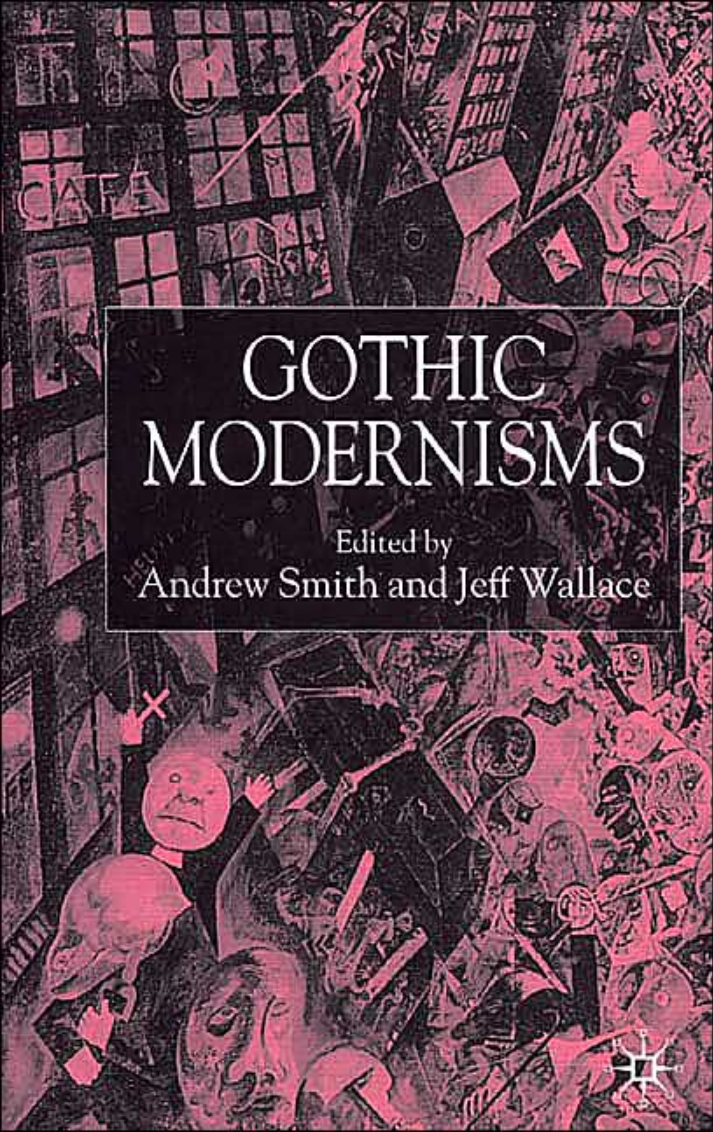
GOTHIC
MODERNISMS
Edited by
Andrew Smith and Jeff Wallace

Gothic Modernisms

Also by Andrew Smith

BRAM STOKER: History, Psychoanalysis and the Gothic (*co-editor with William Hughes*)

DRACULA AND THE CRITICS

FICTIONS OF UNEASE: The Gothic from Otranto to the X-Files (*co-editor with William Hughes and Diane Mason*)

GOTHIC RADICALISM: Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis in the Nineteenth Century

Also by Jeff Wallace

CHARLES DARWIN'S *ORIGIN OF SPECIES*: New Interdisciplinary Essays (*co-editor with David Amigoni*)

RAYMOND WILLIAMS NOW: Knowledge, Limits and the Future (*co-editor with Rod Jones and Sophie Nield*)

Gothic Modernisms

Edited by

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palgrave

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Nat Benson
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In memoriam

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Introduction: Gothic Modernisms: History, Culture and Aesthetics

Andrew Smith and Jeff Wallace

The connections between modernism and the Gothic have largely been overlooked in studies of the Gothic and in modernist scholarship. Given the Gothic's appeal to a mass readership and modernism's associations with elite culture, such oversights seem initially justifiable. However, this is to ignore modernism's fascination with the everyday, as witnessed for example in two seminal high modernist achievements of 1922, *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*; and it is to ignore the mutual obsession of the Gothic and the modernist with the rapidly changing relationship between culture and the quotidian. The refrain from T. S. Eliot's 'Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' – 'In the room the women come and go/Talking of Michelangelo' (1. 13–14) – illuminates one aspect of such a relationship.[1] The lines form a misogynistic image of women gossiping about a mode of culture which they do not understand; but the paradox is that such an image of cultural exclusion is both celebrated and breached by a modernist aesthetic which glimpses in the everyday, not a decline of cultural authority, but rather its rhetorical and image bearing status. In transforming Michelangelo into mass experience, mass culture both captures the essence of a cultural commonality and symbolically represents an attachment to a more profound world of longing, fear and nostalgia – a world, in other words, of Gothic dimensions.

James Joyce's *Ulysses* develops a different strand of the connection between culture and common experience: 'He comes, pale vampire, through storm his eyes, his bat sails bloodying the sea, mouth to her mouth's kiss. Here. Put a pin in that chap, will you? My tablets.'[2] Registered here is not only the stock vampiric iconography of bats, storms and stakings, but also the link with writing and so with culture. The description is a gloss on what Jonathan Harker in *Dracula* (1897) notes in his diary at Castle Dracula:

> Up to now I never quite knew what Shakespeare meant when he made Hamlet say:–
> 'My tablets! quick, my tablets!
> 'Tis meet that I put it down.'[3]

Harker's misquotation is itself revealing; the actual lines from *Hamlet* are:

> My tables, – meet it is I set it down
> That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain
> (Act I, Scene V, 107–8).[4]

A sentiment of duplicity which both captures the spirit of the Count's vampiric yet dandified demeanour, and the ambitions of a certain kind of writing which entertains the absurd in order to raise questions about reality. It is this process, or quest, which brings together the Gothic and the modernist text in their mutual search for a world of meaning which needs to be both recorded and affirmed, although via an employment of symbolism which privileges culture as the space where such debates take place.

The stylistic spirit of adventure in *Dracula* itself seems to anticipate a modernist aesthetic. As Kelly Hurley maintains in this volume, British literary modernism is indebted to an innovative, anti-realist tradition inaugurated in the popular fiction of the *fin de siècle* – Gothic Horror, sensation fiction, science fiction. *Dracula*'s use of diary extracts, newspaper cuttings and letters evidences an interest in the material here-and-now that is further underlined by reference to modish technologies such as a voice recorder and Kodak cameras. These images of the modern are, of course, threatened by the Count who represents an older, darker world. But the modernist cry of 'Make it New!' is ever apparent in a novel which manifestly finds its way into Eliot's *Waste Land*:

> A woman drew her long black hair out tight
> And fiddled whisper music on those strings
> And bats with baby faces in the violet light
> Whistled, and beat their wings
> And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
> And upside down in air were towers
> Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
> And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted
> Wells (v. 1.377–85)

This recontextualising of the Gothic within Eliot's myth of modern decay and dislocation highlights a further area of contention. In France in particular, the roots of modernism can be found in the Gothic's images of perversion and disorder. Peter Nicholls has explored the influence of the fantastical tales of Gautier on French modernism[5]; the influence of Poe's tales of horror and suspense on writers such as Maupassant and Baudelaire is already well known, and the impress of this French tradition on the early work of Eliot is equally clearly established. But W. J. McCormack's description of *Dracula*'s 'modernism' as 'a pre-emptive counter-revolution' against modernism because of its ultimate faith in moral absolutes and linguistic certainties, must surely also require revision, because it overlooks the fact that the model of desire proposed by Stoker's novel actually challenges the idea of certainty.[6] Gothic text and modernist text are joined, that is to say, by their fascination with the potential erosion of moral value, and with the forms that amorality can take.

The interest in the amoral is historically grounded in a series of shared knowledges between the late Victorian Gothic and the modernist text. Theories of degeneration, for example, had a cultural prominence throughout the late Victorian and the early twentieth-century period. The idea that civilisation was threatened by the possibilities of atavistic reversion are developed in works such as R. L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896) and, in an instance which combines an image of physical decline with aesthetics, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).[7] Several of the essays in this volume allude to the role of discourses of degeneration in the Gothic modernist text; while Kelly Hurley, for example, identifies monstrosity and 'abhuman' transfiguration as central post-Darwinian elements in late Victorian popular Gothic texts such as those of W. H. Hodgson, Andrew Smith finds degeneration at work in a 'canonical' text of proto-modernism, D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913). Lawrence's work, along with that of James Joyce and Djuna Barnes for example, exhibits a fascination with the body, its desires and functions. In both modernist and popular discourses, the body can seem to promise authentic personal identity, yet is ghosted by a sense of something potentially alien and strange. Anxieties about the physical health of the collective body – human species, race, nation-state, culture – become anxieties about the idea of the self.

The emergence of psychoanalysis at the end of the nineteenth century was already foreshadowed in the Gothic's own images of perversion,

transgression and the forbidden. Nascent theories of desire to be found in the work of Freud were also being developed within the field of sexology within Britain at around the same time. The sense that the subject is not in possession of itself, because riven with desires which motivated it in telling if obscure ways, was always a key element of the images of compulsion that were at the heart of Gothic transgressions. Psychoanalysis, in other words, has the aura of the Gothic about it: Robert Young has recently maintained, for example, that '*The Interpretation of Dreams* was a Gothic novel', playfully arguing thereby for the essentially tautological nature of 'Freudian' interpretations of *Dracula*, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*.[8] It is thus not fortuitous that Freud's influential account of fear and desire, 'The Uncanny', was generated by a reading of a Gothic text, Hoffmann's 'The Sandman'.

Gothic and modernist instabilities thus have a complex relationship to each other. Images of the unstable self deriving from psychoanalysis bore an important influence on modernist representation of the self. Also, the modernist claim that the world can be understood through our symbolic connections to it supports the Freudian preoccupation with the placing of the body in culture, and suggests the inherently symbolic attachments which govern our relationships to others. Crucially, it is through writing (and symbolism) that such truths about the self are revealed. For modernists, as for Freud, fiction becomes the lie which tells the truth. As Harker mentions in the concluding 'Note' to *Dracula*:

> We were struck with the fact that, in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document! nothing but a mass of type-writing [. . .] We could hardly ask anyone, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story.
>
> (p. 378)

Doubt here is not denial, rather it is the case that Harker is struck by the very materiality of writing and representation, a concern which modernism comes to share with the Gothic.

The present volume thus seeks to address the relative neglect of the connections between Gothic and modernist in literary-historical scholarship – a neglect which in itself remains difficult to account for. Perhaps a clue lies in Marshall Berman's controversial re-ordering of modernist chronology. In comparison with the ceaseless play of contraries

to be found in nineteenth-century modernist thinkers such as Marx and Nietzsche, Berman finds in early twentieth-century modernism 'a radical flattening of perspective and shrinkage of imaginative range'.[9] Does the promise of unfolding technological progress, and unambiguous futurity, become so overwhelming that it swamps the dialectical subtlety of an earlier understanding of modernity – one which could appreciate, for example, that 'some very important kinds of human feeling are dying, even as machines are coming to life' (p. 25)? It is revealing, however, that Berman's sole illustration of this uncritical celebration or embrace of the modern is to be found in Italian Futurism. By contrast, two essays here insist that it is precisely in and through the confrontation with the idealised 'new' that an effect of spectrality, of the Other which haunts progress and presence, is produced. This specifically Gothicist modernism is located by David Glover in the issue of time in early modernist texts, the 'muddied temporality' of *Heart of Darkness* and *The Inheritors* attesting to the radical inability of modernism to have done with the past. David Punter, ranging widely, locates the spectrality effect at the level of style and form: beneath the aspiration to transparency there is always that Other which cannot be detached, the trace and proliferation of the 'unimaginable twin' or of Elizabeth Bowen's 'shadowy third'.

In addition, Berman's over-simplified distinction – the death of human feeling, the birth of machines – needs to be reassessed via the emergence of film, a technology of narrative or representation peculiar to modernism. Terry Castle has suggested, for example, that film, following photography, instantiates the spectralising habit of modernity itself, attesting to 'our compulsive need, since the mid-nineteenth century, to invent machines that mimic and reinforce the image-producing powers of consciousness'.[10] It is not, then, the death of human feeling over which cinema presides, but the transmutation of it, according to a historical logic whose origins coincide with the Gothic narratives of the late eighteenth century. Curiously, however, Castle's analysis reminds us of D. H. Lawrence's shrill anxieties about modern cinema-going, which he similarly saw as complicit with the growing spectrality of the human subject. The final two essays in this volume indicate that no study of Gothic modernism would be complete without an assessment of the role of film in the representation and construction of modern subjectivity.

David Punter in 'Hungry Ghosts and Foreign Bodies' examines the work of three writers, all of whom awkwardly straddle the boundaries of the modernist project: Walter de la Mare, Elizabeth Bowen and T. S. Eliot.

What Punter explores is not how modernism is ghosted by a tradition of writing but rather modernism's inbuilt sense of its own surpassing, and so the possibility that it is itself haunted by a half-imaginable future. Punter argues that this sense of the ephemeral is linked to the Gothic through a fascination with the 'foreign body', a body which is hatching and yet imperfectly glimpsed. Punter explores a series of liminal images and concludes that such images become lodged, through a Gothic paradox, within the very heart of modernism itself. Punter is one of the leading theorists of the Gothic and his essay makes an important contribution to theorising the link between modernism and its Gothic legacy.

David Glover, in '"The Spectrality Effect" in Early Modernism' explores two transitional texts: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Ford Madox Ford's *The Inheritors* (1901), arguing that each text evidences a complex relationship to popular genres. Their use of the Imperial Gothic and Scientific Romance reveals a crisis in historical confidence, a sense that the final culmination of the civilising process may be a higher form of barbarism. Glover argues that the incursions of the Gothic into English modernism mark the point at which the cumulative impact of liberal modernity upon traditional cultural forms begins to unleash an uncontainable and radically disruptive reaction, leaving behind an eerie kind of partial amnesia, or what the narrator of *The Inheritors* calls 'a memory of confusion'. Glover's essay provides a significant reassessment of how this use of the Gothic suggests that modernist texts plot the future as a potentially new form of calamity that recapitulates, yet also dramatically reconfigures, the worst features of the past.

David Seed, in '"Psychical" Cases: Transformations of the Supernatural in Virginia Woolf and May Sinclair', takes as his starting point Virginia Woolf's famous review of Dorothy Scarborough's *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*, where Woolf emphasises that the importance of the Gothic lies in its attempt to evoke a transcendental 'sense of the unseen'. Seed explores how Virginia Woolf and May Sinclair use the supernatural as a means to problematise perception in their short stories. Seed explores how they construct enigmatic objects and extreme psychological states without any of the traditional Gothic trappings. Seed accounts for how modernist notions of terror are indebted to a Gothic vernacular which is then transcended in an attempt to replace it with the specifically modern.

Judith Wilt, in 'The Ghost and the Omnibus: the Gothic Virginia Woolf' argues that Woolf used the Gothic in order to provide her

writing with images which suggest a shattering of consciousness and the dissolving of rational boundaries which lie at the heart of the modernist project. Wilt examines how the Gothic furnishes a model of haunting in Woolf's novels: hauntings which demonstrate the fragility of the modernist self. Wilt argues that Woolf formulates a world of emanations and apparitions, one in which the Gothic figure of the ghost is pervasive and complex: the ghost as privilege and punishment, the ghost exorcised and incarnate, the ghost single and the ghost as a multiple complex entity. Significantly, Wilt positions Woolf's work within a wider modernist framework in order to illustrate how Woolf's images of the Gothic differ from other writers' use of the Gothic tradition.

Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, in 'Strolling in the Dark: Gothic Flânerie in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*', explore how *Nightwood* (1936) blurs generic boundaries between prose and poetry, linear narratives and dream visions. The novel's story also represents the rejection of conventional boundaries. The novel destabilises, amongst others, the boundaries between Jew and Gentile, masculine and feminine, human and animal, sane and insane. The novel's model of transgression is indebted to the Gothic. Moreover the novel reassesses the modernist concern with the city. Whereas writers such as Eliot, Joyce and Woolf represent the city as a space for mobility (hence the flâneur), Barnes portrays it as a Gothic labyrinth. The various European capitals featured in the novel are indistinguishable as urban spaces and function merely as sites for interior experiences: the reader passing through a series of claustrophobic rooms which represent the irrationality of the interior mind. What is at issue here is the defining of the female flâneur, and its relationship to the Gothic. Horner and Zlosnik's article teases out the novel's Gothic references but also makes a unique reassessment of the city space within modernist fiction.

Deborah Tyler-Bennett, in '"Thick Within Our Hair": Djuna Barnes's Gothic Lovers' argues that the Gothic is a vital element of Barnes's writing. The focus in this chapter is on the representation of lovers across a range of Barnes's poetry, short stories and novels. Tyler-Bennett argues that Barnes's lovers echo images of Gothic lovers to be found in the work of Coleridge, Le Fanu and Stoker. She argues that Barnes's work combines modernist perspectives on gender with a distinctly Gothic vocabulary concerning trysts between living lovers and dead 'beloveds'. Additionally she argues that various scenes in *Nightwood* are indebted to *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* and *Nosferatu*. Such an argument gives testimony to the complex Gothic presence in Barnes's writing as well as acknowledging the experimentally modernist aesthetic in her work, one

which can only be properly appreciated through this examination of the Gothic.

In '"The stern task of living": *Dubliners*, Clerks, Money and Modernism', Jeff Wallace explores the economics of Joyce's Gothic modernism. Like contemporaries such as Woolf and Forster, Joyce evinces a fascination with those figures, typified by the clerk, whose lives are an enigmatic struggle for survival, to 'keep body and soul together'. Instrumental in the ghostly automatism of the *Dubliners* (1914) stories is an economic system, along the lines of Marx's 'vampiric' capital, which creates predatory, devouring relationships, moral vacancy or uncertainty, and alienated subjectivities. However, Wallace argues, the stories are equally distanced from any vitalistic or 'vivocentric' alternatives to money. They offer instead an unidealised analysis of life and death within the closed economic circuit, and contribute to the developed, comic celebration of the posthuman subject within such circuits in Samuel Beckett's *Murphy* (1938). Wallace thus provides an important reassessment of the Gothic inheritance in Joyce's work.

Kelly Hurley, in 'The Modernist Abominations of William Hope Hodgson', explores how Hodgson's experiments with a variety of anti-realist narrative techniques work to fracture conventional constructions of human identity. Hodgson uses post-Darwinian ideas within a framework of Gothic horror to create a variety of posthuman subjects, conceived as species hybrids or as the product of human degeneration. Hurley largely concentrates on Hodgson's *The Night Land* (1912), arguing that its monsters owe a debt to both *Dracula* and *The Time Machine* (1895). Hurley concludes that the novel's sometimes hysterical affirmation of a restabilised and 'sound' human identity contrasts with its unabashed pleasure in the elaboration of its monstrosities. Hurley's essay explores a relatively neglected writer and puts him at the centre of the modernist debate concerning the limits of subjectivity.

Andrew Smith, in 'Vampirism, Masculinity and Degeneracy: D. H. Lawrence's Modernist Gothic', places Lawrence's work in the context of late nineteenth-century theories of degeneration. Lawrence develops these theories through a range of Gothic images in his work. Most typically the figure of the vampire haunts his fiction. The vampire is associated with desire but also with degeneracy and decadence. Lawrence thus uses covert images of vampirism in order to make comment on issues such as class, sexuality, and masculinity and femininity. Lawrence also links the figure of the vampire to a fear of syphilis which

he relates to modernist practice and its own loathing of the body. Smith's major focus is on *Sons and Lovers* (1913) although other novels and non-fiction writing are referred to. This essay places Lawrence's work in a context of pseudo-scientific debates about the nature of the self – debates which also inform representations of the neurotic modernist self.

Francesca Orestano, in 'Arctic Masks in a Castle of Ice: Gothic Vorticism and Wyndham Lewis's *Self Condemned*', argues that Wyndham Lewis's association with the 'Vorticists' can be linked to the Gothic. Lewis's emphasis on the anti-mimetic and the anti-romantic is a position which had also tempted some late Victorian authors into affiliations with a Gothic continuity through a fascination with the grotesque. Orestano explores a wide range of Lewis's work in order to expose how his aesthetic concerns are generated out of a late Victorian context. Lewis's work and its fascination with fragmentation, violence, spiritualism and images of ice and frozen wilderness reveals how his modernist enterprise recycles a Gothic tradition in an attempt to create an aesthetic of the 'New'. The essay replots Lewis's aesthetics in a Gothic tradition, one which illuminates the modernist concern with the status and function of artistic practice.

Nigel Morris, in '*Metropolis* and the Modernist Gothic' explores the Gothic images of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926), arguing that it is necessary to problematise the film's relationship to modernism because the modernist slogan 'Make it New!' did not directly relate to the new, and so largely uncanonical, medium of film. Morris argues that an exploration of the film's Gothic images reveals both the way that it is tied to a Gothic tradition and how it replots the Gothic for an understanding of the future. The film's Gothic elements, relating explicitly to the French Revolution, articulate an unease with excessive rationality (industrial organisation and the centralisation of state power) and the bestiality of the Mob, thereby evoking the more recent events of the Russian Revolution as well as a frighteningly accurate prophecy of the Holocaust in Germany. Morris explores the film as both modernist product and as Gothic by-product, and as such he illuminates the complex relationship between modernism and the Gothic.

Julian Wolfreys, in 'Hollywood Gothic/Gothic Hollywood: the Example of Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*', explores the relationship between the externality of the Gothic and the internality of the uncanny, arguing that Derrida's notion that the spectre leaves its mark on the text can be usefully applied to the Hollywood Gothic from the 1930s and after in general and Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) in

particular. Wolfreys argues that the narrative composition of such films is disturbed by the use of uncanny effects of European provenance, which haunt the audience with spectacular visual moments which cannot quite be explained. These ideas are applied to an analysis of *Sunset Boulevard*. It is in films such as this, where Gothic and camp sensibility merge, that we see the American subject held hostage to the ghost of the European Other. What we also witness is how this merges into a genre of modernist self-consciousness: film noir. Wolfreys's essay makes a crucial contribution to the theorisation of the Hollywood Gothic in relation to the uncanny images of modern and modernist culture.

All of these essays were specially commissioned for this volume. They bear testimony to the complexities involved in examining the Gothic presence in modernist texts. The purpose of this volume is to contribute to scholarship on both modernism and the Gothic, the diversity of texts and approaches employed revealing just what a critically rich area of enquiry an examination of the modernist Gothic provokes.

Notes

1. T. S. Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', in *Selected Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1948 [1952]), pp. 9–14. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text.
2. James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 47.
3. Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 36. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text.
4. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), ed. T. J. B. Spencer, p. 93.
5. Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995). In particular Nicholls notes the Gothic influences which bore on the work of Baudelaire, p. 45.
6. W. J. McCormack, *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, vol. 2, ed. Seamus Deane (Derry: Field Day, 1991), p. 846.
7. This point is also made by David Punter in *The Literature of Terror*, vol. 2 (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 1–25.
8. Robert Young, 'Freud's Secret: *The Interpretation of Dreams* was a Gothic Novel', in Laura Marcus (ed.), *Sigmund Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams: New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 206–31.
9. Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 24. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
10. Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 137.

1
Hungry Ghosts and Foreign Bodies

David Punter

In his memoir of Walter de la Mare, Forrest Reid finds it necessary to distinguish de la Mare's tales of haunting from those of Poe: Poe's stories, Reid says, 'are forced from the writer by some dark, secret collaborator; they are written with the terrible intensity of one who abandons himself to an obsession'.[1] Such a process of writing, no matter to whom it might attach itself, would be haunted and haunting, would be the product of an unimaginable other who steals the pen from the writer's grasp in the very moment of inception and yet who cannot be glimpsed, is shrouded in a lasting opacity.

I want to try to avoid generalising about the many-faceted 'object' which is modernism; nevertheless it is perhaps admissible to draw attention to a certain rhetoric of the transparent which flourished during modernism's heyday. In the preface to Amy Lowell's *Some Imagist Poets*, published in 1915, Richard Aldington quotes a relevant passage from Remy de Gourmont:

> Individualism in literature, liberty of art, abandonment of existing forms [...] The sole excuse which a man can have for writing is to write down himself, to unveil for others the sort of world which mirrors itself in his individual glass.[2]

The practice conjured by this remark, I suggest, would be akin to that of Virginia Woolf; it would seek to establish the possibility of an all-encompassing stream of consciousness within which, like flies in amber, moments of perception could be securely embedded and displayed for inspection. I would particularly draw attention to the words 'unveil' and 'mirrors', which between them offer the suggestion that the dark other might be banished, that the opacity which trembles at the centre of the

gaze might be penetrated, that the pen might be snatched back by its lawful but impotent owner. 'Modernist poetry', Graham Hough is hardly alone in pointing out, 'placed great weight on conscious craftsmanship'[3]; de la Mare's short story, 'An Ideal Craftsman', to which I shall turn at the end of this essay, shows us graphically what might lie hidden at the root of this notion of 'craft'; Conrad's 'The Secret Sharer', on which I shall also offer some comments, demonstrates for us the frailty of this craft, a craft in which it is impossible to sail alone, in which the prospect of 'individualism' is perpetually invaded, the inner sanctum of the cabin holds the shape of the other, the very bed of 'the noon's repose', as Eliot will have it, that bears the mark, the trace, of an unimaginable twin.

Thus, then, would the terrain of the finely shaped individual turn into the terrain of the ghost, a world, as Strindberg – writer of *The Ghost Sonata* – put it, 'of allusion where people talk in semi-tones, in muted voices, and one is ashamed of being human'.[4] Statement turns into allusion; a speech one might have considered one's own becomes the echo of another voice. Pirandello's 'madman' Moscarda also has an experience of mirrors, of being mirrored in his father's 'glassy blue eyes', but this experience is principally one of ghosting and hallucination:

> Suddenly the person who was so close to us is miles away: catching sight of him we see a stranger. And our lives feel utterly torn to shreds, except at one point which still connects them to that man. It is a point of shame – the fact of our birth, detached and cut off from him, as though it were an everyday happening. Perhaps not unforeseen, but involuntary, in the life of that stranger – the evidence of a gesture, the fruit of an action, something in short that now, oh yes! makes us feel shame, that arouses resentment and almost hatred in us.[5]

What seems undecidable in this account of a gesture – a gesture perhaps similar to another gesture, in T. S. Eliot's 'La Figlia Che Piange', from which I have already quoted and to which I shall return – is whether it is father or self that is being glimpsed, described: it is as though the one moves to obscure, to obliterate the other, as though the opacity derives from a certain elision, an impossibility of separation, a point where 'craft' – the making of a separable object – fails and closes down, the eyelid blinking shut at the moment when a salving perception appears on the point of being offered.

To return for a moment, however, to Strindberg's 'semi-tones' and 'muted voices': the scenario is surely that of death, or perhaps rather that of the funeral or the wake, of speech in hushed whispers for fear

of . . . awakening the dead? A quietened speech, born of respect – or terror? An attempt to banish the surviving, and still hungry, ghost, or a move to join the spectre on a hallucinated terrain, to participate in a speech of the dead? For European modernism, haunting and haunted by a site of war, the question of rebirth, of the progress of the 'new', would seem always to be accompanied, as by a 'dark, secret collaborator', by the scene of death – as for instance in the dream of the ghost-mother in Hermann Hesse's *Demian*:

> I was on my way to my parents' home and over the main entrance the heraldic bird gleamed gold on an azure ground. My mother walked towards me but when I entered and she was about to kiss me, it was no longer me but a form I had never set eyes on, tall and strong with a look of Max Demian and my painted portrait – yet it was somehow different and despite the robust frame, very feminine. The form drew me to itself and enveloped me in a deep, shuddering embrace.[6]

The words themselves shift and slide: 'a form I had never set eyes on' – what could better describe the hope of the modernists, the longing for the new, fragmented yet ideal, the wish for a 'robust frame' around experience, yet what could also better express the fear that, if found, such a 'form' would lock us into a 'deep, shuddering embrace'? Edward Timms discusses this passage instructively in Jungian terms, but decisively displaces death in favour of 'maternal yearnings'[7]; yet Webster, we know, 'was much possessed by death', and Donne 'was such another' who felt the power of this 'shuddering' spectre 'to seize and clutch and penetrate' – according to Eliot,[8] who describes for us the force of such a deathly encounter. A 'melancholy enchantment', as Arthur Schnitzler was to refer to it,[9] but Eliot's exploration of haunted melancholy conjures a different foreign body:

> Who is the third who walks always beside you?
> When I count, there are only you and I together
> But when I look ahead up the white road
> There is always another one walking beside you
> Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
> I do not know whether a man or a woman
> But who is that on the other side of you?[10]

A 'melancholy enchantment' indeed. If the figure that wraps Hesse's hero in a 'shuddering embrace' has abandoned or passed beyond gender

in the manner of 'breastless creatures under ground',[11] and if Judith Butler's meditations on the connection between melancholy and the loss of homosexual relationship have weight,[12] then it is small wonder that Eliot's protagonist, if indeed such a thing can be addressed or even projected in the world of ghosts that is *The Waste Land*, finds himself the victim of an occluded vision, of a hallucination that is simultaneously clear in its hope of progress ('when I look ahead up the white road') and '(w)rapt' in a cloak of unknowing. Eliot's note on these lines, evasive as it might (inevitably) be, is well-known: they

> were stimulated by the account of one of the Antarctic expeditions (I forget which, but I think one of Shackleton's): it was related that the party of explorers, at the extremity of their strength, had the constant delusion that there was *one more member* than could actually be counted.[13]

Of course Eliot forgets which expedition; this is a scenario of 'whiteout', of a type that W. S. Graham would make peculiarly his own, an impossible encounter in 'Malcolm Mooney's Land'.[14] In such a land there will always be 'one more' than can safely or conveniently be counted, another sharer of secrets, although whether that 'one more' will actually prove to have a 'member' or not will be unknown, as will the gender of those who lean 'backward with a lipless grin'.[15]

What would it mean, these spectral encounters ask us, to see a figure that is 'walking beside you' and yet is at the same time 'on the other side of you'? Other than what, other from where, from what viewpoint or perspective? Other, perhaps, from the gazer, in which case we 'meet' here again a 'figure' for occlusion, a further, more distant figure whose shape cannot be discerned, whose destiny cannot be enacted, because it is always held 'beyond' – there is something 'between' which prevents us from seizing, from clutching, from penetrating. In what sense are 'I' and 'you' together on this road? If both are walking together, then the 'third' only appears when the 'I' looks away, looks 'awry',[16] and thus appears only in the absented place of the seeing self, as an impossible object of the gaze, simultaneously – of necessity – as an alternative originator of the gaze. How can we tell at what a ghost might be looking? What, to put it another way, might on the spectral plane be the 'object of consumption'? To ask that question of Eliot, officiating at the birth and death rites of modernism, might be to enquire into the unprovided answer to a crucial question: 'That corpse you planted last year in your garden,/Has it begun to sprout?'[17] Michael Levenson inspects this

problematic query with an optimistic eye: 'No talk of buried memories', he says, 'can replace the image of the god risen from the dead'.[18] What if we were to reverse this claim, to suggest that such an image of the (re)birth of the new cannot in the end (if there is an end) replace the cannibalistic need to feed off the past, to turn Hecate's queendom of household refuse into the only available source of sustenance, as the ghosts, like hungry bears, gather outside in a truer (if only because hungrier) version of ecological transformation?

