protagonist and the computer novel are rendered horrifying to the partisans of this ancient order. Yet, it is not merely due to their pieced anatomy that the hyperfiction and the title character are deemed monstrous. In one key lexia that thematizes the monstrousness of patchwork such pieced corpora are described as "torturous *somatic* [emphasis mine] monsters whose parts did not belong" (Jackson 1995, body of text/ typographical). As might be known, the Greek word *soma* translates into *body* and positions corporeality in opposition to the soul, the mind and the psyche. So what this crucial passage underlines is that the alleged monstrousness of *Patchwork Girl*/Patchwork Girl does not solely result from the fragmentariness of their bodies but is furthermore inextricably linked to the notion of *soma*. Thus, additionally to flaunting aesthetic unity, the deviance of the textual and the anatomical body of *Patchwork Girl*/Patchwork Girl is also rooted in the somatic quality of such patchworks which positions such corporeal pieceworks in opposition to vaporous ones which represent the soul, the mind, and the psyche instead. The patchwork quilt is, of course, a particularly apt image in this context, for these tangible textile objects of everyday use belong into the category of folk arts rather than fine arts and are themselves material decorative and utilitarian objects which can be touched and handled rather than transcendental art objects.

Likewise, the operational features of hyperfictions are intended to undermine traditional concepts of authorship and textuality, above all the "abstraction of the literary work from its physical basis" (Hayles 2000, 16) which solidified the notion that "literary works operated somewhat like Platonic forms achieving perfection because they were not sullied by the noise of embodiment" (ibid.). The hypertexan Jay David Bolter offers useful insights in how far hypertexts call into question these notions of text as a vaporous product of a body-less speaking mind. In a conventional print novel, he explains, "the ideal was to make a text transparent, so that a reader looked *through* [emphasis mine] the text to the world beyond" (Bolter 1991, 167), that is to the world of the fictional characters. The peculiar structural make-up of a hyperfiction, however,

impedes such a *ludic* reading where a reader may lose him- or herself in the imagined world of the book. Instead, readers of a hyperfiction are forced to oscillate between *looking through* and *looking at* due to the computerized structure of lexias and links in such a digital novel. Concretely this means, when readers immerse themselves in a particular lexia, they may escape into the world of the narrative, but whenever readers have to physically click on links between such fragments of text, the structure rather than the content of the hypertext is highlighted, so that readers are forced to look *at* rather than *through* the text (Bolter 1991, 166-168). This in turn means that readers are made aware of the actual materiality and corporeality of the text by the pieced multiple and mutable corpus of the hyperfiction *Patchwork Girl* (cf Hayles 2000, 10, 30ff.).

This leads us to what is gained by Jackson's uncanny permutation of intertextuality in which all textual bodies are inevitably haunted and all writers necessarily turn into ghostwriters: In *Patchwork Girl* literature is presented as subjected to the limitations of the material universe rather than as a vaporous transcendental creation which surpasses our ordinary human world and belongs into higher spheres, since all authors work with "a limited number of similar [linguistic and literary] elements" (Jackson 1995, body of text/ bodies too). According to this intertextual understanding of literature, texts are always seen in relation to other texts rather than as a closed-off entity that stands alone. In other words, the pieced hypertextual corpus of *Patchwork Girl* corroborates the notion that all texts are intertextual patchworks, thus foregrounding their actual materiality, i.e. the somatic quality of texts by pointing out that authors are at best patchwork artisans, compilers or *bricoleurs*, who (re)arrange pre-existent possibilities within the linguistic and literary system.

This insight gained from the haunted bodies in *Patchwork Girl* is paradoxically, on the one hand, very much in line with theories of intertextualiy and, on the other hand, amends an involuntarily lack created by the linguistic turn. To explain this paradox we need to return to the (post)structuralist luminary Roland Barthes whose textual theories appear to anticipate the advent of hypertext. Although Barthes cut up seemingly unified texts into disconnected fragments, lexias, in order to debunk a variety of myths surrounding literature, it should be noted that "Barthes's vision [nevertheless] remain[ed] rooted in print culture, for he define[d] the text through its differences from books, not through its similarities with electronic textuality" (Hayles 2000, 2). This is, of course, little surprising considering that Barthes's textual theories were written decades before computers became ubiquitous. Nevertheless, his and other (post)structuralists' theories have unintentionally participated in "eliding differences in media" (ibid.) while wanting to "expand [textuality] beyond the printed page" (ibid.), as Hayles stresses. Differently put, by focusing primarily on the linguistic properties of texts, theorists of intertextuality unwittingly neglected the physical properties of texts which was actually very much in line with was they set out to criticize, namely the inherent values and reading practices of print culture to see a book as "an immaterial

mental construct" (ibid., 16) which in turn "solidified [prescriptive traditional] assumptions about what counts as creativity, authorship, and proper literature" (ibid.).

In Jackson's reinscription of intertextual texts as haunted *bodies*, however, the *somatic* quality of those intertextual patchworks is foregrounded, even more so since Jackson's somatic permutation of the theory of intertextuality is instantiated within the medium of hyperfiction which also intentionally highlights its own corporeality. Thus, it can be maintained that Jackson employs the writing and reading space of hyperfictions, which is ideally suited to embody her concept of ghostly heterogeneity, in order to reinscribes the concept of intertextuality in a way so that its bodily, somatic, dimension is not elided any longer but actually emphasized. By employing a medium which Barthes could not have imagined within his book-bound world, Jackson moves the theory of intertextuality into the digital age, in which electronic novels like *Patchwork Girl* offer better opportunities to writers and theorists alike; readers and writers of hyperfictions do not have to fight against the fixity of the page or the bounds of the codex book any longer, since the inherent specificities of hyperfictions inevitably lead to a transgression from traditional models of subjectivity and classical models of literature.

Yet, Jackson's uncanny permutation of the theory of intertextuality as haunted bodies does not only look forward but also backward to the Gothic genre and to one of its classics, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. As the literary critic Christopher Keep noted *Patchwork Girl* ultimately "suggest[s] that the capacity of the gothic novel to seduce its reader, to draw her into an emotional exchange negotiated at the level of the body itself, persists even in the 'disembodied realm' of cyberspace" (Keep 2006, 8). Although Keep does not perform a close reading of the aforementioned lexias about ghostwriting and haunted bodies which are central to my own analysis, since his interpretive angle on the Gothic nature of Jackson's hypertext differs from mine, he nevertheless offers several theoretical insights which are beneficial to my own analysis, since he establishes a link between the notion of *soma* and Gothic literature. In connection with the deviant body, Keep avers that it was not merely "the affront it posed to notions of aesthetic proportions and physical beauty, but its capacity to reveal the degree to which form and matter are deeply imbricated in one another" (Keep 2006, 10) which made it appear dangerous. This is in line with his main argument, since Keep reminds his readers that the novel in general, and in particular the Gothic novel, was characterized as "a literature of somatic affect" (ibid., 5), that is a literature which "touch[es] us more deeply, at the level of nerves, muscles, and tissue" (ibid.). Hence, Gothic literature, which once it entered a reader's mind affected him or her not only mentally but also physically, posed a threat to the central binary of Enlightenment philosophy, namely the mind/body divide (ibid.). Keep goes on to explain that particularly female readers were warned of the inherent dangers of such literature, which might promote "false expectations [of a life] rich in sensations and feeling" (ibid., 6) and which may moreover lead to an addiction to "physical stimulation" (ibid.). Yet, while moralists preached that

women should therefore shun Gothic literature, "gothic novelists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were keen to include vigorous denunciations of the very pleasures with which their texts were most closely associated" (ibid., 7). These novelists did this naturally in order to gain a larger readership but also because their underlying agenda matched that of Shelley Jackson's computer novel.