Levenson does, however, go on to talk a little more about ghosts and the dead in Eliot, and in *The Waste Land* in particular. He quotes Eliot's comment to the effect that 'one cannot be sure that one's own writing has not been influenced by Poe'[19] – 'one', one might ask, or the 'other'? Would Poe then (have) become his own 'dark, secret collaborator', returning to haunt the future?

> Poe is a forgotten figure behind *The Waste Land*, and to remember Poe is to recover the gothic element that is too often explained away, the waste land as a chamber of horrors. . . . *The Waste Land* is a kind of ghost story with protagonists both haunted and haunting.[20]

Yes indeed: but what would it mean to 're-member' Poe? Would it, for example, mean to construct a new (foreign) body from the dismembered but sprouting corpse of the past? Would it mean to come to a new view of the occluded father, to put him back together again as recompense for some primal damage? Would it mean to allow the hallucinatory to flow back again, to return from exile, to foreshadow that 'turn' of modernism into the surreal so convincingly displayed in Ionesco's proliferating worlds of endlessly de-individuated objects?[21]

One thing it would certainly mean would be the reintroduction of a foreign body at just the point where such frighteningly 'sprouting' – perhaps we might better, or at any rate more rhizomatically, say 'fruiting' – bodies appear to have been exiled. Fungicidal modernism, we might say, was doomed. True though it appears to be that various rhizomes enter into 'benevolent' relationships with the roots of trees around which they grow (a feature of arborescence not illuminated by Deleuze and Guattari[22]), the fact remains that discrimination between nutrition and poison, in the case, for example, of the mushroom remains beyond the grasp (the clutch) of any but the expert. What corpses will be 'safe' for the sacrificial feast?

We can take up the narrative of the 'third who walks always beside you' in Elizabeth Bowen's story, 'The Shadowy Third'. Martin is married,

for the second time; his wife of less than a year is known to him, and thus to us, as Pussy. The house they live in was built for him at the time of his first marriage, four years previously, 'and still smelt a little of plaster, and was coldly distempered, which he hated, but they said it was not yet safe to paper the walls'.[23] The reader might well wonder at this lapse of time, this strange deferral of modernity; might well also wonder, especially as the story proceeds, about who the 'they' would be who thus warn Martin of what it might or might not be 'safe' to do.

Pussy is frightened by the house: 'I sometimes feel the very room hates us!' ('ST', 82). Certainly whatever it was that the house contained in the past – the absent ex-wife, the locked chest, the dead baby, all of these 'secret sharers' are 'on stage' during the course of the story – has not gone away, indeed there is again a real danger of proliferation, as Bowen tells us in the opening paragraph which is also the story's own finale, an epigraph that is also a multiple, rhizomatic epitaph:

> He was a pale little man, with big teeth and prominent eyes; sitting opposite to him in a bus one would have found it incredible that there could be a woman to love him. As a matter of fact there were two, one dead, not counting a mother whose inarticulate devotion he resented, and a pale sister, also dead.
>
> ('ST', 75)

In death, perhaps, there are no tenses; we cannot tell here about the 'were', about what it tells us of the survival or otherwise of the first wife, any more than we can tell about the status of 'also' offered to us in the description of death's 'pale sister'. Indeed we cannot 'tell' at all, and neither can either of the (living?) characters; here there is no possibility of (re)counting, only of a series of gestures that might 'in the end' only be echoes, reverberations from a previous 'still life'.[24]

And so the 'shadowy third' is not restricted by numerological accident; it spreads and proliferates, a queendom of the dead. The plaster on the walls, we might suppose, will never set; there will never be a moment when the 'robust frame' of the new house, the house of the new, will be free from the impress of the ghosts of the past. 'It seems so very much our house', says Pussy, 'I can't imagine anybody else at home here, we have made it so entirely – you and I' ('ST', 77). But in this set of suppositions she is deluded, she is hallucinating; for 'Anybody' is precisely the (evasive, proliferating) name by which she refers to Martin's first wife – although even here there is a certain opacity, as to whether the

capitalisation and its implications are supplied by Pussy or by Bowen, rhetorically innocuous as its contexts sometimes appear.

The key, Martin says, is lost; the key, that is, to the white chest of drawers, the key to the secret location, the key to all mysteries of purification and contamination: in the very act of making the house anew, of refurnishing it, of bringing it to new life, the life it used to have and the ghosts it used to harbour have not been banished or exiled but have instead been sealed into a crypt in the very heart of the domestic. The 'god risen from the dead' is again, somnambulistically and without resistance, with the effortlessness of a fantasised consummation, replaced by 'buried memories'. 'O quam te memorem virgo' would be Eliot's mnemonic equivalent, offered to us epigraphically at the beginning of 'La Figlia Che Piange', a poem that also seeks to 'frame' a lost gesture, an absent woman, or alternatively seeks against its own will, but under the influence of a 'dark, secret collaborator', to re-conjure the dead:

> She turned away, but with the autumn weather
> Compelled my imagination many days,
> Many days and many hours:
> Her hair over her arms and her arms full of flowers.
> And I wonder how they should have been together!
> I should have lost a gesture and a pose.
> Sometimes these cogitations still amaze
> The troubled midnight and the noon's repose.[25]

To 'pose' or to 'repose', one might echoically wonder; to place an unanswerable question, to place it again and again, to rest finally (in death) from all hope of an answer being vouchsafed, or of anybody continuing to vouch for the safety of the questioner – who is, after all, acting under 'compulsion', is being compelled . . . by a ghost. To have 'lost a gesture' appears here to be a necessary fate: the nature of the 'gesture' is to indicate and to participate in loss, in the impossibility of the frame, in the cannibalistic annulment of experience. No seizure, no clutching, no penetration: instead something 'incomparably light and deft', the phantomatic touch of something which passes on the stairs and which is only the impress of a memory on the walls of the house of the new.

'I wonder how they should have been together': not 'would' but 'should', what could have made, compelled them to be together? And would they then have been like the 'couple' on the white road, with the

place of the subject instantly vacated in order to be filled by an ambiguous form, a form whose shape and gender remain indeterminate or indeed become more so when 'subjected' to the directness of the gaze? But then, that gaze can never be direct, it is always fleeting, it is compounded with a 'fugitive resentment', a resentment that is fleeting but that also threatens or promises flight, that sets up its own possibility, indeed certainty, of absence in the very moment of experience. The soul is after all, the poem reminds us, already leaving the body 'torn and bruised,/As the mind deserts the body it has used': the phantom is born of 'grieving', of mourning, and we are once again back at the funeral, the wake, speaking in 'muted' voices for fear of waking the hungry dead, for fear of conjuring a 'foreign' (fugitive) body that will take over our pen, will rewrite for us that which has, in any case, not yet even been written.

Such a foreign body appears before us vividly yet limned with mortality in the first paragraph of Bowen's story 'All Saints':

> The Vicar moved about the chancel in his cassock, thoughtfully extinguishing the candles. Evensong was over, and the ladies who had composed the congregation pattered down the aisle and melted into the November dusk. At the back of the church somebody was still kneeling; the Vicar knew that it was the emotional-looking lady in black waiting to speak to him as he came down to the vestry; he feared this might be a matter for the confessional and that she might weep. The church was growing very dark; her black draperies uncertainly detached themselves from the shadows under the gallery. As he came down towards her, her white face looked up at him.[26]

A foreign body that also tricks the eye; perhaps she is merely constructed of (funereal) blackness, conjured by shadow, a mere inhabitant of 'draperies' which possess an agency of their own. Her purpose, as it emerges (from the shadows), is to ask the vicar whether she can be permitted to offer a new window for the church, specifically for the Lady Chapel, a window dedicated to 'All Saints', but perhaps this new figure for proliferation is less striking than the comment she makes that appears to the vicar himself as 'peculiar': 'My real name is Mrs Barrows' ('AS', 49).

Why her 'real' name? This would be a 'real name', perhaps, that she would only be able to bear as she stands up 'so straight among the slanting tombstones' ('AS', 49), a name that is also therefore an epitaph, a name 'instead' of some other name that she has never declared: a name

that is perhaps never meant to be known, for the vicar finds it impossible to conclude their conversation, instead 'he raised his hat, turned on his heel, and fled through the darkness' ('AS', 52). He is fleeing, we might suspect, an impossible, or an interminable, discourse, an 'infinite conversation'[27]; an absence of limitation – the lady is not interested in a window as a memorial, as the celebration of a specific name, rather her interest is in the very notion of sanctity or reign, in, no doubt, the 'foreign' but 'innumerable company of saints'.

These saints, however, are not the saints of tradition. 'I'd thought the saints were over long ago', she says, 'I'd seen old pictures of them when I was a child' ('AS', 50). But the vicar's sermon has, she continues, helped her to see that all the people who have helped her in her life are saints too; sanctity is not reserved for the past, it can occur also in the context of the new, it might infringe upon the modern. Is this 'modern' contamination too what frightens the vicar? Yet even here all may not be as it seems. The friends she wishes to celebrate, she says, are 'not at all conventional and they never go to church, except, perhaps, to weddings. And one or two of them are – oh, *very* unconventional' ('AS', 51). Are they, one might also wonder, alive, or something quite else? What spectral function might they perform at the wedding feast, or how might they move among the 'slanting tombstones'? Is *this* what frightens the vicar, what makes the notion of 'all saints' so monumentally paralysing?

Something, certainly, is under threat, something to do with windows and frames, with mirrors and the robust, with ghosts and illuminated bodies, with what might be made anew and what might return out of the dark. 'I did not know it was so small', she cries when she sees the existing Lady Chapel window; 'we must make it larger – I think this would never hold them' ('AS', 50). All saints; and thus to 'all hallows'.

'All Hallows' is the title of a short story by de la Mare. Its epigraph from Hooker ('And because time in itselfe . . . can receive no alteration, the hallowing . . . must consist in the shape or countenance which we put upon the affaires that are incident in these days') already raises questions of modernity, frames, craftsmanship.[28] The narrator, after a journey of extraordinary drought and difficulty, is, he tells us, at last able to slake his thirst on the sight of the great, lonely sea-cathedral of All Hallows, but is baffled by the attempt to (re)count the experience; there should be six gigantic statues surrounding the unfinished tower but 'my first impression had been that seven were in view . . . But then the lights even [*sic*] of day may be deceitful, and fantasy plays strange tricks with one's eyes' ('AH', 293). The verger who is the cathedral's

only occupant and custodian (since the mysterious fate of the Dean) is baffled as to why the authorities will not let out the full story – 'why not tell *all*? Why keep back the very secret of what we know?' ('AH', 304).

This 'story' is, he insists, not the one we might expect; the 'secret' is one held only in difference from the 'conventional':

> I am speaking not of dissolution, sir, but of *repairs*, *restorations*. Not decay, *strengthening*. Not a corroding loss, an awful *progress*. I could show you places – and chiefly obscured from direct view and difficult of a close examination, sir, where stones lately as rotten as pumice and as fretted as a sponge have been replaced by others fresh-quarried – and nothing of their kind within twenty miles.
>
> ('AH', 307–8)

Whatever this 'shadowy third' is who accompanies narrator and verger, recounter and custodian, its job is not to be confined to the usual processes of loss but is instead to consolidate an awful progress, to produce a strange version of the modern; it is instead the experts who come from time to time to pronounce on All Hallows' incomprehensible condition, its unreadable symptom, who are 'at a loss' ('AH', 308), a loss the verger connects firmly but obscurely – and within a grand company – with the ending of the Great War. Yet the cathedral itself is also perhaps a shadowy replica, a de-individuated shape, as such buildings may be 'copies of originals now half-forgotten in the human mind' ('AH', 311); the problem for the story is one of perception, of hallucination, of how to provide a 'true' account of a particular type of craftsmanship.

Indeed the idea of craftsmanship reverberates through the narrative as it reverberates through the hungry, echoic, imminently flooded cathedral; the very possibility of human making, of separating one object, one stone, from another, of giving it a form and texture which it will still hold when morning comes; and here we might reasonably think ourselves, albeit from an unexpected direction, to be at the heart of a certain aspect of modernist debate. 'Progressive modernism', according to Marshall Berman, constructs that scenario in which, for example, the old chaotic city 'is sorted out and split up into separate compartments, with entrances and exits strictly monitored and controlled, loading and unloading behind the scenes, parking lots and underground garages the only mediation'[29]; but if this remark demonstrates for us a tendency within modernism towards a structuration of

the new, it was of course accompanied from the outset by its countervailing force, a force aptly alluded to by Lukács. He quotes Musil claiming to be 'interested in what is typical, in what one might call the ghostly aspect of reality', and goes on:

> The word 'ghostly' is interesting. It points to a major tendency in modernist literature: the attenuation of actuality. In Kafka . . . the realistic detail is the expression of a ghostly unreality, of a nightmare world, whose function is to evoke *Angst*.[30]

As I have said above, I am not attempting in this essay to offer a picture of modernism, still less one that would situate these two levels, the ordered and the ghostly, the plate glass above and the underground car-park, in relation to each other; but what we can say of 'All Hallows' is that it broaches a world in which haunting and the 'attenuation of actuality' do not necessarily go hand in hand (as the narrator and the verger are forced to do), where the shadowy third is deeply implicated in a process that we might fairly label as a problematic 'constructivism', a perversion of progress that gestures to the building of a new world on the shattered remains – shattered by war and by the withdrawal of religious conviction – of an older one.

In this context, it is particularly important to be clear as to what the narrator, himself a foreign body, does appear to experience in the cathedral. He owns (to) only one significant perception of haunting, and it occurs when he is looking, not at any part of the cathedral itself (the 'fabric' which the men have previously come 'down from London to inspect' ['AH', 314]) but at the scaffolding and its canvas covering, which have been placed there by the 'inspectors' and then abandoned – in haste, we presume, because occasioned by what they found. It is this canvas – a reverberating and archaically painterly site of the modern, of that which has been used in an attempt to bring matters under control, into the 'reign' of craftsmanship – this 'dingy and voluminous spread of canvas' which 'perceptibly trembled, as if a huge cautious hand had been thrust out to draw it aside' ('AH', 315); whatever is making incursions into this cathedral, whatever is 'making it over' into a different 'service', does not arise from the past alone but has instead something to do precisely with those forces that are trying to banish or explain away the contaminations of the ghost.

'The shadowy third', the non-existent girl on the stairs, 'all saints' and 'all hallows' – are these then expressions of the modern even as they figure as hauntings from worlds that have little to do with modernism's

architectonics, the aberrant intensity of its emphasis on technique, its concern for 'Pure Form'[31] where 'the value of a work lay in its technical properties'?[32] The two, we must assume, cannot be separated. There is then a 'secret sharer'; turning now to Conrad, of course we know who that secret sharer is, it is Leggatt, the disgraced ship's 'mate', the man in hiding, the strange double of the captain, the 'naked man from the sea sitting on the main-hatch, glimmering white in the darkness, his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands',[33] a watery ghost. But there is, of course, at least one more 'secret sharer' in the tale: one might speak, for example, of the captain's cabin itself, or rather the cabin which, being in the shape of a letter 'L', rapidly ceases to be the captain's and instead becomes Leggatt's. All is held, as it were, within the letter,

> the door being within the angle and opening into the short part of the letter. A couch was to the left, the bed-place to the right; my writing-desk and the chronometers' table faced the door. But any one opening it, unless he stepped right inside, had no view of what I call the long (or vertical) part of the letter. It contained some lockers surmounted by a bookcase; and a few clothes, a thick jacket or two, caps, oilskin coat, and such like, hung on hooks. There was at the bottom of that part a door opening into my bath-room, which could be entered also directly from the saloon. But that way was never used.
>
> ('SS', 256–7)

A lengthy description indeed, long perhaps as the 'vertical' of the letter L, and in some ways an exceptionally clear one; such a description, perhaps, as might be used or needed when 'setting the scene' for a play, when preparing for the arrival, the encroachment of a 'third' who would not be shadowy at all, who would be a being of flesh and blood, a being that could array itself in clothes, a being that could lead, or take up, a life regulated by the exigencies of a writing-desk and a chronometer, that could without difficulty find the purloined letter (L) amid this ordered environment. There are, naturally, discomforts: the way that is 'never used' will indeed be used, but more to the point the letter itself is not stationary, it moves . . . for what else could be the explanation for the second door being at the 'bottom of that part', when according to the previous alphabetic geography it can only be at the top? Or is something here too, like the cathedral of All Hallows, mysteriously sliding towards the sea, slipping away from grasp, eluding perception and description?

The movement in 'All Hallows' is slight, trembling, faint perhaps as an unseen gesture by an incomprehensibly foreign body, a gesture the memory of which is forever obscured; the movement in 'The Secret Sharer' is a more complex affair – perhaps it is a slippage towards the sea, perhaps it is a reversal of the letter, perhaps indeed it is not there at all, for

> This is not the place to enlarge upon the sensations of a man who feels for the first time a ship move under his feet to his own independent word. In my case they were not unalloyed. I was not wholly alone with my command; for there was that stranger in my cabin. Or rather, I was not completely and wholly with her. Part of me was absent. That mental feeling of being in two places at once affected me physically as if the mood of secrecy had penetrated my very soul.
> ('SS', 277)

If this is not the place, then what is? Where would the imperceptibly proposed 'other place' be, the place where one might 'enlarge' upon one's sensations, especially one's sensations, one's hallucination, of being in complete command, of being able to utter a pure 'unalloyed' performative? Or where might it be that one could feel a ship (or the floor of a cathedral, or a trapdoor in some Gothic castle) 'move' under one's feet and yet regard this as the effect of one's 'own independent word' rather than as the result of some action by a spectre, an old mole, something moving out of sight in the underground car park?

The shadowy third proliferates. There is the cabin and its mysterious limning of a moving letter. There is the ship, which is also a performative ('my command') and yet is at the same time a wholly obedient female, a potential resolution of the homosexual melancholy that troubles the captain, that Hamlet-like melancholy, induced by ghostly means, that the mate (the real mate, that is, real because of his 'terrific whiskers', not the spectral mate – of a 'different' ship – whom we have already encountered on deck) 'naturally' mistakes for madness. There is also, of course, the sea itself (which, elsewhere, is eroding the beach by the great western doors of All Hallows at the rate of forty inches a year) which appears to have its own interest in 'moving letters' – 'Was she moving?', the captain wonders as the ship hovers in extreme danger. 'What I needed was something easily seen, a piece of paper, which I could throw overboard and watch' ('SS', 294).

That, indeed, would be one, perhaps modernist, perhaps surrealist, answer to the problem of craftsmanship: since all the letters move

around anyway and curiously resist our control, achieve a strangely 'foreign' communication, responding 'instead' to some shadowy other, why not simply take our piece of paper and throw it into the sea? What then might get written, what would come to constitute the requisite 'saving mark', what might inscribe itself on the other side of all this difficulty, all this effort, all this impossible renewal? In de la Mare's 'An Ideal Craftsman', which is a relevant example, salvation might be achieved through the young narrator's clever rewriting of the murderous scenario he discovers 'below stairs' ('under ground'). Intending to raid the venomous butler's pantry, he discovers instead his body in a cupboard and his killer, distraught and weeping, sitting at the kitchen table. Sight of this, and of a nearby gallipot used as a trap for crickets, 'had touched a spring, it had released a shutter in his mind',[34] and converted the scene, we might say, into 'pure form'. He remembers the case of

> an old man who had been brutally strangled in the small hours by his two nephews. They had never been caught either; nobody had even suspected them. They had planned a means of escape – so vile and fantastic that even to watch them at it had made his skin deliciously creep upon him and his hair stir on his head. But it had succeeded, it had *worked*.
>
> ('IC', 66)

And it is at this point that the boy turns into an 'ideal craftsman', concerned only to produce a narratorially 'successful' resolution to 'difficult' events (events, we might say, like poetry, *must* be difficult); what, of course, he does not notice is that the emphasis on 'working', on succeeding, turns instantly into its opposite – has *already* turned into its opposite, for the case which he has been reading was from the *Newgate Calendar*; one of the nephews had in the end made a death-bed confession, the secret has become an open secret, that which was unknown has become broadcast, in the very creation of a story (a 'work' of art) the individual creator discovers the ineradicable presence of a 'dark, secret collaborator' (dead twin) whose function is, among other things, to give the game away.

In any case all this craftsmanship, we are told in the final paragraph, does not in the end conceal what it might be like to be, as with so many Gothic heroes and heroines, alone in the dark house with the sprouting corpse, the foreign body, the hungry ghost. When he has helped the murderess to escape,

> He ran back again into the house – as if he had been awakened out of a dream – leaving the door agape behind him, and whimpering 'Mother!' Then louder – louder. And all the blind things of the house took wooden voices. So up and down this white-shirted raider ran, his clumsy poniard clapping against sudden corners, his tongue calling in vain, and at last – as he went scuttling upstairs at sound of cab-horse and wheels upon the sodden gravel – falling dumb for very terror of its own noise.
>
> ('IC', 73)

'The effect', we are told, has been 'masterly'; the arrangement of Jacobs's body and its surroundings so that it would appear that he had hanged himself (had himself given order to the movement under his feet) was 'a triumph' ('IC', 73). But in this ordering of the deathly outer, an inner collapse has occurred unnoticed, under a sign of deferral, of *Nachträglichkeit*; something which had been thought banished has re-entered – perhaps, as at All Hallows, by a 'rounded dwarfish side-door with zigzag mouldings [where] there hung for corbel to its dripstone a curious leering face, with its forked tongue out . . . ' ('AH', 294–5) – and into the very act of successful construction has been inserted (like a poniard?) a voice that goes through crescendo to end in terrified silence, a silence lodged at the heart of the 'articulate' as obscurity may be lodged in the centre of the seeing eye.

'Buried memories' may be replaced by 'the god risen from the dead'; thus, as we have seen, runs the progressivist, Enlightenment version, and it can be applied to modernism as a whole, for instance by James McFarlane, who sees modernism in terms of two principal phases:

> Initially, the emphasis is on fragmentation, on the breaking up and the progressive disintegration of those meticulously constructed 'systems' and 'types' and 'absolutes' that lived on from the earlier years of the century, on the destruction of the belief in large general laws to which all life and conduct could be claimed to be subject. As a second stage [. . .] there came a re-structuring of parts, a re-relating of the fragmented concepts, a re-ordering of the linguistic entities to match what was felt to be the new order of reality.[35]

But perhaps such notions of salvation have only a tenuous life as we hear de la Mare's narrator silenced by terror, by a Gothic return of that which is displaced by civic restructuring; or as we listen to the groaning stones of All Hallows, torn by their violent wrench into the new; or as

we notice the invisible handprints on the wall of Pussy's new house, or sense the silenced voice inside the white chest; or as we enquire, with Eliot, 'what images return/O my daughter'. In 'Marina', there is only really one answer to this question; it is the answer we have seen hinted at in Strindberg and Pirandello; it is the Gothic answer, and it is also the answer offered by the exulting death-drive:

> Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog, meaning
> Death
> Those who glitter with the glory of the hummingbird, meaning
> Death
> Those who sit in the sty of contentment, meaning
> Death
> Those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals, meaning
> Death.[36]

The question would then be not only about death and its endless recurrence at the heart of the new, about the irrepressible resurgence of hungry ghosts and foreign bodies in the very texts of the clearest or angriest manifestoes, but also about the modernist relation between death and meaning; about whether the programmatic, the 'craftsmanlike', can in fact strike through to any sort of triumph, however temporary, or whether the endless proliferation of 'all saints' will prevent the drawing of boundaries however fragmented, the categorisation of experience, the ability to seize, to clutch, to penetrate. Modernism would then, like any other literary or cultural movement, be a phenomenon incapable of writing itself; suffering at every turn from the somnambulistic burden of a 'melancholy enchantment' it would instead find itself written by a 'dark, secret collaborator', a piece of paper thrown to the mercy of the night sea, an incomplete Gothic manuscript, bereft of origin or provenance.

Notes

1. Forrest Reid, *Walter de la Mare: a Critical Study* (2nd edn, New York: Henry Holt, 1970), p. 17.
2. *Some Imagist Poets* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915), p. vi.
3. Graham Hough, 'The Modernist Lyric', in *Modernism 1890–1930*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 320.
4. See James McFarlane, 'Intimate Theatre: Maeterlinck to Strindberg', in *Modernism 1890–1930*, ed. Bradbury and McFarlane, p. 525.
5. Luigi Pirandello, *Uno, nessuno e centemila*, ed. Giovanni Macchia (2 vols, Milan: Mondadori, 1986), II, p. 792.

6. Hermann Hesse, *Demian*, trans. W. J. Strachan (London: Grafton Books, 1969), pp. 89–90.
7. Edward Timms, 'Hesse's Therapeutic Fiction', in *Modernism and the European Unconscious*, ed. Peter Collier and Judy Davies (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), p. 171.
8. The references are to T. S. Eliot, 'Whispers of Immortality', ll. 1, 9, 11, in Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909–1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 55.
9. Arthur Schnitzler, *Dream Story*, trans. J. M. Q. Davis (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), p. 20.
10. *The Waste Land*, ll. 359–65, in Eliot, p. 77.
11. 'Whispers of Immortality', l. 3, in Eliot, p. 55.
12. See Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 132–66.
13. Eliot, p. 85.
14. See my 'W. S. Graham: Constructing a White Space', *Malahat Review*, 63 (1982), pp. 220–44.
15. 'Whispers of Immortality', l. 4, in Eliot, p. 55.
16. The reference is to Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: an Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1992).
17. *The Waste Land*, ll. 70–1, in Eliot, p. 65.
18. Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: a Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 173. Surprisingly few of Levenson's objects of enquiry are 'English'.
19. Eliot, *To Criticise the Critic* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), p. 42.
20. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p. 174.
21. See Ionesco, particularly *The Chairs* (1952).
22. In this reference and others, my source is Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1988).
23. Elizabeth Bowen, 'The Shadowy Third', in *Collected Stories*, introd. Angus Wilson (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), p. 75. Subsequent references are given in the text to 'ST'.
24. See Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel: Still Lives* (London: Macmillan, 1995), especially pp. xvi–xvii, 26–8.
25. 'La Figlia Che Piange', in Eliot, p. 36.
26. Bowen, 'All Saints', in *Collected Stories*, p. 48. Subsequent references are given in the text to 'AS'.
27. The reference is to Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
28. Walter de la Mare, 'All Hallows', in *Best Stories of Walter de la Mare* (London: Faber and Faber, 1942), p. 288. Subsequent references are given in the text to 'AH'.
29. Marshall Berman, 'The Twentieth Century: the Halo and the Highway', in *Modernism/Postmodernism*, ed. Peter Brooker (London and New York: Longman, 1992), p. 78.
30. Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin, 1963), pp. 25–6.

31. See Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1976), I, p. 202.
32. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p. 133.
33. Joseph Conrad, 'The Secret Sharer', in *Typhoon, and other Tales*, ed. Cedric Watts (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 252. Subsequent references are given in the text to 'SS'.
34. De la Mare, 'An Ideal Craftsman', in *Best Stories*, p. 66. Subsequent references are given in the text to 'IC'.
35. McFarlane, 'The Mind of Modernism', in *Modernism 1890–1930*, ed. Bradbury and McFarlane, p. 80.
36. 'Marina', ll. 4–5, 6.13, in Eliot, p. 115.

2

The 'Spectrality Effect' in Early Modernism

David Glover

In 'The Finding of the Absolute', the last of May Sinclair's grimly witty *Uncanny Stories* (1924), a metaphysically-inclined cuckold named Mr Spalding suddenly dies and finds himself in heaven. There the true nature of the world is explained to him by two men, each in their different ways a representative figure of modernity: Paul Jeffreson, the dissolute Imagist poet who had run away with his wife Elizabeth, and the philosopher Immanuel Kant. On meeting Jeffreson again, Spalding at first thinks that he must be in hell. But, in spite of his drinking, drug-taking and philandering, Jeffreson has been saved by his love of beauty since it was this sole redeeming quality that made him, in his own words, such 'a thundering good poet'.[1] Though he has been a thoroughly bad man, his dedication to his art has given him a purity of mind that places him among 'the very finest spirits' ('FA', 231). Beauty is integral to the Absolute, against which Spalding's earthly morality appears merely petty and provincial.

Nevertheless, Spalding has qualified for heaven because of his pursuit of truth, his passionate devotion to the task of constructing a system of metaphysics, a devotion that ultimately cost him his wife. From the standpoint of *his* philosophical account of the Absolute, the very existence of Elizabeth's adultery is a flaw in the nature of things and thus a blow to his moral sense. So, when Spalding discovers that he is now in a position to consult Kant directly about his spiritual crisis, he is delighted. Transported to Kant's study in Königsberg, Spalding – a convinced Kantian – is surprised to learn that the philosopher is in no doubt about the considerable advances in human understanding achieved by his successor Hegel. For Kant the moral law *sub specie aeternitatis* 'is not an end in itself', but rather a vehicle for the realisation of the mind's true creativity, the exercise of the imagination's

higher freedom ('FA', 242). According to Kant's Hegelian theodicy, evil and suffering are simply the conditions against which the will to create defines itself. Moreover, their significance is diminished by the multi-dimensionality of space and time 'in the idea, which is their form of eternity'. In the Absolute, time is no longer to be grasped as linear succession, but as a dialectical movement which turns 'on itself twice' in order to gather up the past and the future into the present, producing an expanded, portmanteau temporality ('FA', 243). This is the essence of what Spalding sees in his panoramic vision of the universe as glimpsed through Kant's study window, in which 'vast planes of time' intersect 'like the planes of a sphere, wheeling, turning in and out of each other' in a sublimely radiant light that admits no darkness, forever. Spalding is simultaneously 'present at the beginning and the end' of time ('FA', 246).