Gothic Desires

The main message corroborated by Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* by means of her trope of haunted patchworks is the exact opposite of the partisan and moralistic aesthetic prescriptions which stigmatized ghostly heterogeneity as monstrous or demonical in order to shun such pieced bodies. In fact, the haunted, pieced anatomy of the title character as well as of the computer novel is ultimately presented as natural, instead of horrifying, as traditionalists claim. We have seen before how Jackson reasonably argues that all writers are ghostwriters and all texts are piece-works. Likewise, Jackson normalizes the notion that all physical bodies are patchworks, by pointing out that even our own bodies are haunted:

> BODY GHOSTS
> 'Our bodies are haunted as well as our minds. We are haunted by our uncle's nose, our grandfather's cleft palate, our grandmother's poor vision, our father's baldness. There are ghosts in the form of recessive genes, that never show themselves to us, but might appear to our children, to the seventh son of a seventh son. Red hair, suddenly, out of a clear blond lineage.' (Jackson 1995, a story/ séance/ body ghosts)

Yet, the haunting of bodies, their ghostly heterogeneity, is not only normalized in *Patchwork Girl* but, "the subject-as-unity [is in turn revealed] as a grotesque impossibility" (Hayles 2000, 29), as Hayles also observed by citing a bizarre resurrection scenario thematized in *Patchwork Girl* (cf Jackson 1995, body of text/ resurrection; ibid., body of text/ resurrection/ remade). After all, as another snippet of text reminds us: "Classical wholeness and taxonomic self-knowledge is harder and harder to believe in" (Jackson 1995, body of text /mixed up /whole?). In our day and age, the subsequent lexia goes on to argue:

> "Identities seem contradictory, partial, and strategic."
> "There is not even such a state as 'being female', or 'being' monster, or 'being' angel.
> "We find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras."
> (Jackson 1995, body of text/ mixed up/ identities)

Likewise, Gothic fiction writers of past centuries also

aim[ed…] to overcome the tentative hold which sense had over feeling; [… it intended to] unleash the body's repressed energies, and to remind women that they were more than disembodied spirits, more than mere angels whose innocence and purity secured the masculine claim to the social and political spheres. (Keep 2006, 7)

In line with this defiant agenda of Gothic fiction is also Patchwork Girl's reaction to the Glass Cat's abuse, cited earlier:

'I expected this reception,' she [Patchwork Girl] replied. 'The civilized Thebans enacted a law commanding idealization in art. Digressions toward outlandishness were legally punishable. [But] horrid?' said the daemon. 'Why, I'm thoroughly delightful. I'm an original, if you please, and therefore incomparable. Of all the comic, absurd, rare and amusing creatures the world contains, I must be the supreme freak. […] I'm awfully glad!--that I'm just what I am, and nothing else.' (Jackson 1995, quilt/ but I'm glad)

To the Glass Cat's question: "Aren't you horrid?" (ibid., quilt/ at the mirror) Patchwork Girl responds proudly that she is "thoroughly delightful" (ibid., quilt/ but I'm glad), being "the supreme freak" (ibid.) "[o]f all the comic, absurd, rare and amusing creatures the world contains" (ibid.). Patchwork Girl dares all of us, but especially women, to be different in an *unheimlich* manner, leaving hearth and home behind for more fulfilling dark adventures. Instead of wanting to be unified and whole, in accordance with ideals of beauty and womanhood, we should be glad about inhabiting a haunted body, as the following lexia indicates:

I have a letch for sequence, don't doubt it. I am not the agent of absolute multiplicity any more than I am some redoubtable whole. I am a double agent, messing up both territories. I am muscular and convincing because I am whole; I am devious and an escape artist because I am broken.
   Oh, I want to be whole, don't doubt it. Jennifer's leg lying next to Bronwyn's foot on the flagstones of Frankenstein's workshop can't kick anyone's butt. But then Jennifer couldn't do it alone, either, not in all those petticoats. No, it's me, this one: Jennifer- Bronwyn- Elizabeth- Roderick- Kate- Alise- Germain- Aphrodite and all the others, who can take on any comers. And if you think that's not fair, a few hundred to one, you're overlooking your own stitch marks. (Jackson 1995, body of text/ double agent)

Thus, multiplicity and mutability are strengths rather than weaknesses. Instead of having to decide for one pole of a binary opposition, a pieced identity constitutes a "double agent" (ibid.), who is so versatile and heterogeneous that he or she "can take on any comers" (ibid.). Considering this, we all should try to appreciate our own phantoms and our "own stitch marks" (ibid.), where we were pieced together, rather than trying

to erase our incoherencies and contradictions. Evidently, ghostly heterogeneity is celebrated in *Patchwork Girl* as a kind of "Gothic desire," to appropriate Cynthia Sugars' term. She coined this term in the course of her exploration and reevaluation of Canadian Gothic literature to describe "an invocation of the Gothic as not only desirable, but also comforting and actually sustaining" (Sugars 2011, 59). Similarly, the haunted patchworks in Jackson's narrative ultimately engender something desirable. Accordingly, instead of inspiring Gothic horror, the haunted piece-works of Jackson's hyperfiction are meant to inspire the Gothic desire to dare to become a "supreme freak" (Jackson 1995, quilt/ but I'm glad), a "misfit" (ibid., a quilt/ misconception) who challenges clear-cut boundaries, upsets traditional hierarchies and enables a synthesis of formerly incompatible opposites.

I would like to conclude with the following lexia of *Patchwork Girl* which alludes to the fact that *Patchwork Girl* is a hypertext in two senses of the word, a computer novel and a rewrite of another work of literature:

> (I [Patchwork Girl] told her [Mary] to abort me, raze me from her book; I did not want what he [the male monster] wanted. I laughed when my parts lay scattered on the floor, scattered as the bodies from which I had sprung, discontinuous as I myself rejoice to be. I danced in front of the disassembly, and vertebrae rolled to the four corners of the wood floor, I wrapped my intestines around my neck and wrists and sashayed about, I pitched my bladder against the wall. She watched me with half-fearful amusement. She was always proper, but there was a fierce hunger under her stays. *My hijinks did not make it through the wrought iron flourishes of her prose, but they can be glimpsed in the paisley of its negative spaces* [emphasis mine], a hurly-burly of minced flesh and gouts of blood.
>   *To be linked to the chain of existence and events, yes, but bound by it? No. I forge my own links, I am building my own monstrous chain, and as time goes on, perhaps it will begin to resemble, rather, a web* [emphasis mine].) (Jackson 1995, a story/ M/S/ she)

Let us try to unravel the meaning hidden behind Patchwork Girl's comment that her "hijinks did not make it through the wrought iron flourishes of her [Mary Shelley's] prose, but […could merely] be glimpsed in the paisley of its negative spaces" (ibid.). If one interprets this snippet of Jackson's hyperfiction in the context that *Patchwork Girl* constitutes a hypertext in both senses of the term, one might infer the following: Patchwork Girl's "hi[gh]jinks" (ibid.), meaning her unruly and boisterous laughter, did not make it through the "flourishes" (ibid.), that is the elaborate literary and rhetorical expressions, of Mary Shelley's prose. Patchwork Girl further argues that this was due to the "wrought iron" (ibid.) quality of Shelley's prose. The "wrought iron" (ibid.), reminiscent of the movable pieces of type used in the first printing presses, alludes to the fact that once Mary Shelley's letters were printed, her ideas were provided with an impenetrable stability. This in turn made it hard to break Shelley's prose up after it had

been permanently set in print as *Frankenstein*. Patchwork Girl's story could therefore merely be glimpsed "in the paisley of its [*Frankenstein*'s] negative spaces" (ibid.), namely in the narrative gaps of Mary Shelley's Gothic novel.

Yet, although Jackson's electronic remake is intertextually "linked" (ibid.) to *Frankenstein*, it is not "bound" (ibid.) by its restrictive textuality. Therefore, what was unspeakable within *Frankenstein*'s fixed and stable print textuality can be expressed within the alternative electronic textuality of *Patchwork Girl*, whose computerized set-up with lexias and links allows for "building […] monstrous [multiple and mutable] chain[s]" (ibid.), since such haunted multiple and mutable patchworks facilitate more freedom of expression than homogenous, stable structures ever could.

Contributor Details

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In/between Places: Connection and Isolation in *The Bridge*

ABSTRACT

Over recent years Scandinavian detective stories, both in print and on screen, have captivated audiences the world over. This phenomenon is known broadly as "Nordic Noir" and is characterised by bleak, gothic landscapes, twisting plotlines and obsessive and socially isolated protagonists who push themselves to solve the cases that no one else can. This paper will illustrate how Nordic Noir texts generally and The Bridge *specifically deploy Gothic narrative tropes such as the uncanny, negative aesthetics and liminality. In particular I explore how the themes of connection and isolation are addressed within* The Bridge. *I argue that these themes are represented through the exploration of three literal and allegorical bridges: The Öresund Bridge connecting Sweden and Denmark, a bookend to the story arc of the series, an in/between place and the key visual image throughout the show; the Danish detective Martin Rohde as a bridge between his socially awkward Swedish colleague, Saga Norén, and the world; and the show's villain, known as both the Bridge Killer and the Truth Terrorist as the bridge between Martin Rohde and his son, August. Through using the notion of "the bridge" as an in/between space,* The Bridge *explores and (re)imagines connections in/between nations, estranged families and the isolated within the social world.*

Nordic Noir, for the unfamiliar, is a fairly recent phenomenon. It encompasses print media through the novels of (amongst others) Arnaldur Indridason, Steig Larsson, Henning Mankell, and Jo Nesbø; cinema through the Swedish and American

adaptations of Larsson's *Millennium Trilogy*; and through television through the Swedish and British adaptations of Mankell's *Wallander*, Danish crime dramas *The Eagle: a crime odyssey* (*Ørnen: En krimi-odyssé*), *Unit One* (*Rejseholdet*) and *The Killing* (*Forbrydelsen*); Danish political thriller *Borgen* and the Swedish/Danish crime drama *The Bridge* (*Bron/Broen*).

Nordic Noir has enjoyed international critical acclaim and is enjoyed by millions across the globe. Its popularity in Britain has been particularly feverish and a recent *Radio Times* article stated that Nordic Noir is "all over [British] screens like gothic fungus" (Armstrong 2013). *The Killing* in particular sparked British interest in everything Danish (Jensen and Waade 2013) and in particular changed British women's winter fashions forever as the Sara Lund Faroe knit sweater phenomenon took hold like a gothic comfort blanket.

Thematically, Nordic Noir has been said to represent the decline of the utopian welfare states of the nations of Scandinavia (Forshaw 2012), as well as political lurches to the right in Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Forshaw (2012) argues that Nordic noir also represents the continuing influences of the great Viking sagas in Scandinavian cultural outputs, particularly the *volsung saga* and its population of powerful gods, resilient heroes, warrior women and unspeakable monsters. Like its American cousin *film noir*, Nordic Noir is a mysterious non-genre that hybridises the crime thriller, horror and the political drama and is held together by heavy dose of social commentary. In addition, like *film noir*, Nordic Noir is characterised by the use of the Gothic narrative tropes of negative aesthetics and liminality, wielding a mysterious and seductive power that deploys anaemic light, juxtaposing the shadowy underworld of its cities with stylishly furnished interiors, offering a "potent, even magical articulation of death-in-motion" (Krutnik 1991).

Liminality, as a key feature of Gothic texts, is characterised by narrative devices that cross thresholds and explore the notion of in/between spaces such as the possibilities for existing in/between fantasy and reality, life and death, being and unbeing (Whisker 2007). This paper offers a reading of the Nordic Noir television series *The Bridge* (*Bron/Broen*). I argue that the show explores liminality through the literal and allegorical bridges: the Öresund Bridge that gives the show its title and is the setting of much of the action; the relationship between protagonists Martin Rohde and Saga Norén with Martin attempting to act as a bridge between the socially awkward Saga and the world; and finally through the show's villain, the Bridge Killer/Truth Terrorist/Jens Hansen who acts as bridge between Martin Rohde and his estranged son, August.

In addition the paper will make links between *film noir*, Nordic Noir and the Gothic, demonstrating how the Gothic narrative devices deployed within *The Bridge* are generic conventions that characterise Nordic Noir texts. Finally, I argue that although

The Bridge and other Nordic Noir texts are not explicitly Gothic, they nevertheless explore Gothic themes and deploy Gothic narrative and metaphorical devices. Therefore, Nordic Noir texts make a valuable contribution to both a consideration of the historical trajectory of the Gothic, as well as to contemporary Gothic scholarship.

Nordic Noir and the Gothic (re)imaginary

As a mode of expression, Gothic texts draw upon the notion of the uncanny, the things that make us fearful and uneasy. Freud's (1919) conceptualisation of the uncanny as encompassing the unfamiliar and the hidden dangers lurking under the surface of the familiar are evident within classic Gothic texts such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which reflected contemporary fears about the rise of technology and a new mechanised era of production for mankind (Back 1995). Maria Beville (2009) argues that Gothic texts continue this tradition and offer a conduit through which to voice our anxieties about current fears such as global terrorism (ibid.). The Gothic, then, through its exploration of the dark and unfamiliar, but ever-present threats to our existence, gives us a way to (re)imagine the social, political and scientific worlds that we inhabit.

Like the Gothic, the *film noir* movies of the nineteen forties, fifties and beyond gave audiences an opportunity to (re)imagine the American dream (Krutnik 1991; Strinati 2000). The post war world represented within many early *film noir* texts was dark and unfamiliar and scarred by the horrors of a mechanised war that took place on land, sea and in air and also saw the systematic, production-line destruction of over six million humans within the Nazi death camps[1]. Similarly, Nordic Noir offers audiences an opportunity to (re)imagine Scandinavia from a left-wing utopia to a society full of cracks through which oozes darkness.

Similarities between *film noir*, Nordic Noir and the Gothic are easy to observe and I will spend some time here fleshing out some of these similarities. I will focus, within this section, upon how negative aesthetics are used metaphorically within the three genres under discussion within this paper. As I am arguing that Nordic Noir has a place within Gothic scholarship, it is necessary to draw comparisons between both the Gothic and Nordic Noir's predecessor, *film noir*.