In the omnipresent duration of eternity Spalding's extended gaze takes in everything from mammoths and pterodactyls to the acme of a secular modernity: 'the British Republic, the conquest of Japan by America, and the federation of the United States of Europe and America, all going at once' ('FA', 245). And clearly the inclusiveness of Sinclair's dramatisation of her preferred version of Idealism is meant to ameliorate the lovelessness and waste that motivate the apparitions who stalk the pages of the other stories in her book. But, in what I will suggest is one of modernism's most characteristic tropes, Sinclair's Everyman is also momentarily possessed – and, were the story not set in heaven, this might sound like a kind of haunting – by the sight of the earth hanging 'like a dead white moon in a sky strewn with the corpses of spent worlds', the brief passing intimation of a destructiveness that cannot quite be exorcised, that nags away at the edges of transcendental rapture, the stark expectation of death just before the surge of 'unthinkable bliss' comes ('FA', 246–7).

Given its Hegelian roots, Sinclair's depiction of history has an aura of progressivism that is entirely modern: the first event that Spalding sees from his Kantian vantage-point is, appropriately enough, the French Revolution and, looking backwards, there seems to be nothing worth recording between 1789 and the Ice Age. Yet Spalding's momentary squeamishness when faced with the inexorable grandeur of modernity is hardly without precedent. In a far bleaker vein one thinks, for example, of 'the sense of abominable desolation' conveyed by H. G. Wells's Time Traveller as he looks out upon 'the lurid sky' of 'futurity'; or, no less famously, of the ghostly crowd flowing across London Bridge beneath 'the brown fog of a winter dawn' in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.[2]

In each of these texts the distinction between the various modalities of time becomes notoriously blurred, disturbing the reader's confidence in the vivid, transparent immediacy of the present and disrupting its orderly relations with the past and future. What the coming of light reveals is not always or not necessarily, salutary.

At the broadest level one might contend that the restless dynamism of modern life produces a deep ambivalence, taking the form of a darker pessimism in the case of Wells or Eliot, a loss of conviction that indicates a refusal to subscribe to any easy liberal narrative of progress. 'To be modern,' writes Marshall Berman, 'is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.'[3] So the heady aesthetic temptation to 'modernolatry' finds its mirror image in the abysm of 'cultural despair'.[4] Berman's argument in *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* seems to suggest that the source of these difficulties has persistently lain in modernity's complex relationship to time, particularly to the past, and his own analysis is no exception. Towards the end of the book, Berman portrays himself as 'digging up some of the buried modern spirits of the past, trying to open up a dialectic between their experience and our own'. This work of disinterment is unremitting, since 'modernists can never be done with the past; they must go on forever haunted by it, digging up its ghosts, recreating it even as they remake their world and themselves'.[5] Berman's title is culled from the pages of *The Communist Manifesto* and signals his attempt to extrapolate the Marxist logic of combined and uneven politico-economic development into the general sphere of culture. Yet, in common with his theoretical mentor, Berman is unable finally to rid himself of those spectres that are constantly rising up from the past to cloud his vision of the future. This is only to be expected. For in Marx's thought, as Jacques Derrida's copious demonstration has recently made plain, the revolutionary potential of modernity is inseparable from the 'conjuration and abjuration' of ghosts and spirits.[6] Just like the sight of 'the corpses of spent worlds' encountered in the penultimate moments of 'The Finding of the Absolute', these eerie figures obstinately linger on as a chilling afterimage, chilling because their reference is never properly resolved.

What then is the status of such spectral moments within the discourses of modernity and why do they occur so often? Derrida is surely correct to insist that what he calls 'the *spectrality effect*' can be identified through the way in which it operates upon and so repeatedly

troubles 'the linear succession of a before and an after', of a 'past present' and a 'future present'. But, as his remarks on Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* also imply, if this aporia is discernible within Marxism it is *ipso facto* no less evident in the liberal democratic *telos* of progress and moreover it points up a serious problem for the theorisation of modernity in general. In other words, what the image of the spectre reveals is 'the doubtful contemporaneity of the present to itself', the failure of the new to fulfil the course of history.[7] However, Derrida's argument needs to be set within a much more comprehensive genealogy of the modern, from which it can then be understood as a peculiarly symptomatic intervention. In the early eighteenth century, for example, the elevation of Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton into a distinctively English literary canon played a key role in differentiating 'a polite modernity' from its ' "gothick" prehistory', a barbarous domain governed by superstition, myth and magic whose forces were sometimes felt to exercise an archaic fascination upon the present.[8] This type of model has proved remarkably influential and no matter how far they may tacitly disagree in detail, later histories have often adopted a structurally similar perspective. Thus it is possible to account for 'the ineluctability of spectral returns' within modernism by locating them within 'a wider history that begins with the Enlightenment [and] reaches its height with Mallarmé', a movement that has long been shadowed by the phantasmal presence of all those 'displaced, discarded, or sublated ("abolished") concepts' that have not yet been fully 'laid to rest'.[9] Modernity receives a somewhat different inflection in these two parallel narratives, drawing upon a speculative historicism in the one and a melding of psychoanalysis and philosophy in the other. But, in each case, it is noticeable that the Gothicisation of the past stands as a sign of the radical unavailability of a definitive break with what has gone before. 'The tradition of dead generations' has continued to weigh, in Marx's vivid phrase, 'like a nightmare on the minds of the living'.[10]

Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the early years of British modernism, precisely that interregnum between the late nineteenth-century dystopias of H. G. Wells and 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'. At that time the word 'modernism' was still relatively unformed: it would most often refer to 'the feelings . . . of the age', including those 'weaknesses of civilization in its effect upon thought and character' that were typically associated with the novels of Thomas Hardy, though the term carried other, more specialised meanings too.[11] Within this transitional period the work of Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford (then Hueffer) had a particular importance, for while their

writing clearly broke with the terms of the Victorian literary compact, it seemed close enough to popularly acceptable idioms to point towards a new species of romance. In his own lifetime Conrad was praised for the 'almost Homeric splendour' of his prose, which was in turn regarded as a welcome infusion of unEnglish exotica, an expression of 'the fiercely romantic instincts of the Slav'.[12] How far off the mark this critical judgement actually was can be seen from a reading of *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and *The Inheritors* (1901), two of the most disquieting texts these authors were to produce.

Precisely why *Heart of Darkness* is such a disturbing text has been the subject of intense contemporary debate. In much recent post-colonial work, Conrad's flawed novella has acquired exemplary status as a summation of the myopia evinced by the imperialising imagination, exemplary *because* flawed. According to Patrick Brantlinger, for example, 'Conrad's critique of empire is never strictly anti-imperialist', a position echoed in Edward Said's insistence that 'neither Conrad nor Marlow gives us a full view of what is *outside* the world-conquering attitudes embodied by Kurtz, Marlow, the circle of listeners on the deck of the *Nellie*, and Conrad'.[13] In spite of this emerging consensus, any definitive balance-sheet has proved extraordinarily difficult to draw up. The same critic who argues that Chinua Achebe's notorious denunciation of Conrad's racism 'does not go far enough' can also claim that Conrad's virtue as a 'colonial writer' lies in the fact 'that he was so self-conscious about what he did'.[14] How much *Heart of Darkness* explicitly allows its readers to see has remained elusive, a dilemma that necessarily returns one to the metaphorical play upon darkness and light that is so integral to the epistemological structure of Conrad's narrative and yet which problematises the possibility of vision. Some of the most vertiginous passages in *Heart of Darkness* signal a transition from 'a vision of greyness without form' to 'that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible', a moment that may somehow encompass 'all the wisdom, all truth, and all sincerity' at the same time as it renders them utterly opaque.[15]

There is a much-noted point of hesitation, a caesura in the narrative, where Marlow's story threatens to break down or come to a sudden halt. Marlow has been recounting his time at the Central Station and is attempting to convey how, against his deepest inclinations, he has slipped into dishonestly inflating his 'influence in Europe' in order to be of service to Kurtz. But the absent Kurtz is nothing more than a name and an intuition and Marlow begins to doubt his own ability to capture his feelings in a meaningful utterance:

> . . . He was just a word for me. I did not see the man in the name any more than you do. Do you see him? Do you see the story? Do you see anything? It seems to you I am trying to tell you a dream – making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams. . . .
>
> He was silent for a while. (*HD*, 50)

When Marlow tries to pick up the thread again, he appears to be lost. Communication has become 'impossible': we are each alone with our subjective impressions. After a moment's reflection, Marlow finally appeals to the collective perceptions of his audience: 'you fellows see more than I could then' (*HD*, 50). But his hearers are dispersed in the gathering darkness and, according to the story's unnamed narrator, they can barely see each other. Their condition blankly mirrors Marlow's own uncertainty. The narrator cannot even be sure whether anyone but himself is actually awake.

The iconography of dreams has had a long and instructive history within modernity, from the false dreams that dogged Descartes's *Discourse* to Freud's *Traumdeutung*, and the image of the dream has often functioned as the originary moment for critical thought, an imaginary summons to clarification or self-understanding. So, in his early forays into journalism, for example, the young Marx asserted that the true impetus behind political criticism lay in 'the fact that one makes the world aware of its consciousness, that one awakens the world out of its own dream, that one *explains* to the world its own acts'.[16] This modern desire for intellectual transparency, the conviction that the human mind could be made 'as plain as the road from St Paul's to Charing Cross', is exactly what *Heart of Darkness* so powerfully resists.[17] Marlow's experiences are famously 'inconclusive', lacking the 'direct simplicity' of most sailors' yarns, and it is this indistinctness that informs the strangely auratic quality of his stories, whose meanings are not to be found 'inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze' (*HD*, 18). Truth appears to be fugitive or elusory at best, and this passage has frequently been cited as proof of Conrad's literary impressionism with its abiding sense of a significance that lies 'outside in the unseen' and is easily lost among the tricks played by the light.[18] But what has less often been noticed is the way in which the closing words of the passage impart a ghostly pallor to this hazy scene, 'in the likeness of one of these misty

halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine' (*HD*, 18).

Spectres are never very far away in *Heart of Darkness*. Not only is the Congo nightmarishly figured as a 'tenebrous land invaded by . . . mean and greedy phantoms', but its supply lines are the site of 'a merry dance of death and trade', as if its inhabitants were trapped within a vast 'overheated catacomb' (*HD*, 31, 110). The African slaves are zombified, moving with 'complete, deathlike indifference', a brotherhood of phantoms whose 'moribund' presence leads Marlow to imagine that he has entered 'the gloomy circle of some Inferno' (*HD*, 33–5). One may protest that these metaphors only serve to mystify the exploitation they are intended to condemn, that they open up a terrifying gulf between European and African experiences through a grotesque process of reification, that they turn the African into an object of fear and loathing rather than a broken and brutalized subject – criticisms that are hard to deny. What is less clear, however, is the extent to which these failings can legitimately be regarded, to again quote Edward Said, as a product of Conrad's 'historicist vision', the re-enactment of an 'imperial gesture' that seeks to incorporate the entire globe on its own terms.[19]

From the beginning Conrad's narrative of the present insistently folds back upon itself, pursuing historical parallels that elaborate the harsh nobility of imperial adventure, while also hinting at the ignominy, and perhaps the inevitability, of decline. Immediately after the moon's ghostly radiance has been installed as the ambiguous seal of narrative lucidity, Marlow conjures up the shades of ancient Rome, celebrating the legionaries who 'were men enough to face the darkness', 'to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable', while in the next breath portraying them as blind to the contingency of their own power, unable to see that their strength was merely 'an accident arising from the weakness of others' (*HD*, 19–20). If the British are yesterday's 'wild men', the fact that they may be tomorrow's Roman army of occupation carries scant consolation. For, like their precursors, they 'live in the flicker' of a lurid 'flash of lightning' and the nameless European capital from which Marlow obtains his commission is already 'a city of the dead' (*HD*, 19, 26).

Though it differs from *Heart of Darkness* in several important respects, not least its determinedly metropolitan focus, *The Inheritors* is marked by a similar sense of pathos and foreboding, but here the political criticism is more obviously satirical, less diffuse. A collaborative novel largely written by Ford Madox Ford but subsequently sharpened and improved

by Conrad, the composition of *The Inheritors* (finished in March 1900) belongs to the same period as *Heart of Darkness* (first version completed in February 1899). The two books are seldom read together, but they do share some significant structural and thematic affinities. If *Heart of Darkness* looks over its shoulder at a series of long-extinct and doubtless cautionary imperial moments (Roman, Tudor) in order to put its own imperial present in perspective, *The Inheritors* recounts a more immediate tale of imperial decline, in which the present collapses into a future that is arriving all too quickly.

The novel's opening sections suggest a sort of Wellsian invasion narrative, a scientific romance in which the inhabitants of a barely imaginable but futuristically advanced world ('the Fourth Dimension') announce their plan to take over the world. Their principal agent or spokesperson is a strangely captivating young woman who has the power to suddenly up-end an ordinary view of a quiet cathedral town and turn it into 'an unrealized, an unrealizable infinity of space', a transformation that reduces the book's writer-narrator Arthur Granger to a state of hysteria.[20] Patiently, pitilessly, this nameless female adversary uses the well-connected but hopelessly infatuated Granger to enter the inner circles of Britain's political class, its Cabinet, its financiers, and its press, bending them to the Fourth Dimensionists' 'clear-sighted, eminently practical' but ultimately heartless will. Their triumph will bring about the advent of a soulless rationalism, a regime 'with no ideals, prejudices, or remorse; with no feeling for art and no reverence for life; free from any ethical tradition; callous to pain, weakness, suffering and death, as if they had been invulnerable and immortal'. The woman plays upon and taunts Granger for his desire, posing as his sister; yet she is glacially dispassionate and 'expressionless', her disembodied voice resembling 'a phonograph reciting a technical work' as she spells out the coming demise of the human race (*I*, 6).

The success of Granger's 'pseudo-sister' is so peculiarly devastating because she is able to sow the seeds of a racial confusion whose impact spreads insidiously throughout the text. Granger's first response to their meeting is, conventionally enough, to pronounce her 'a riddle', but it is clear that this befuddlement is intimately related to his sense of race. The delicacy of her features produces 'an effect of transparency', yet she is obviously 'a foreigner in a strange land' and there is something 'repelling in her' that is 'accounted for by this difference in national point of view' (*I*, 4). Granger struggles ineffectually to pin down her origins – is she Slavic, Semitic, Circassian, Prussian, or American or Australian? He cannot tell – though she later implies that her wealth

derives from an Australian inheritance. But his failure to gain the upper hand in their encounter so decisively turns the tables on him that the security of his own racialised sense of identity is thrown into doubt, as if he were trapped in an unexpected ethnological reversal: when Granger tells her with a kind of mock deference that she wishes him 'to consider myself relatively a Choctaw', he is in fact anticipating a condition of reverse colonisation that soon completely engulfs him (*I*, 5). For once she has 'faded into darkness', he is left pondering her 'impressive' display of 'confidence' and superiority, 'the essential quality that makes for the empire of the Occidental', threatening to transform him into 'a negro' or 'even . . . a Hindoo'. In the face of her 'insolent modernity' he can only desperately insist 'I was somebody, confound it, I was somebody' (*I*, 11).

The Inheritors seems at points to echo (and even to parody) *Heart of Darkness*, recasting its tale of colonial exploitation as urban scandal and installing it as the central device through which the Dimensionists are able to gain control of the British government.[21] Just as *Heart of Darkness* is preoccupied with (and also complicates) the gap between the official rhetoric and the brutal African reality – precisely the gap that Marlow must conceal from Kurtz's fiancée 'in the sepulchral city' (*HD*, 46) – so *The Inheritors* uses the contrast between the high-minded claims made by the Duc de Mersch (often read as Leopold II of Belgium's double) on behalf of his 'Système Groenlandais' and the sordid truth that Granger's paper releases to 'the sleeping millions' around him (*I*, 147). 'Progress, improvement, civilization, a little less evil in the world' yield to 'real horrors' – 'flogged, butchered, miserable natives, the famines, the vices, diseases, and the crimes' (*I*, 62, 144). Perhaps we should not be surprised by this doubling, for the Système Groenlandais reaches back to one of *Heart of Darkness*'s probable sources, referred to in passing in the novella's opening pages, namely Sir John Franklin's disastrous Polar expedition of 1845, which ended in starvation, disarray and cannibalism.[22] The Trans-Greenland Railway, twinned in 'international value' with the Suez Canal, leads into an abyss of whiteness that is, in its own rather remote way, as fateful for Granger as the Congo basin is for Marlow.

Greenland is a curiously shadowy presence in *The Inheritors*. Never seen at close quarters, it serves as a political backdrop, a screen upon which the mercenary ambitions of the ruling elite are projected, a tissue of rumours and a repository of banal prejudices that bizarrely imagine the Esquimaux as fetish-worshipping, slave-driving 'blacks' (*I*, 77, 127). Its primary function, however, is to sound the death-knell of the old

order, giving the lie to its time-honoured 'altruism and ethics' through the revelation that 'all the traditional ideals of honour, glory, conscience, had been committed to the upholding of a gigantic and atrocious fraud' (*I*, 8, 145). This unmasking is centred upon the symbolic persona of Churchill, the British Foreign Minister, a man of unimpeachable integrity who stands for what Granger revealingly calls 'the stability of statesmanship' and 'the decencies that it is troublesome to have touched' (*I*, 31). Churchill feels obliged to provide government support for de Mersch's scheme, partly in order to safeguard the national interest and partly to show that his innate conservatism has not put him out of touch with the spirit of the times. As the most trusted public figure in England, Churchill is the man most vulnerable to any hint of moral or financial impropriety; and such irregularities are likely to be especially damaging because Parliament is effectively without an Opposition and is racked by intra-party strife. Promoting the Système Groenlandais as 'the saner policy', Churchill is caricatured by one of his supporters, the press baron Fox (himself a Fourth Dimensionist) as a representative of 'the Old Morality business' (*I*, 21). But, as one of Churchill's followers pointedly observes to Granger, 'What's the good of the saner policy that Mr Churchill talks about, if you can't trust any one with your money, and have to live on the capital?' (*I*, 128). The Dimensionists are poised to exploit this tense and unstable situation, using it as a bridgehead for their own invasion.

When the political and economic crisis finally comes it is precipitated by Granger in a reckless attempt to show the strength of his love for his pseudo-sister by displaying the power that he has over her, while declining to use it – a futile gesture that merely plays into the Dimensionists' hands. The early part of the novel traces Granger's transformation from a failing writer, who nevertheless prides himself on being 'ahead of his time', into a highly efficient political journalist whose commissions include a collaboration with Churchill on a *Life of Cromwell*. Granger's rising fortunes are dogged – and once again the notion of a haunting seems appropriate – by the presence of his pseudo-sister, turning up in the most unlikely circumstances to remind him that he and the social and political world that he values have no future, that he can do nothing to alter the course of history. Indeed, she makes it abundantly clear that Churchill is the man Granger must of necessity betray (not the least of the ironies of this collaborative book is that it is a tale of collaboration and betrayal). At the climax of the novel Granger's new identity is in free fall, cut off from a past that he has helped to destroy, yet without the acumen or the will that might align

him with the ruthless forces of the new era, reduced to the pathetic status of one of history's vanishing mediators. 'You had to do the work,' Granger's pseudo-sister tells him, 'I had to make you do it. I chose you because you would do it. That is all . . . ' (*I*, 164).

The Inheritors has often been criticised for its inability to show how Britain has been changed by the Dimensionists' victory, for failing to show the Fourth Dimensionists as 'a convincing counter against which to weigh England's venerable past'.[23] And notwithstanding Ford's own subsequent description of the novel as an 'allegorico-realist romance', commentators have tended to be unhappy with what they have regarded as an uneasy compromise between two very different literary genres.[24] But, while one may query the way in which the original pretext of scientific romance is displaced by political satire, it would be misleading to suggest that the quasi-supernatural elements have been entirely abandoned by the book's close. In fact, there are grounds for believing that *The Manchester Guardian* was largely correct in characterising *The Inheritors* as 'a ghost story of a new kind, with the vulgar thrills eliminated for a strange quality of mental disturbance'.[25] As the novel moves towards its dispiriting conclusion, there is an intensification of the spectral aspects of the text so that unaccountable happenings give way to a more direct identification of its increasingly ghostly inhabitants. Churchill, disgraced and defeated ('The greatest fall of any minister that ever was'), is observed getting into his brougham as 'pale as a ghost', a lost figure from whom all sense of substance has departed (*I*, 157). More graphically, in his final confrontation with the woman who has been his nemesis, Granger comes to see himself as 'a tenuous, bodiless thing, like a ghost in a bottomless cleft between the past and the to come', a fate that he would have to endure 'forever' (*I*, 165).

In both cases, this disembodied condition is scarcely without precedent, and a careful reading reveals that it has gradually been coming into focus over the course of the novel. When Granger's pseudo-sister tells him that he is for her 'only the portrait of a man – a man who has been dead – oh, a long time', it is as if an uncanny act of transubstantiation is taking place between the 'tremulous' writer and the 'inscrutable white figure' who stands before him, the latter attaining a new solidity ('like some silent Greek statue') as the former begins to lose his grip on reality (*I*, 120–1). And the next day, when Granger sits in his club he remembers having received a letter from the Foreign Minister that had caused 'Churchill and his *Cromwell*' to rise in his mind 'like preposterous phantoms; the one as unreal as the other – as alien'. There is a feeling of utter depletion, of being like 'a boat thrust out upon a mill-pond,

moving more and more slowly'. Trying 'desolately to pick up the threads of the past', yet without the energy to cope with the task, Granger slides 'listlessly' into another metaphorical end-game, imagining that he is sinking down in an already 'half-drowned' world, a world in which he will be condemned to exist in limbo, caught within 'a cleft of unscalable rocks' that represent anterior and future time (*I*, 122–3).

It is no accident that in *Heart of Darkness* and *The Inheritors* anxieties about the narrating subject's relationship to time are repeatedly depicted in spatialised terms and are so closely connected to colonial discourses. For, at its limit, the universalising character of modernity has involved a massive co-ordination of disparate localities into a single system, assigning each a place on a general trajectory of development as moments in a constantly evolving contemporaneity. Thus, on the one hand, Marx and Engels's *Manifesto* dreams of a world literature that will transcend the 'one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness' of 'the numerous national and local literatures'; while, on the other, one finds the kind of elaborate 'ethnical' typology informing Augustus Henry Keane's *Man: Past and Present* (1899), in which 'Kelts', Saxons, Negroes and Bantus are described in terms of a static hierarchy of contrasting 'racial temperaments'.[26] In their divergent ways, these two examples reflect the fact that in the nineteenth century the Western nation-state 'began to consolidate itself in relation and distinction to the other, nonsynchronous times of the cultures it absorbed through colonialism', sometimes by wholly excluding them from the conceptual armoury of modern history and sometimes by subordinating them within a comparative evolutionism through a 'complicated syncopation of assimilation-through-differentiation', an endlessly deferred state of merely partial belonging.[27]

Peter Osborne and Homi Bhabha have each argued that, under the globalising rubric of modernity, these attempts at definition can never be permanently settled since the time of modernity entails, in Bhabha's phrase, 'a continual questioning' of its own 'conditions of existence' or what he calls the unendingly 'iterative' or self-regenerating moments of the compulsively 'repeated demand to modernize'.[28] Similarly, for Osborne, what is distinctive of modernity as a category of historical experience is its insistence upon 'registering a break' that decisively intervenes 'between the character of its own time and that which precedes it', a breach that can never be broached often enough. In other words, a major consequence of modernity's 'perpetual anxiety to transcend the present', is that it 'is everywhere haunted by the idea of decline' – and, one might add, it is precisely this fear which accounts

for the persistence of the Gothic within modernist and modernising idioms, the terror of being locked outside the self-renewing temporality of progress.[29]

Recall Churchill's embrace of de Mersch's Système Groenlandais in *The Inheritors*, with its 'model state' and its 'Society for the Regeneration of the Arctic Regions': according to Granger's pseudo-sister's clinical appraisal, Churchill is afraid of his own obsolescence, of 'slipping down hill' if he fails to seize this opportunity, as if his natural conservatism had somehow already been tried and found wanting.[30] Or, think of Kurtz's sponsorship by 'the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs' (not of course unrelated to de Mersch's rather similar Society), whose founding charter is the forced advancement of the 'primitive' races, memorably interpreted by its chief acolyte as a *reductio ad absurdum* requiring the necessary extermination of all indigenous peoples ('the brutes!').[31] Ultimately even Marlow is in thrall to the protocols of European developmentalism, wishing to consign Kurtz's pamphlet to 'the dust-bin of progress' and seeking to exorcise 'the ghosts of his gifts' so that the 'beautiful world' of Kurtz's fiancée can continue to exist unsullied by shame or distress or scandal (*HD*, 80, 84). In each case there is a fatal inability to secure oneself against a future that seems at first to be dubious or perplexing, but in the end turns out to be terrifying. This is the selfsame future that begins 'to exist again' for Arthur Granger, 'looming up like a vessel through thick mist, silent, phantasmal, overwhelming – a hideous future of irremediable remorse, of solitude, of craving', a veritable ship of fools (*I*, 118).

If the official languages of cartels and governments in these novels stress the need for unceasing innovation and development, often voiced in philanthropic accents, their shadow-text brings out the imminent likelihood of bankruptcy, immobility and regression. Both books reveal a muddied temporality in which the present is without transparency, consistency or direction and even words themselves may become charged with unearthly possibilities, sounding as though they 'had been torn out of' their speaker's mouths 'by a supernatural power', as Marlow says of the dying Kurtz (*HD*, 109). Kurtz's brutalism may signify the least palatable of all spectrality effects, the suspicion that the culmination of the civilising process may in fact be no more than a higher phase of barbarism. In Conrad and Ford we see the Gothic starting to change its meaning: no longer associated with an irruption of unreason or an inexplicable violence directed against the symbols of individual and social cohesion, it now begins to adumbrate the fear of a generalised breakdown in the narrative of progress itself, producing

a vision of the future as a new calamity that would recapitulate, yet also dramatically reconfigure, the worst features of the past. Indeed, one might say that the incursion of the Gothic into English modernism marks the point at which liberal modernity's continuous assault upon traditional cultural forms begins to unleash an uncontainable and radically disruptive reaction from within, cracking under the strain of its own constantly redoubled efforts at expansion and renewal and its desire for 'no more than justice'. Time seems to stand still when Marlow visits Kurtz's 'Intended' at the end of *Heart of Darkness* and he imagines that he sees the dead man's face reflected in the glossy surfaces of the door. Under such conditions, to paraphrase Henry James, 'a lofty drawing-room' in a nameless European city may be infinitely more terrifying than the castle of Udolpho (*HD*, 118).

Notes

1. May Sinclair, 'The Finding of the Absolute', in *Uncanny Stories* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1926, 3rd edn), p. 231. (Hereafter 'FA' in the text.)
2. H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (1895; New York: Signet Classics, 1984), pp. 90–3; T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1922) in *Selected Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1948 [1952]), l.61, p. 51.
3. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: the Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), p. 15.
4. Berman, *All That Is Solid*, p. 169.
5. Berman, *All That Is Solid*, pp. 345–6.
6. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 112.
7. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, pp. 41–2.
8. Jonathan Brody Kramnick, 'The Making of the English Canon', *PMLA*, 112:5 (October 1997), p. 1089.
9. Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Ghosts of Modernity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), pp. x–xi, xvi.
10. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), trans. Ben Fowkes in *Surveys from Exile: Political Writings – Volume 2*, ed. David Fernbach (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 146.
11. On 'the ache of modernism', see Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, ed. Juliet Grindle and Simon Gatrell (1891; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 129. The contemporary assessment of Hardy is taken from R. A. Scott-James, *Modernism and Romance* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1908), p. 69.
12. Scott-James, *Modernism and Romance*, pp. 229, 233.
13. Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 274; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 24.
14. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 23, 165.

15. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Robert Hampson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), pp. 113–14. (Hereafter *HD* in the text.)
16. Karl Marx, 'An Exchange of Letters' (1844), in *Writings of the Young Marx in Philosophy and Society*, ed. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (New York: Doubleday, 1967), p. 214.
17. The simile originated with James Mill (1773–1836).
18. The phrase occurs in the manuscript version of *Heart of Darkness*. See Ian Watt, 'Impressionism and Symbolism in *Heart of Darkness*' (1979), repr. in Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Robert Kimbrough (3rd edn, New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), p. 320. On the problematic nature of light in Conrad, see J. Hillis Miller, *Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth-Century Writers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), ch. 2.
19. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 165.
20. Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford, *The Inheritors: an Extravagant Story* (1901; Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1991), p. 5. (Hereafter *I* in the text.)
21. Conrad once famously described *The Inheritors* as 'a melancholy parody' in a defence of the novel published in a letter to *The New York Times* (24 August 1901, p. 603). On the aptness of this description, see Max Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: a Dual Life, Volume I: the World Before the War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 135–40.
22. For an excellent account of *Heart of Darkness*'s Arctic antecedents, see Robert Hampson's introduction to the 1995 Penguin edition, especially pp. xii–xvi.
23. H. Robert Huntley, *The Alien Protagonist of Ford Madox Ford* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), p. 33.
24. See Arthur Mizener, *The Saddest Story: a Biography of Ford Madox Ford* (1971; New York: Carroll and Graf, 1985), pp. 52–6, 464–6.
25. *The Manchester Guardian*, 10 July 1901, reprinted in Appendix B of Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford, *The Inheritors*, intro. David Seed (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p. 157.
26. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, intro. Eric Hobsbawm (1848; London: Verso, 1998), p. 39; and A. H. Keane, *Man: Past and Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899).
27. Steven Connor, 'The Impossibility of the Present: or, From the Contemporary to the Contemporal', in Roger Luckhurst and Peter Marks (eds), *Literature and the Contemporary: Fictions and Theories of the Present* (Harlow: Longman, 1999), p. 16.
28. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 242, 244.
29. Peter Osborne, 'Modernity is a Qualitative, Not a Chronological Category', *New Left Review*, 192 (March/April 1992), pp. 75–6. See also his development of these arguments in *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-garde* (London: Verso, 1995).
30. Conrad and Ford, *The Inheritors*, pp. 1, 23, 48, 72.
31. Hampson suggests that the inspiration for this Society might have been Leopold II's Association Internationale pour l'Exploration et la Civilisation en Afrique (which also bears more than a passing resemblance to the 'Pan-European Railway, Exploration, and Civilization Company' in *The Inheritors*). See Hampson, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 137.