Place and setting are important within the Gothic and physical location within Gothic texts often represents the inner worlds of protagonists through the use of negative aesthetics. "Negative aesthetics" is described by Botting (2014) as "informing Gothic texts". For Botting, darkness saturates the Gothic with exterior darkness mirroring the psyche of protagonists and "landscapes stress isolation and wilderness, evoking vulnerability, exposure and insecurity" (4). Human feelings and interiority

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[1] Many of the early *film noir* directors were Jewish émigré's to the USA who had escaped Nazi Germany. See Brook (2009)

exist liminally within the Gothic, and are expressed and belong both within and without. Similarly *film noir* is characterised by a neutral, deadpan narrative style where dramatic moments and visual set pieces are deployed to convey the effects of "extreme violence, perverse or corrupt sexuality or moments of psychic breakdown" (Krutnik 1991, 20) often using music or setting to convey such emotional events. Place and context are therefore 'often tempered with decay: deserted, haunted and in ruins' (Botting 2014, 4). The influence of the Gothic can be clearly seen in the early film noir movies of the 1940'a and 1950's, particularly in Orson Wells' (1949) *The Third Man*, filmed in a Vienna ruined by the bombs of World War II, the city resembles a ruined castle, its shadows and decay mirroring the inner world of Wells' Harry Lime. Krutnik (1991) argues that the crime film lends itself to such a style because it allows for narratively generated stylistic excess. Murder, the ultimate act of human excess provides context, scene and aesthetic motivation for the crime drama, where human nature in all its bloody darkness becomes narrative subject matter.

Both Gothic and *film noir* texts then represent the inner worlds of their characters through the use of negative aesthetics to depict 'disturbances of sanity and security (including) displays of uncontrolled passion, violent emotion (and) portrayals of perversion and obsession' (Botting 2014, 1) and are concerned with the dark spaces of the human psyche: obsession, perverse sexualities, insanity and violence. Identity, place and context are (re)imagined and are made hostile, untamed and threatening (Botting 2014).

Nordic Noir, like *film noir*, reflects the Gothic narrative trope of negative aesthetics to represent the inner world of protagonists. Troubled, unsmiling and with little bodily affect, Nordic Noir detectives attend to their cases with obsessive fever. Musical soundtrack is often used to indicate the thought processes of the protagonists rather than dramatic interaction. In addition Nordic Noir, like *film noir*, pays particular attention to the effects of crime. Season one of *The Killing* in particular offered an unflinching portrait of the impact their daughter's murder had upon Theis and Pernile Birk Larsen. Nordic Noir also uses negative aesthetics to (re)imagine sunny streets of Malmö, Copenhagen or Stockholm and to transform them into bleak, shadowy and rainy cityscapes where killers lurk and no one can be trusted. *The Eagle: A crime odyssey* exemplifies this technique and uses the geographical features of Iceland as a metaphor for Hallgrim Hallgrimson's complex character (Agger 2013), the jagged rocks and treeless landscape mirroring his troubled state of mind. Nature within the Gothic 'stresses isolation and wilderness' (Botting 2014, 4) and such a visual style characterises Scandinavian produced Nordic Noir. Indeed, one of the most striking differences between the Swedish and British adaptations of *Wallander* was in the representation of the Swedish town of Ystad. In the Swedish version flat, characterless cities were dominated by anonymous factories and unwelcoming housing estates (Forshaw 2012), the skies were always cloudy and Wallander's beachside home backed onto a flat, grey

Baltic Sea. The British version of *Wallander* by contrast, offered sunny skies, a picturesque town and a rural idyll, a British (re)imagining of Sweden (Waade 2011).

In Nordic Noir, the bleak landscapes provoke in the viewer "feelings of melancholic gloom, loneliness and loss" (Botting 2014, 6). For example in both *The Killing* and *The Bridge,* the Streets of Copenhagen and Malmö become dystopian labyrinths of despair where it is often raining, always autumn or winter and more often than not, night-time. The viewer is drawn in to the gloomy worlds that are inhabited by the Nordic Noir protagonists and see their inner worlds reflected within the murky underworlds that they inhabit. The streets of Copenhagen in *The Killing* were lit so dimly that Danish viewers allegedly attempted to adjust their sets when the series first aired in 2007. Elsewhere Agger (2013) has outlined the surprise registered by the Danish tourist board that foreign visitors found the "sombre, noir-inspired" (Agger 2013, 236) image of Copenhagen presented in *The Killing* more attractive than the glossy friendly city presented by tourist brochures. Agger argues that this is because The Killing offered a new topography of Copenhagen; it turned "sites" into "sights" (Hospers cited Agger 2013) and put "traditional and modern locations into a contemporary moral and visual perspective" (Agger 2013, 236). As with the Gothic and *film noir*, Nordic Noir deploys shadow, darkness and location as allegorical devices that illustrate the moral, political and psychological darkness that accompany the murders under investigation and the protagonists take us with them on a journey to the murkiest depths of the human psyche.

Finally, it is worth outlining the way in which the heroic figures within Nordic Noir (re)imagine the characteristics of the detective. Typically, protagonists in both classic Gothic and film noir texts are male. Within many Gothic texts, women are represented (even by female authors) as being in danger from stepping outside of heteronormative structures such as marriage, the family and the domestic sphere (Botting 2014). Those that do may find themselves in need of rescue from a man. Similarly, and drawing from 'hard-boiled' crime fiction, the *film noir* hero is typically male, masculine, unhappy, cynical and bitter who becomes sexually, and often fatally attracted to a woman with a similar outlook – the femme fatale (Strinati 2000). Within Nordic Noir texts, protagonists simultaneously interrupt and reinforce the characteristics *noir* hero(ine). There is something of a gender reversal in Nordic Noir and male detectives are (re)imagined and represented as emotionally dependent upon women. Kurt Wallander for example leans upon his daughter Linda for emotional support, later turning to his boss and neighbour Katarina. In *The Eagle: A crime odyssey*, Hallgrim Hallgrimson is shown to have deep emotional issues stemming from childhood trauma, complete with panic attacks. Such men are a far cry from the hyper masculine *film noir* protagonists, described in 1947 by John Houseman as the

> Tough crime hero […] male, unkempt, unloved and socially isolated whose primary goal in life is the 'unravelling of obscure crimes, the final solution of which offers him little or no satisfaction (Houseman cited Krutnik 1991, 56).

Within many Nordic Noir texts female protagonists lead investigations and are "unloved and social isolated" (ibid.), perhaps these characteristics reflect Gothic narratives around the dangers of non-conformity for women. Both *The Killing's* Sarah Lund and *The Bridge's* Saga Norén struggle to maintain relationships of both familial and romantic kinds. Lund and Norén are emotionally muted, self-reliant and psychologically driven by their desire to solve their cases, they exist within a liminal space – outside of society and yet within it, living with lives filled with death. The social isolation of Lund and Norén is further increased by their position as marked minorities in the male dominated world of the police force. Although Saga Norén displays many behaviours that viewers may read as consistent with Asperger Syndrome, the writer of *The Bridge*, Hans Rosenfeld and the actress who plays her, Sofia Helin deliberately omitted a diagnosis when creating Saga (Forshaw 2014), this adds to her mystery. Saga's isolation is double sided, as a woman in the police force and as someone with a different way of being. Saga exists within a liminal space, neither truly belonging or completely outside of society. We might think of Saga as a Gothic protagonist because of her psychic liminality; she is a gifted detective who cannot, because of her way of being, belong to the social world that she investigates.

The remainder of this paper examines season one of the Nordic Noir TV show *The Bridge* and explores the way in which the show deploys the Gothic tropes of negative aesthetics and liminality to drive its narrative and to as well as how it is tied to its *film noir* predecessors.

The Bridge (Bron/Broen)

Co-Produced by Danmarks Radio and Sverieges Television with the German television company ZDF, *The Bridge* or *Bron/Broen* is a cross-cultural collaboration between Sweden and Denmark. Season one was first broadcast in 2011 and was comprised of ten hour-long episodes, the story starts when the power that lights the Öresund Bridge that connects the Swedish town of Malmö to the Danish capital, Copenhagen is cut. When the lights are restored a body is found with its midriff exactly in line with the border of Sweden and Denmark. The body is in fact two halves of two people – a Swedish politician and a Danish prostitute. Detectives from both countries are assigned to the case, Martin Rohde from Copenhagen and Saga Norén of Malmö. The killer contacts a Malmö-based journalist and becomes known interchangeably as The Bridge Killer and the Truth Terrorist. The killer has five lessons to teach about various social problems including: politically sanctioned Islamaphobia; the plight of the homeless; and the deaths of children in non-Western conflicts. However during the latter episodes of the show the killer is revealed to be Jens Hansen, a former college and friend of Martin's.

Jens' real mission objective is revealed not to be the five lessons but personal revenge against Martin whom he blames for the death of his wife and son who died some years earlier in an accident that saw their car plunge from the Öresund Bridge.

The Bridge picks up on some of the major Nordic Noir themes and offers as (re)imagining of Swedish and Danish society that is consistent with the genre. The show picks up on contemporary Scandinavian fears around the decline of the utopian welfare state and the rise of the political right wing as the Bridge Killer/Truth Terrorist/Jens sets out to demonstrate where Scandinavian society is going wrong. Stylistically it deploys negative aesthetics particularly successfully, draining the colour from the sea and the sky and using the shadow, flat light and bleak inner urban cityscapes as both backdrop to the action and as reflection of the negative affect that Bridge Killer/Truth Terrorist/Jens' crimes provoke both within individual and collective psyche's. The cities of Copenhagen and Malmö appear to be as troubled by the show's events as the detectives working on the case.

The Bridge also offers a particularly interesting version of the hard-boiled noir hero(ine) and in terms of the male noir hero as driving the real noir agenda, "the affirmation of the hero as an idealised and undivided figure of masculine potency and invulnerability" (Krutnik 1991, 93), the figure of Martin Rohde acts to undo such a trope. In the first episode we learn that he has had a vasectomy – a deliberate ploy to curb his 'masculine potency' – he has fathered five children. He also reveals his vulnerability as he has an affair with a witness that results in his wife throwing him out of their home to Martin's distress. The denouement of the story sees his eldest son, August, kidnapped by the Bridge Killer/truth Terrorist, and it is Saga, not Martin who holds together emotionally and solves the case. Saga proves to be physically invulnerable as she does this despite several gunshot wounds. Saga herself is an interruption to the traditional noir hero. Neither male nor unkempt she takes the socially isolated characteristic of the noir hero to the extreme. Displaying behaviours consistent with what the viewer might recognise as consistent with Asperger Syndrome. She is understood by her colleagues as 'odd' and loved only it seems, by her boss, Hans. We see Saga enjoy casual sexual encounters, she picks up a man in a club, takes him home for sex and then encourages him to leave by looking at gruesome crime scene photographs after the coupling is over. She is not undone by love or lust and is driven to solve the case and believes that she is the only person who can. She is, in effect, a gendered inversion of the hard-boiled hero of *noir* yore.

I will now discuss the ways in which *The Bridge* draws upon the Gothic narrative devices of negative aesthetics and liminality in order to illustrate the themes of connection and isolation through the use of three literal and allegorical bridges.

The Öresund Bridge: Liminality and death in motion

The Öresund Bridge that connects Malmö in southwestern Sweden to the Danish capital Copenhagen acts both a literal and allegorical bridge in *The Bridge*. It is a place of isolation, without allegiance or nationality whilst simultaneously connecting the two countries for the first time since the last Ice Age. The Öresund Bridge serves many narrative purposes throughout the show: it is why the Bridge Killer/Truth Terrorist/Jens kills; it is where the first bodies are found; it is how Saga and Martin travel to each other; and it is the scene of the show's climax, with Saga revealing to Martin that his son is dead, murdered by Jens in an act of revenge.

The action in *The Bridge* is often interspersed with stills of the Öresund Bridge and, as such, it is a constant presence in the show, a more significant landmark than anywhere else in Malmö or Copenhagen whose tourist attractions are thrown over for "backstage" city squalor. The bridge is used as a negative aesthetic, its purpose is ambiguous and the sea underneath is flat and grey. The bridge haunts us like a lonely ghost, where the spectres of Jens' lost family and the dismembered corpses of his first victims are restless within a swirl of sea mist from the Öresund strait. More importantly, the liminality of the bridge, reflected by its neutrality and in/between-ness, enables a Gothic reading of *The Bridge* to flourish. The loss of his wife and son upon the bridge transforms Jens into something monstrous, he becomes the death drive in physical form, faking his own death and physically transforming into The Bridge Killer/Truth Terrorist by surgically changing his face. Jens, like the bridge itself, exists within a liminal space, "hovering between being and unbeing, dead and undead" (Whisker 2007, 411)

It is the intention of Gothic texts to engage with the uncanny, that which makes us uneasy or afraid. The inevitability of death haunts humanity, for Freud, death is the aim of life (Royle 2003). In many ways the Gothic troubles the inevitability of death and is characterised by those who cheat death, like vampires reborn from blood or the zombie who is animated in death, both monsters who are neither dead nor living but somewhere in/between. The Gothic is concerned with death and with what drives us to seek a return from death, or to take life from another. This latter point Freud termed the "death drive" (Freud cited Royle 2003).

Royle argues that "the death drive manifests itself in a compulsion to repeat" (2003, 89) and the compulsion to repeat characterises death in *The Bridge*. Jens's motive is to get Martin's (and the world's) attention by murdering everyday citizens (the homeless, police officers, children), repeating and mirroring the previous human harms of homeless deaths in winter, Muslim deaths in custody and child deaths in non-Western conflicts. Once Martin has been entranced by the case, Jens reveals his true motive – to kill Martin's oldest son, August, as revenge for the deaths of his wife and son. Jens then wishes for Martin to kill him in a final act of revenge and repetition - this

ultimate drive to death taking place upon the underside of the Öresund Bridge. The Öresund Bridge is a liminal gateway to the narrative trajectory of *The Bridge*. Its function within the series is to do much more than to connect characters and countries, it is a catalyst for the articulation of death in motion (Krutnik 1991) in the form of Jens's grotesque drive towards revenge and annihilation. The Öresund Bridge constitutes an uncanny presence, mysterious and with uncertain purpose (Royle 2003). The events that unfold on or because of the bridge expose the everyday darkness that lurks underneath the surface of our lives and the places within which our lives are lived, darkness that we may brush up against but never see. A landmark reimagined and refigured The Öresund Bridge destabilizes the "calm complacency" (Whisker 2007) of many contemporary understandings of Scandinavian societies to reveal the darkness that lurks underneath.

Martin and Saga: bridging social worlds

With a name that alludes to epic Viking mythology, Saga Norén is a complex character. The viewer may first understand Saga as displaying behaviours consistent with Asperger Syndrome, although we never know for sure because Saga does not understand herself in terms of medical diagnosis. We might say that Saga herself exists within a liminal space; somewhere in/between her obsessive and literal mind and the world inhabited by her laid back, adaptable and humorous Danish counterpart, Martin Rohde.