3

'Psychical' Cases: Transformations of the Supernatural in Virginia Woolf and May Sinclair

David Seed

Virginia Woolf and May Sinclair redefine the real through the processes identified by the new Freudian psychology. For Woolf and Sinclair the self was perceived as the site for conflicting desires where only the topmost layer of psychic activity was conscious. Both writers privilege the perceiving self over the given data of reality and both were drawn to psychical research as a means of criticising contemporary materialism and also as a medium for promoting the emerging discipline of psychology. The supernatural was therefore not a marginal concern for Woolf or Sinclair but was central to their attempts to relocate the importance of the mind. Edith Birkhead's declaration in 1921 would have been congenial to both novelists, that 'the future of the tale of terror it is impossible to predict; but the experiments of living authors, who continually find new outlets with the advance of science and of psychological enquiry, suffice to prove that its powers are not yet exhausted'.[1]

George M. Johnson has convincingly demonstrated that Woolf assimilated the new version of the mind promoted by this second-wave psychology as 'psychic energy in continual motion' and argued that from 1909 onwards she was aware of psychical research partly through the mediation of her father's interests.[2] Johnson stresses that psychical research and the promotion of new psychological theories went hand in hand in the pages of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* which combined detailed reports on cases of mediumship, thought transference and related subjects with some of the earliest publications in English of articles by Janet and Freud. A new view of mental life was proposed as early as 1891 by F. W. H. Myers whose concept of the 'subliminal consciousness' spatially extended the workings of the mind

beyond known limits: 'The spectrum of consciousness', he wrote, 'is in the subliminal self indefinitely extended at both ends.'[3] Such a view had become assimilated by 1917 when Woolf reviewed Elinor Mordaunt's collection of short stories *Before Midnight*, where she takes that writer to task for using superficial images of the primitive. Instead of dismissing it, Woolf assimilates the non-rational into the workings of the mind, declaring: 'Nobody can deny that our life is largely at the mercy of dreams and visions which we cannot account for logically.' The review thus identifies a missed opportunity, namely the 'discovery of some of these uncharted territories of the mind'.[4]

Woolf's attitude to the supernatural as a subject for fiction was significantly shaped by her reading of Henry James and, consistently with the latter's preface to the New York edition of *The Aspern Papers*, Woolf noted the current popularity in 1918 of 'psychical ghost stories'.[5] Here she part-echoes James's famous description of the new type of ghost story emerging, the 'mere modern "psychical" case, washed clean of all queerness as by exposure to a flowing laboratory tap, and equipped with credentials vouching for this'.[6] James waxes nostalgic over the 'beautiful lost form' of the traditional ghost story which for him had been displaced by a narrative mode applying quasi-scientific procedures and containing elaborate strategies for self-verification. In fact James's account simplifies the ongoing debate over the supernatural which ran throughout the nineteenth century where, for example, narratives repeatedly disclaimed earlier Gothic effects as a prelude to their own evocation of the inexplicable. This was a tactic James himself followed in *The Turn of the Screw* when he opens chapter 4 with the question: 'Was there a "secret" at Bly – a mystery of Udolpho or an insane, an unmentionable relative kept in unsuspected confinement?'[7] The credibility of such stories was constantly thematised as a problem within the narratives themselves where the reader's scepticism was anticipated and deflected. In *The Art of the Novel* James addressed the 'peril of the unmeasured strange' by positioning cues for his reader rather than overt description, the one replacing the need for the other: 'Make him *think* the evil, make him think it for himself, and you are released from weak specifications.'[8] The preferred means James adopted for this effect was to present events through a narrator which ensured interest but avoided confronting the reader's presumptions about reality: 'we get the thickness in the human consciousness that entertains and records, that amplifies and interprets it'.[9] Thus in 'The Altar of the Dead' (1895) the discourse of the supernatural is deployed to articulate the self-obsessed desire of the protagonist Stransom to preserve the

memory of the dead girl. His appropriation of a chapel as a site for private devotion and of a female acquaintance as 'priestess of his altar' constitute an attempt, which ultimately fails, to 'escape from the actual'.[10] The 'ghosts' of this story thereby shift from memory-images to images of the living to which Stransom's obsession denies physical substance.

Woolf's 1921 essay on Henry James's ghost stories carefully distinguishes between means of representation and the supernatural as a potential subject. 'If the old methods are obsolete', she states, 'it is the business of a writer to discover new ones.'[11] Accordingly she singled out for special praise 'The Friends of the Friends' and *The Turn of the Screw*. The first of these, originally entitled 'The Way It Came' (1896), opens like *The Turn of the Screw* with an editorial frame, in this case of a woman's diary, selected and copied out. The tale somewhat resembles Woolf's own sketch 'The Mysterious Case of Miss V.' in recounting how the female protagonist had a vision of her father in a museum abroad. The narrative finesses over the event by questioning the 'fact' of her 'vision': 'the official, the aunt, the cousins were therefore in a manner witnesses of the fact – the fact at least of the impression made on her; and there was the further testimony of a doctor who was attending one of the party.'[12] 'Testimony' reflects the legalistic self-consciousness of recording apparitions induced by the publications of the Society for Psychical Research and indeed the story contains a number of challenges to authenticate its various accounts. Accordingly, when a man claims to have met a woman after her death, the understated description impresses Woolf as the 'queerest of shocks'. Similarly she found the silence at Bly particularly suggestive: 'Some unutterable obscenity has come to the surface. It tries to get in; it tries to get at something.'[13] Woolf evokes threat and invasion without being able to specify the nature of that agency or its target; and it is specifically that inability which confirms the perceived power of the narrative since it opens up a space and hints at a sequence of action for the reader to speculatively fill out.

Woolf recognised James's shift of attention in these narratives away from the apparitions on to the drama of the consciousness registering them. His ghosts 'have their origin within us', she declared, and appear 'whenever the significant overflows our powers of expressing it'.[14] Thus, the governess displaces the 'ghosts' as a source of affect, as Woolf noted in her review of Dorothy Scarborough's *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (1917): 'The appearance of the figures is an illustration not in itself specially alarming, of a state of mind which is profoundly

mysterious and terrifying.'[15] In her study Scarborough notes that interest in the occult has grown rapidly over the preceding thirty years and declares that modern ghost stories rely on 'psychic horror' rather than physical fear, often with the help of 'sensitives', i.e. 'animals or persons that are peculiarly alert to the occult impressions'. She singles out for special praise James's fiction where the 'effect must be subtly managed yet inescapably impressive'.[16] Woolf acted on her lead to elaborate the point that the fear evoked by modern tales of the supernatural is 'refined and spiritualised' so that 'we can examine and play' with it.[17]

When Woolf describes the sentences of *The Turn of the Screw* as 'stretched', she is responding to a tortuous syntax which reflects the governess's own twists, evasions, and arbitrary inferences. Progressively the governess uses the apparitions to authorise her chosen role as heroine in a psychic drama where she does battle for the children's souls, developing in the process a paranoid suspicion of what might be lurking behind every detail of their behaviour. The governess simultaneously demonstrates a morbid desire to interrogate appearances and a dread of the final confirmation that such an interrogation might produce. Accordingly the ultimate subject of the narrative is both approached and deferred, as we can see in perspective terms when the governess realises one night that little Miles has got up. Looking out of her window, she can distinguish a figure in the grounds:

> The moon made the night extraordinarily penetrable and showed me on the lawn a person, diminished by distance, who stood there motionless as if fascinated, looking up to where I had appeared – looking, that is, not so much straight at me as at something that was apparently above me. There was clearly another person above me – there was a person on the tower; but the presence on the lawn was not in the least what I had conceived and had confidently hurried to meet. The presence on the lawn – I felt sick as I made it out – was poor little Miles himself.
>
> (p. 45)

And there that section concludes. The account creates suspense from its delaying tactics, which incorporate verificationary details (bright moon to explain visibility, distance to explain foreshortening) and which follow the governess's gaze down to the observer's upward gaze. The latter is directed at an object or figure invisible to the governess. In that respect the passage describes an analogue of the governess's subject, which can only be gestured towards. Her sense of crisis emerges from

a recognition of the child's presence – strange, but explicable – which distracts us from more ominous inference of another person on the tower – strange and *in*explicable.

Woolf speculated repeatedly on the possibility of psychic traces surviving the individual's death. 'The Mysterious Case of Miss V.' (1906) describes a posthumous form haunting art galleries and in 'A Sketch of the Past', written 1939–40, she discusses eidetic memory, producing images so vivid that she sometimes fancies she is re-experiencing events, and from this extrapolates the possibility that 'things we have felt with great intensity have an existence independent of our minds'.[18] Similarly Clarissa Dalloway recoils so strongly from death that she considers the 'unseen part of us [. . .] might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places, after death'.[19] Both instances hedge the idea around with qualifications but Woolf nevertheless applied the notion in her fiction. 'The Shooting Party' describes a train journey where grey mist (possibly smoke) blanks out her body so that only her eyes are visible in this 'sepulchral atmosphere'. Though partly dismissed as 'mere fancy', the narrator nevertheless toys with the idea that the eyes might be the 'ghost of a family' on the principle that 'there is nothing that does not have some residue'.[20] Such a residue might be repressed in the consciousness of characters and so in *Mrs Dalloway* Septimus Warren Smith is tormented by the voices of the war dead which induce guilt from his inability to feel for the death of his own friend, a fellow officer. Similarly Clarissa Dalloway transfers her repressed social guilt over the gentry as parasites on to the spinsterish Miss Kilman who becomes 'one of those spectres who stand astride us and suck up half our life-blood, dominators and tyrants' (p. 15). On the face of it the comparison is ludicrous because Miss Kilman is one of the most socially marginalised figures in the whole novel, but Clarissa has transposed and internalised the vampire metaphor of social exploitation which had generated currency in the previous century.

Woolf's main explorations of psychic traces take place in the 'Time Passes' section of *To the Lighthouse* and in 'A Haunted House'. The first of these constitutes an attempt to retain human presence in the empty house phrased initially as a re-enactment of familiar actions: 'almost one might imagine them, as they entered the drawing-room, questioning and wondering, toying with the flap of hanging wall-paper, asking, would it hang much longer, when would it fall'.[21] These questions are the very ones posed by the reader as the abandoned house risks an invasion from nature or dissolution into the chaos of the night. Woolf

figures the tenuous traces of human presence as 'airs' which explore the house and which possess a fugitive vitality. Although scarcely possessing form, the narrator imagines addressing the airs, 'upon which, wearily, ghostly, as if they had feather-light fingers and the light persistency of feathers, they would look, once, on the shut eyes and the loosely clasping fingers, and fold their garments wearily and disappear' (p. 173). By refusing substance and definite shape to these 'airs' Woolf avoids the quasi-realistic problems of some ghost stories: how were the apparitions dressed? what facial expressions did they have? and so on. On the other hand they are given enough human attributes (manner, garments and so on) to distinguish them from merely physical processes and to set up their function as witnesses of human presence. These attributes are conveyed through suggestion and nuance, however. Rather than being threatening alien presences, then, the airs which explore the house 'musingly', articulate in dynamic form the mood of contemplation that extends throughout this section. They function, in other words, as a disembodied human consciousness ruminating on transience and mortality.

Woolf's 1921 sketch 'A Haunted House' diverges from the quasi-legal deposition paradigm established by the Society for Psychical Research. It describes haunting as a double search, by an imagined couple for a lost entity simply designated 'it', and by the narrator for the visitants. An extraordinary mobility of pronouns constantly shifts the relation between narrator and the 'ghostly couple'. The latter are imagined as exchanging words one night, overheard by the narrator who intervenes in their dialogue (but outside of speech marks) to suggest internally verbalised thoughts: 'but it wasn't that you woke us'. The narrator then typifies herself as 'one' engaging in a dialogue with an anonymous companion about the couple who recede into the third person 'they'. By deferring linguistic reference Woolf naturalises ghost-hunting into a search for something forgotten or left behind which the very discourse of the sketch can only gesture towards in a series of self-qualifications or incomplete statements: '*But* they had found it in the drawing-room. *Not* that one could ever see them' (my emphases).[22] Instead of human figures, we are only told of reflected images (apples, roses in the window-panes) which are themselves vulnerable to shifts of light producing 'pendant from ceiling – what? My hands were empty'. The impossibility of stabilising any image is expressed as gesture here, an attempt to grasp a quality reified in the sketch as 'treasure'. The house by this point has become the tantalising site for the search, carrying a figurative vitality of its own (a 'pulse') which contrasts with the narrator's recognition of

being separated from the couple by time and death through the barrier of glass. Woolf seems to turn the statement of mortal vision in I Corinthians 12 ('now we see through a glass, darkly') into a description of non-perception: 'Our eyes darken; we hear no steps beside us; we see no lady spread her ghostly cloak' (p. 123).

The adjective 'ghostly' – ghost-like – signals to the reader that Woolf is radically transforming traditional elements of the ghost-story genre. There are hints within the sketch of two lovers having been separated and as a result trying to find their lost joy within the house. Haunting, traditionally represented as a bond from former wrongdoing, is thus revised into a kind of recall which extends indefinitely beyond the lifespans of the couple. Accordingly the narrator is not tormented by the haunters so much as tantalised by registering ('hearing') snatches of their dialogue. The notion of entry is similarly transformed. In *Wuthering Heights* the shade of Catherine Earnshaw raps on the window of the Heights to be readmitted to the place of her youth. Woolf finesses over the liminality of her own ghosts by having them halt on the threshold: 'Nearer they come; cease at the doorway'. The narrator distances herself from her own physical situation (sleeping) to imagine observing the couple scrutinising the faces of sleepers in their search. The climax to the sketch comes not as a crisis of terror but as a peak of excitement in the house's 'pulse', mirroring the sleeper-narrator's jolt into wakefulness: 'Waking, I cry "Oh, is this *your* – buried treasure? The light in the heart" ' (p. 123). If she wakes, was all the preceding description dream? And who is being addressed here – the house or the couple? And if the latter, do they therefore exist outside of dream?

Here and elsewhere in her works Woolf appropriates the discourse of the supernatural to challenge presumptions about the priority of material circumstance in reality. 'A Mark on the Wall' (1917) uses a speculation on visual perception to question social acquiescence. Woolf designates those social forms 'phantoms' which were accepted before the First World War but which subsequently 'one may hope, will be laughed into the dustbin where the phantoms go'.[23] This perception of the lack of substance to social rules forms part of a liberationist polemic by Woolf against unquestioned decorum.