The characters of Saga and Martin and the relationship between them can also be read as including Gothic tropes. Firstly there is the refusal to name Saga's disposition, her colleagues call her "odd" and Martin spends much of their interactions trying to understand her, to respect her as a professional whilst trying to guide her towards some of the social graces many of us take for granted: to praise her colleagues, to tell white lies. We are privy to Martin's private life, we see him cheating on his wife, and we know that he was married previously and that he also cheated on his former wife. We know that he had an affair with Jens's wife and that this destroyed their friendship and is the reason why Jens revenge is played out upon Martin. Conversely we know very little about Saga. We know that she had a sister who died by suicide but the reasons for this along with any other details about Saga's family and private life remain hidden. Botting states that, within the Gothic,

> Reasons and explanations, if they come at all, arrive late and only after a range of apprehensive or expectant projections have been elicited: fear and anxiety about the balance of human faculties and borders of everyday life are provoked in the process of making what is perceived and what is understood, is suspended, often to the point of total loss of […] self control or sanity (2014, 6)

That we are given no reason or explanation for Saga's "odd" behaviour, for her solitude or her sister's death is reflective of the first part of Botting's assertion. Martin's attempts to engage Saga about her family are met with a kind of direct evasiveness. For example in one scene Martin asks Saga where she has been to which she replies, "The cemetery", when he asks her why she states, "my sister lives there" and then closes the conversation by continuing with her work. Saga's positioning of her sister as inhabiting the cemetery is jarring and reveals something about the way in which Saga understands the world. Parallels to Gothic narratives can also be drawn here as Saga's refusal to name either the reasons for her social awkwardness or the nature of her sister's death reflect Botting's assertion that, within the Gothic, "narratives […] delimit the scope of reason and knowledge by framing events from partial perspectives". Our curiosity is, however, not satisfied within this moment and we are left to project our own imaginings of events into Saga's sister's death or to make assumptions about her psychic condition.

The relationship between Martin and Saga and the way that it drives the plot of *The Bridge* inevitably leads to a loss of self-control as articulated by Botting. A pivotal moment in the show occurs when Martin and Saga are talking to the mother of a missing teenager who is feared to have been taken by the Bridge Killer/Truth Terrorist/Jens. Martin's attempt to reassure the woman that they will find her daughter are undone by Saga who bluntly states that they will do their best but can't make any promises. The woman leaves and Martin chastises Saga, berating her for being unaware of the impact of her speech and telling her that, "Sometimes people need to be told something, even if it's not true". Saga argues that doing so is wrong, that she would be caught out in a lie if the girl turns out to be dead and would not then know what to say to the victim's mother. This moment presents a thought provoking moral dilemma: is it better to say to a worried parent of a runaway child that there might not be a happy ending or to lull them into momentary false hope. This moment also reflects Saga's peculiar position as neither truly belonging to or being completely outside of the social world. She does not know what the correct social cues are in this, and many other interactions. Saga expresses surprise when Martin berates her as though she didn't know what white lies are, as though she has been hidden from the world that we recognise.

However, the interaction also serves another purpose. That Saga cannot lie is pivotal to the climax of the series. Jens kidnaps Martin's son, August, and buries him alive behind a wall. During the show's denouement, a scene that unfolds the underside of the Öresund Bridge, it is revealed that Saga has found August, she tries to lie to Martin, telling him that his son is still alive. However Martin refers back to his previous advice to her and asks her, "Are you telling me what I want to hear?" When she replies that she is, and that August is dead, Martin loses both psychological and moral control. Again however, Saga fulfils her role as a hard-boiled heroine and prevents him from

killing Jens thus interrupting the classic Gothic narrative of woman as in need of rescue from man.

The way in which Saga balances her human faculties act as a perfect counter position to Martin, who loses control sexually and emotionally throughout the series. Reasons and explanations are then used in *The Bridge* in tune with Gothic sensibilities, they are narrative devices that act to reveal the inner psyche of characters rather than plot drivers *sui generis*.

The Bridge Killer/Truth Terrorist as Martin's bridge to his son

Earlier, I discussed how Martin Rohde represents a failed hard-boiled hero. Like Saga and her relationship to the social world, Martin also occupies a liminal space with regards to his masculinity. He is somewhere in between being a good man and a scoundrel and is depicted as both a loyal and absent father. He has an affair with a witness but is riddled by guilt and desperate to make amends with his wife. The classic *noir* hero's relationship with the femme fatale is seen by Kaplan (1991) as a rejection of the heteronormative family imposed upon men and women of the time. For Martin Rohde, infidelity only reinforces his desire to be part of his family. At the beginning of the series we learn that Martins eldest son, August lives with him and his second wife, Mette and their three young sons. The relationship between Martin and August is strained and the two initially seem to have very little time for each other. As the show progresses, we see August having frequent instant message chats with his ex girlfriend, Frida. Frida convinces August that his father is not such a bad guy, to give him a chance and August does. The relationship between father and son softens and the two plan a camping trip together. However, in the penultimate episode, it is revealed that Frida is not who she seems. She is, in fact, the Bridge Killer/Truth Terrorist/Jens who has been chatting to August. The Bridge Killer/Truth Terrorist/Jens has done this bridgework between father and son deliberately, so that it will hurt Martin more when he takes August away from him. This clever plot twist sets the remainder of the show up for the final showdown that takes place on the Öresund Bridge, the bridge becoming a bookend for the show and reinforcing the notion of the in/between place within which the show is located.

Images of liminal spaces are common to the Gothic (Whisker 2007) and so it interesting that the relationship between Martin and his son is built within a liminal space of existence (ibid.), the Internet. Such a space allows August to reveal his inner world, inadvertently to a monster. Such a plot device reflects Gothic modes of expression because it troubles our relationship to a familiar space – most of us use the Internet on a daily basis, and communication is one of the key reasons for doing so. That August's ex-girlfriend turns out to be Jens reminds us of the dangers the Internet poses. It taps into our fears about the harms that can come from technologies and as such reflects concerns located within the postmodern Gothic.

Conclusion

This paper has illustrated some of the ways in which Nordic Noir texts generally, and *The Bridge* specifically, draws upon Gothic narrative tropes, particularly those of negative aesthetics and liminality. I have demonstrated how the themes of connection and isolation are addressed within *The Bridge* through the exploration of liminal spaces of existence. Such spaces are represented by three literal and allegorical bridges: The Öresund Bridge, Martin Rohde as a bridge between Saga Norén the social world; and The Bridge Killer/Truth Terrorist/Jens as bridge between Martin and his estranged son, August. I have also traced the origins of both Nordic Noir and film noir to the Gothic and shown how the plot, characters and setting of Nordic Noir and *film noir* draw from Gothic notions of the uncanny, negative aesthetic and liminality. Analyses of Nordic Noir texts therefore offer a contribution to a study of the historical trajectory of the Gothic as well as the genre's evolution and contemporary manifestations.

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LORNA PIATTI-FARNELL

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Vampires in America: An Interview with D.B. Reynolds

D. B. Reynolds is the RT Award-Winning author of the popular Vampires in America *series of Paranormal Romance/Urban Fantasy and an Emmy-nominated television sound editor. She lives with her husband of many years in a flammable canyon near Los Angeles, and when she's not writing her own books, she can usually be found reading someone else's. You can visit her blog at www.dbreynolds.com for details on all of her books, for free stories and more.*

LPF: *I suppose we should start with the most obvious question…why vampires? Tell us how you came up with the idea of writing about vampires in the first place.*

DBR: I've been a fan of vampires for a very long time. I remember seeing the 1979 movie *Dracula*, with Frank Langella, and he was so elegant and beautiful and deadly. That really stuck with me. And then I read Anne Rice's *Interview with a Vampire*. I have such vivid memories of reading that book--the place, the sound of the ocean, the absolute wonder that a writer could create such a story. For the first time, Rice brought vampires into the modern world in a practical way without losing any of their mystique. So, when the time came to write my own stories, I knew my hero had to be a vampire. Especially since the inspiration for my story was the very first scene with Alexandra. I had this image in my head of a tiny, anachronistically dressed

woman/vampire telling her assailants with absolute certainty, "He'll kill you for this." Raphael was created not for Cyn, but to fulfil Alexandra's vision of him as her protector. Cyn came later.

LPF: *I like the idea of a "vampire mystique". And I do share your love for Anne Rice's books. But how do you feel about recent attempts at humanising vampires? Rice was definitely a pioneer in showing a sympathetic view of vampires. And I'm also thinking here of other examples by other writers where vampires even refuse to drink human blood completely. How do you position yourself within that framework?*

DBR: I'll be honest, I'm dismayed by the recent trend in vampire literature which has all but de-fanged vampires. One of the reasons I wrote my books was to bring the *vampire* back to vampires! They've become conflicted, sensitive souls, who only drink blood if they really must, and sometimes not at all. My vampires exist in human society. They have jobs, own businesses, even lobby Congress. But when it comes down to it, they're still bloody, violent and aggressive. My Vampire Lords in particular can be extremely vicious and territorial, and offer no excuses for it. They see themselves as superior to humans, not as some sort of shameful aberration of humanity. To me, that's what being a vampire is all about.

LPF: *Your vampires were all 'turned' at one point or another. You haven't explored the possibility of vampires 'being born' as such. What are your thoughts on this?*

NBR: No, in my *Vampires in America* world, vampires are turned. They're infected with a sort of symbiote that works to preserve its host, which is the vampire. They're nearly immortal—the symbiote can heal all but the most devastating injuries. They're impervious to disease, and they're sterile. No baby vampires. I'm not opposed to the idea of vampires as a race of creatures, but for the Vampires in America series, I wanted the emphasis to be on the vampire's predatory nature and competitiveness, the imminent violence of their existence. And I wanted to preserve the heated sexuality of their natures, as well, most especially the relationship with their human mates.

LPF: *The predatory nature of vampires always makes me wonder where to position them in relation to other* species/creatures *on earth. Do you think they are more "animal" than humans? Are they more "evolved" (considering they prey on what is commonly perceived as the dominant species)? Or, are they a projection of a more feral way of being, which is neither animal nor human?*

My vampires consider themselves superior to humans. They are absolutely the dominant predator on the planet, with humans as their prey. They don't consider

themselves human any longer, and when they speak of humans, it is as "the other." But they're not animals in the sense you mean. They share many traits with humans, including sentience and emotion, but many of their physical and mental abilities place them clearly above humans on the scale of evolution.

LPF: *The vampire world you constructed seems to be based on feudal organisation, with Lords and vassals. What attracted you to this type of socio-political system for your novels?*

DBR: My college and university degrees are all in history and international relations, so it was natural for me to look into history for a political system that fit my vampires' world. It was the nature of my vampires that determined the choice of political system. The weaker vampires in my system actually *need* a more powerful vampire in order to survive, while the more powerful vampires rise to the top and rule the others. A "lone wolf" of a vampire isn't likely to survive very long. He'll be killed by someone more powerful, or if he's powerful enough, he'll be driven by the very nature of his vampirism to establish his dominance over others.

LPF: *Blood, unsurprisingly, plays an important part in your novels, but it is not just a matter of feeding. It is also important in bonding rituals between vampires and, at times, humans. We see this particularly in* **Jabril**, **Rajmund** *and* **Sophia**. *What can you tell us about this?*

DBR: The initial relationship is between a Sire and the new vampire he creates. That necessarily involves blood, since it's the Sire's blood which carries the vampire symbiote, which, when transmitted to the selected human, makes that human a vampire. In my books, the vampire symbiote is what makes everything possible, and the symbiote is blood-born, thus blood is central to the entire vampire existence. As for the bond between a vampire and his human mate, the symbiote is transmitted to the mate in small quantities, because the vampire wants to keep his mate human so he can feed off of her (or him.) But the symbiote level transmitted to the mate is sufficient to grant her *some* of the qualities of vampire, and to create a link between them. And this is where we get into a little bit of magic, because the more powerful the vampire, the more powerful his blood, and hence the stronger the bonds he forges with both the vampires under his control, and his human mate. For example, the blood of a Vampire Lord would have much greater healing abilities, than that of an ordinary vampire.

LPF: *Yes, indeed. I am very captivated by the idea that, by becoming a vampire Lord, an ordinary vampire not only establishes a link with other vampires, but is also able to draw strength from them and even dip into that power source when needed. Indeed,*

that idea of "power" when it comes to your vampire (both psychically and physically) is very fascinating. Could you tell us a bit more about this?

This again is where magic comes into the equation. Vampire Lords are born, not created. By that I mean, when a vampire is first turned, or reborn, he (or she) either has the potential to be a Lord or not. Some of it is personality, the desire to lead rather than follow. But without power, the desire to lead doesn't do any good. A Vampire Lord has to have the raw strength to hold and control his minions, to forge that mostly unbreakable link. I say "mostly," because nothing is unbreakable. A vampire can be seduced by another master, or can simply be psychologically twisted in such a way that the bond doesn't hold. A Vampire Lord will typically have anywhere from hundreds to thousands of vampires beholden to him as their master. If one weakens and begins conspiring with the enemy, the Lord won't necessarily be aware until the vampire makes the attempt to actually break their bond. And when that happens, retribution is immediate and merciless. Disloyalty is never tolerated.

LPF: *Could you talk a little bit about gender stereotypes? Are they instrumental in constructing your vampires' literary personas?*

I try not to indulge gender stereotypes in my writing. For example, my heroines are all very strong, capable women. They have different strengths, from both their mates and each other, but they are all very strong willed, very alpha females. Sarah, Rajmund's mate, is almost stereotypically feminine, but she was strong enough to survive a terrible trauma as a teenager, to walk away from her family and everyone she knew and build a new life for herself. No, she can't beat an assailant to the ground or shoot a gun, but that doesn't make her weak. Her strength is less physical, but that doesn't make it *less.* Cyn, on the other hand, is tough and beautiful both. She doesn't need anyone to save her; she'll save herself. However, I have to bow to the reality of the genre in which I write, and that means the hero has to be very alpha, as well. The heroine can be alpha, she can be an excellent match for the hero, but she can't be stronger than he is. I also try to include non-traditional actors in my stories. Rajmund's lieutenant, Emelie, is a lesbian who was driven from her home by parents who couldn't accept who she was. She's model-beautiful, but she's powerful enough as a vampire to rise to the level of lieutenant to a Vampire Lord, and maybe even higher. Raphael's human trauma surgeon is a gay man who's mated to one of Raphael's bodyguards, and all of Raphael's bodyguards are very tough, very dangerous vampires.

LPF: *There is a sense that most of your Vampire Lords (and Lady) are of significant financial means. And they all have a penchant for the finer things in life. Why is that?*

Well, first of all, even though Sophia is (obviously) female, she is nonetheless a Vampire *Lord*. In direct address, she's Lady Sophia, but her title is Vampire Lord. Vampire society is very male dominated, because historically the more powerful vampires chose to turn humans who could serve as soldiers and protectors. But to answer the question, the Vampire Lords are wealthy because they've had sometimes hundreds of years to accumulate wealth, and on top of that, they inherit the centuries of wealth accumulated by the vampire lord who died, or they assassinated, in order for them to assume rulership of their territories. In practical terms of the story, however, they're wealthy, because it makes for a more interesting character, one who can fly to their various homes and meetings on a private jet, who can support a rather large troop of private guards, wear fine clothes, live in beautiful and/or exotic locations, and mingle among rich and powerful humans. And who's never bothered with the nitty-gritty of earning a living, leaving them free to engage in adventure and romance.

LPF: *So, in a way, the vampires answer to our very human desire for a lavish life, untainted by financial worries. Well, I doubt anyone can resist that…do you think that's part of the vampire's appeal? To live a life that is very "exotic", dreamy and exciting in human terms?*

There's no question that readers enjoy the lavish lifestyle of my vampires. For one thing, it makes the story flow more smoothly. If Raphael needs to get to Arizona after Cyn, he hops his private plane. No driving hundreds of miles, no waiting around airports for a delayed flight. And he lives on an oceanfront estate in Malibu, while Rajmund owns a penthouse in Manhattan, and Sophia an architect designed home on the riverfront in Vancouver. The glamour and elegance of their lifestyle definitely is part of their appeal.

LPF: *A lot of your vampires (although not all) have migrated from the "Old World" to America, seemingly bringing with them a lot of their traditions and customs. Is this geographical shift significant in your work? Are we facing a "new brand" of American vampire?*

DBR: Duncan was the first truly American vampire we've met, and he's certainly the most powerful American-born vampire so far. The prominence of immigrant vampires in the books is a function of age. Since the vampire symbiote is transmitted by blood contact, it had to be *brought* to the North American continent by a vampire. (Of course, that raises the—thus far unanswered—question of who the very first vampire was.) But, in general, vampire lords tend to be older, because it takes time to learn how to wield their power and to become smart enough to destroy their predecessor. Older vampires

on this continent will, for the most part, have immigrated from somewhere else. No newly-turned vampire on this continent can pre-date that first vampire who brought the symbiote over. Which pretty much means no American-born vampire can pre-date the colonial period, since travel before that time was exceedingly difficult, especially for a creature who needs human blood to survive. Both during and after the colonial period, there was a tremendous amount of immigration to North America, which would include vampires like Raphael, who didn't arrive until the early 1800s. Victor, the vampire lord Duncan defeats to gain his territory, was one of the first vampires to arrive here, having been established well before the American Revolution. And Krystof, Rajmund's master, was already here when Raphael arrived.

LPF: *Yes, I can absolutely see that point about travel! And yet, vampires always seem to be a "European thing", with all their insatiable hunger and (one might even argue) power and greed. There doesn't seem to be much written on vampires who were always from the New World. I know this sounds a bit speculative, and I am asking it in general terms, but do you think there is something of a conceptual/political agenda in placing vampires in the New World? You know, visions of freedom, liberation, post-revolutionary desire for wealth, a new society etc…This is a general question, really, not just about your fiction but about issues of vampires migration overall.*

DBR: No, I think it's simpler than that. Vampires are old. Europe is old. And there's the affectation of many vampires, favouring the music and culture of their youth before they were turned, and that almost always goes back to somewhere other than America, again because of the age. There's also a perception on the part of readers, and writers respond to reader expectations, that Europe is more mysterious and sophisticated than America. Many vampire stories are steeped in ancient mystery and prophecy, and that all has to come from historic Europe.

LPF: *Your vampire stories are very sensual and erotic. Does the concept of genre ever play a part in your decision-making when writing?*

DBR: I don't consider my stories erotica, because, while they do have explicit sex scenes, the sex is not the plot or driver of the story. I do consider genre when writing, but only in the sense that my stories are definitely in the paranormal genre. I'm very careful to clearly set out the rules of my vampires, or other paranormal creature, and to follow those rules. I also try not to violate any of the cardinal rules of the genre by, for example, having a vampire who doesn't desire and/or drink blood at all. I've tried to combine the classical vampire of horror movies and books with the vampire romantic lead of modern romance. My vampires are bloodthirsty, violent and territorial, but

they're also fanatically loyal, possessive and protective of the one human whom they love.

LPF: *I think that point about loyalty and protection to their loved humans is very interesting. It proposes a very specific dynamic between supernatural and human which is almost ubiquitous in vampire fiction. Love is a very important part of it, and it's not just a matter of feeding. What made you want to keep this dynamic alive? Was it a matter of fitting the tradition, or was it inspired by a desire to establish an emotional (perhaps even conceptual) connection between vampires and humans?*

DBR: In my books, it's not so much a connection between vampire and *humans*, so much as a connection between vampire and *his* human. It goes hand in glove with the vampire's strong sense of territoriality and possessiveness. His mate is almost a possession, and no one takes what's his. Love certainly comes into it, though, because the books are, after all, paranormal romance. I wanted a bond between my vampires and their human mates that would be something the reader would long for. This perfect connection with a powerful vampire who will literally kill to protect you, who will tear a city apart searching for you. There is nothing he won't do to ensure your safety and happiness. But as for the rest of humanity, my vampires don't distinguish between humans and vampires when it comes to fighting and/or killing. If a human crosses one of my Vampire Lords, he is subject to the same punishment as one of the Lord's vampire subjects would be, even if that means execution.

LPF: *Does the international market influence you in making decisions about your writing?*

DBR: My books are currently only available in English, although I do have many international readers from all over the world. I try to give my books an international flavour by introducing vampires from many different countries and cultures. And when dealing with those characters, I'm always very careful about language, history and customs. I do quite a bit of research into the time period and country any particular vampire is from to be certain I've got his history and background right. With language, I'm lucky to have my darling husband who's from Europe, and, of course, fluent in five different languages. But I've also tapped friends and strangers both to ensure the accuracy of my characters' words. That doesn't mean I never make a mistake, but so far no one's complained.

LPF: *I'm fascinated by the idea of accuracy, actually. Is that an important concept for you when it comes to the vampire tradition and (to some extent) the vampire canon? What I mean is, when you do research for your books, are you always aware of what*

vampires "should be like" and how they might be expectations about this particular group?

DBR: Historical and cultural accuracy is very important to me. I hold advanced degrees in Russian History and International Relations, so I come to fiction writing from an academic tradition where accuracy was critical to an analysis. I'm also something of a control freak and a perfectionist, so that comes into it, too. LOL As for the vampire canon, I kept what I consider to be the core of the traditional vampire, while rejecting some parts which I felt flew in the face of physical science. That might seem odd since we're talking about magical or paranormal creatures, but there were certain aspects of the vampire tradition which violated physical science without contributing anything to the narrative. For example, my vampires definitely have a reflection in a mirror, and they're not dead. Zombies don't appeal to me at all, which is what a walking dead vampire would be. But they do sleep through the day, which informs the narrative in that everything happens at night. And they do drink human blood, which in my view is the most critical and inviolable vampire trait. They *must* require human blood to survive and flourish. Almost anything else can be adapted, adjusted, deleted, but a vampire *must require human blood to survive!* Otherwise, he's not a vampire, he's something else. That's not saying it won't be a good story, but it won't be a vampire story.

LPF: *It is virtually impossible to avoid vampires these days. They are everywhere! This is not a single occurrence in history, that's true, but…what are your thoughts on the latest vampire phenomenon?*

Vampires have been around in literature for a very long time, going back to the very early 1800s. The vampire has always been associated with seduction, although not always with romantic intent. I can only speak to the themes of adult fiction, since that's what I read and write … but I've always thought vampires' appeal to readers, especially in their modern fictional incarnation, is that they are the ultimate bad boys of romance. Many female readers, me included, love the bad boy hero, and there is nothing quite like a vampire for badness. He is practically invincible, charismatic and gorgeous, and he's tamed by an ordinary human woman. But tamed *only* for her. To the rest of the world, he's still the biggest, baddest boy of all … and he's all hers. How can a woman resist that?

23 April 2014