Night and Day (1919) similarly privileges moments of solitary reflection where characters experience a desubstantialisation of the real and the perceiving consciousness is figured as the only source of energy. The would-be writer Denham descends to a level below surface perception in his thoughts: 'All things had turned to ghosts; the whole mass of the world was insubstantial vapour, surrounding the solitary spark in his

mind.' Similarly the female protagonist Katherine withdraws from a social gathering as if moving on to a different dimension of reality, a 'world that was the prelude, the antechamber to reality'. The words of those nearby take on a hallucinatory quality: 'it was as if, lately dead, she heard the living talking'.[24] Just briefly Katherine's entry into a dream state enacts a refusal of social obligations and so her figurative 'death' becomes a private gesture of rebellion against social orthodoxy. The recurrent reduction in Woolf of the phenomenal world to the ghostly thus has satirical undertones in draining social practices of substance and in privileging the individual consciousness. Woolf repeatedly draws on the psychic to suggest new dimensions to mental life and conversely uses the ghostly to question social forms previously thought immutable.

May Sinclair, independently of Virginia Woolf, arrived at a similar position towards the supernatural. Like Woolf, she followed developments in the emerging discipline of psychology through the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*; she too was influenced by Henry James, as we shall see; and in her best known piece of non-fiction, her 1918 review of *Pilgrimage*, for *The Egoist*, praised Dorothy Richardson for taking realism beyond the restrictions of the obsolete categories 'objective' and 'subjective'. Sinclair appropriated the phrase 'stream of consciousness' from William James, taking from him a model of experience in constant flux which she used to challenge Aristotelian plot structure.[25] James was also a member of the Society for Psychical Research to which Sinclair was elected in 1914. Her biographer Theophilus E. M. Boll has argued that 'she had an artist's interest in the occult story as a creative exercise, and in the mysteriously happening psychic phenomena in life, but she had no patience with the assumption that psychic phenomena were matters for scientific explanation according to a scientific methodology'.[26]

This puts the matter rather simply. In fact Sinclair viewed the supernatural as a 'region of the utmost uncertainty and danger' and in 1917 summarised contemporary views of the unconscious as a 'pantechnicon murky to the last degree, and chockfull of hideous and repulsive things'.[27] Around 1914 she wrote an introduction, never published, to an account by her friend Mrs C. Dawson Scott of a communication from her dead husband. Here she took great care not to dismiss the account as a subconscious fantasy:

> But we know very little about the subconscious, and what we do know does not point inevitably to that conclusion. We know that by

> far the greater part of what was once our conscious experience has been forgotten, submerged, sunk below the threshold of consciousness, and that in suitable conditions it may be recovered. We enter into this submerged region when we dream. It may be brought back to us by suggestion, waking or hypnotic, or in states of extreme passivity. We know that the content of the subconscious is our forgotten knowledge, knowledge that we once possessed. We do not know whether there is in it anything which never was at any time in consciousness.[28]

Sinclair stresses the limitations of current psychological knowledge in order to retain at least the possibility of the paranormal. There is certainly no suggestion here that such phenomena are unworthy of rigorous investigation.

Sinclair in fact praised the Society for Psychical Research for its 'admirable work' on dream and for its publication of pioneering work by Freud and Janet. In *A Defence of Idealism* (1917) she went to considerable lengths not to ridicule accounts of telepathy and manifestations. Here again she admits the likelihood of phenomena but leaves the question of their identity open. Her discussion steers carefully between narrow-minded scepticism on the one hand and premature inference on the other. Sinclair had considerably less difficulty, for instance, than A. R. Orage, the editor of the *New Age*, in responding with respect for G. R. S. Mead and the Quest Society's publications on personal immortality, insisting: 'that there are "powers", *some* powers, is, I think no longer in dispute'.[29] On the nature of these powers, however, she reserved judgement. Similarly William James refused to dismiss psychic phenomena out of hand, declaring that 'there is a continuum of cosmic consciousness, against which our individuality builds but accidental fences'; the paranormal emerges through 'leaks' in these barriers.[30]

When late in 1910 Sinclair started work on a series of stories on 'queer subjects: "spooky" ones some of them', she borrowed a term, the uncanny, which by the turn of the century had taken on the modern sense of 'partaking of a supernatural character'.[31] The notion of the uncanny, for example, was used in Mary Louisa Molesworth's *Uncanny Tales* (1896) as an effect of estrangement. The opening story of Molesworth's collection, 'The Shadow in the Moonlight', implicitly establishes its credentials in contrast to the clichéd nature of its subject: a haunted house. Despite the protestations of the narrator ('we never thought of Finister St. Mabyn's being haunted. We really never did') and the dispersal of narration through different members of a family,

the subject lapses into conventional associations between haunting and the crimes of a cardsharp from the past. Far more powerful is 'The Man with the Cough' which centres on the night journey of a dealer in patents. The narrator has to deliver exceptionally valuable documents to London agents and, despite all his efforts to stay awake, falls asleep in his train compartment where the only other passenger is a man with a cough. When the narrator jerks awake he is totally unable to identify the place where the train has stopped; a porter answer his question 'in the queerest German I ever heard'. From then onwards the disorientation gets worse and worse. Going to a nearby 'restauration' where the other customers are silent, the narrator drinks a coffee (doped?) and promptly falls asleep again, waking to find the man with the cough returning his possessions to him. By this point the other has become a sinister presence indeed: 'I began to feel as if he were an evil spirit haunting me.'[32] Returning to the station the narrator experiences the 'nightmarelike sensation' of his bag getting heavier and heavier, and hears a distant bell tolling ('it sounded most uncanny' (p. 100)). When he boards his train it seems totally silent and empty of other passengers: 'it might have had a freight of the dead, and been itself propelled by some supernatural agency, so noiselessly, so gloomily did it proceed' (p. 101). When the narrator awakes from yet another deep sleep he finds the train full of passengers, daytime normality re-established, and regains his confidence to complete his mission to London.

This tale uses supernatural analogies to describe inexplicable aspects of the narrator's experience during the night in question which can in fact be read as an apparent realisation of all his worst fears. Thus every detail reflects a loss of self-control: of location, time and autonomy. His fear of missing the train explains the unnatural weight of his bag; his fear of taking the wrong train and failing on his mission (a professional 'death') accounts for the eerie solitude and silence of his train. 'Uncanny' signals an ambiguity in events which the reader might be tempted to rationalise away as pure anxiety, but the narrator's fears turn out to be justified when he realises that the man with the cough is actually taking part in a conspiracy to steal the patents, a conspiracy which the narrator foils. The last section of the tale in no way damages the psychological consistency of its dramatisation of estrangement, but helps to establish a pattern throughout *Uncanny Tales* of a divergence from and subsequent re-establishment of normality.

The trajectory of Molesworth's tales would appear then to confirm Freud's famous definition of the uncanny as 'that class of the frightening which leads us back to what is known of old and long familiar'.[33]

Freud's discussion relies lexically on the German term *heimlich* containing opposed meanings within itself whereas the English word 'uncanny' suggests the opposite to 'knowing' or 'clever'. Freud's explanation of the uncanny as the repressed familiar builds up to a coda which has been relatively neglected by his commentators where he argues that literary representations of the uncanny are in a different category because this fiction's 'content is not submitted to reality-testing' and the writer can 'select his world of representation' nearer or farther from the familiar (p. 373). In short, Freud recognises how the writer can direct a reader's response by exploiting concealment within the narrative: 'He can keep us in the dark for a long time about the precise nature of the presuppositions on which the world he writes about is based, or he can cunningly and ingeniously avoid any definite information on the point to the last' (p. 374). The writer of the uncanny, it seems, might be canny in the extreme.

Sinclair's evocation of the supernatural combined a Freudian awareness of symbolic displacement with a Jamesian projection of ghosts as representing states of mind. Sinclair met James in either 1905 or 1912 and wrote to a correspondent in 1915: James 'has influenced *me* considerably and I'm not a bit ashamed of it'. Contributing to a 1922 symposium on 'Dreams, Ghosts and Fairies' she singled out *The Turn of the Screw* for special praise and remarked that the 'ghost-lover is on the lookout for his own special thrill, which is, or may be, independent of any belief in the supernatural'.[34] Sinclair's 1911 story 'The Intercessor' conflates Henry James with a retelling of *Wuthering Heights*. An antiquarian named Garvin visits a remote fellside house and during his stay first hears a child crying and then sees her. From the behaviour of the couple Garvin infers that they are being haunted and living as a result on the 'edge of the borderland of fear'.[35] This trope of boundaries reflects the story's general focus on the developing psychology of Garvin whereas Emily Brontë uses Lockwood as a convenient means of narrative access. Garvin by contrast not only discovers the story of the dead girl and her father's affair with a local woman, but more importantly he experiences a crisis of subjectivity rationalised as a 'possession' of his 'innermost self' by the girl: 'He had been made the vehicle of that spirit; he had been possessed, divinely coerced by Effy.' The experience destabilises his view of reality: 'There were no bounds and partitions between flesh and spirit, the visible and invisible' (p. 595).[36] Thus the Jamesian drama of perception reaches its crux with Garvin's possibly self-deceived realisation that the apparition has returned to claim the emotion she was denied in life.

Uncanny Stories (1923) substantiates this statement by surrounding all cases of the paranormal with ambiguity. In an address to the Society for Psychical Research of 1896 William James speculated that responses to the paranormal could be gendered so that the male 'scientific-academic mind' might be missing truths registered by the 'feminine-mystical mind'.[37] This was a possibility which Sinclair explored in the longest of *Uncanny Stories*, 'The Flaw in the Crystal'. Drawing on the character-groupings and symbolism of *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl*, this story centres on a young woman called Agatha caught between two married couples where each husband is suffering from a neurasthenic illness. Agatha possesses, or rather is possessed by, a gift which can scarcely be described: 'You could think of it as a current of transcendent power.'[38] Agatha, in short, has become a medium (a 'connecting link') who can project a therapeutic influence on to subjects at will. This she does first to Rodney, the husband of Bella; then to Harding, Milly's husband. In both cases the process seems to have beneficial results. Before we consider the complications that arise, we should note that Agatha functions in the story as a secret agency whose full importance is only witnessed by the reader. The story constantly privileges the psychic over the physical, as demonstrated in a key visionary moment for Agatha when she experiences a 'sense of consecration':

> It was now as if her being drank at every pore the swimming darkness [. . .] She sank in it and was covered with wave upon wave of darkness. She sank and was upheld; she dissolved and was gathered together again, a flawless crystal.
>
> (p. 122)

Here the boundaries of the self break down into an oceanic feeling of oneness with the self's surroundings. The only drawback in this ecstasy, as the title reminds us, is that the crystal carries a flaw.

Sinclair assimilates the imagery of the paranormal into what gradually emerges as a drama of suppressed desire which is partly played out at one remove from the physical. This suppression manifests itself as a concealed referent in the pronoun 'it' which first signifies Agatha's gift and then her desire for Rodney. The latter recognition compromises Agatha's chosen role as a selfless spiritual deliverer and this role collapses completely when she begins to sense Harding's desire for her. The result is a second, but this time inverted, visionary moment when Agatha hears the sounds 'of the invisible things unborn, driven towards birth; sounds of the worm unborn, of things that creep and writhe

towards dissolution'(pp. 169–70). When she read this passage, Sinclair's friend Evelyn Underhill, the scholar of mysticism, praised her 'vision of the evil world'.[39] The vision grows specifically out of Agatha's fear of Harding which she rationalises as a process of seepage between consciousnesses, as if the latter's insanity 'had leaked through to her' (leakage was William James's own figure for the paranormal). Where Agatha's first vision privately rhapsodised over the loss of limits to the self, now her fear of possession by the bestial Harding is articulated as a quasi-sexual terror of invasion: '*He* was in her' (p. 167). In the ensuing struggle, which suggests an attempted psychic rape, Agatha triumphs but by the end of the story has been forced to admit to herself the 'flow' of her own mortal desire.

Sinclair uses a strategy of the motivated supernatural in this collection where human feelings inform the divergences from reality without explaining the mechanisms of these divergences. In other words, the logic of events is established in a preliminary situation which the subsequent narratives extrapolate. This is consistent, for example, with Sinclair's view of *Wuthering Heights* where 'the greater action of the tragedy is entirely on the invisible and immaterial plane; it is the pursuing, the hunting to death of an earthly creature by an unearthly passion'.[40] Thus 'The Token' is narrated by a woman convinced that her sister-in-law has been treated badly by her husband. After the latter's death her 'phantasm' starts appearing to the narrator, always looking at her husband as if searching. The secret is finally revealed when the husband admits he loved his wife. Here the apparition brings about a late demonstration of feeling to the narrator as proxy wife. In 'If the Dead Knew' Sinclair shifts the subject on to taboo areas of feeling, this time a son's suppressed desire to kill his mother who has blocked him from marrying. Not long after her death the form of the mother starts appearing to the terrified son, an apparition where her sorrowing face is highlighted: 'It was less a form than a visible emotion, an anguish.'[41] The anguish in question is the son's guilt at wishing her death projected into an external shape which threatens his marriage. With uncharacteristic neatness Sinclair resolves this story by having the apparition give the son 'her peace' at the end.

A more complex symbolism operates in 'The Nature of the Evidence' where the narrative has been pieced together by the friend of Marston, a lawyer specialising in the theory of evidence. This thematisation of the reader's scepticism towards the supernatural is offset by an explicit condemnation of Marston as 'one of those bigoted materialists of the nineteenth century type who believe that consciousness is a purely

physiological function, and that when your body's dead, *you're* dead'.[42] The story thus constitutes an attack on the convictions of the protagonist but not, by implication, of the narrator. What was raised as an abstract speculation in *Mrs Dalloway*, that the consciousness might survive posthumously in familiar locations, is dramatised as the haunting – though Sinclair studiously avoids this term – by a husband's first wife after he remarries. This time the phantasm prevents any sexual union between the couple, being seen by the husband and later felt in bed by the second wife. However, the uncanny figures in the sudden appearance of the *second* wife one night: 'She had absolutely nothing on but a transparent white chiffony sort of dressing-gown. She was trying to undo it' (p. 228). Where Marston (and the reader) had expected the form of the first wife, it is the second who shocks him as 'unnatural' and triggers a realisation that he hates her. At this point the latent contrast between the two women becomes explicit. The first wife had golden hair and a cherubic, childlike face; the second dark-haired and with a 'vermilion' mouth suggestive of predatory sexuality. The premature death of the first wife leads Marston to demonise the second and his relation fails between these starkly contrasting images of femininity. Sinclair refuses to allow the apparitions in this story to generate any romantic pathos, revealing instead the self-destructive nature of Marston's sexual ambivalence.

'The Nature of the Evidence' proves to be ultimately an ironic portrait of the protagonist's blindness. Similarly 'The Victim' describes a monomaniac's scheme to murder his employer, crazed by the thought that the latter had separated him from his girlfriend. The grisly details of the killing and dismemberment recall Poe, even up to the point where the form of the old man begins appearing to the protagonist. So far in this tale the supernatural seems to figure conventionally as a process of nemesis and as a result we expect the young man to break down or confess. However, Sinclair prevents this outcome by weaving no less than three twists to the plot. Firstly the 'ghost' insists 'I'm real' and actually thanks the protagonist for getting him out of financial difficulties, minimising his murder as a redistribution of matter. Then he reveals that the real crime lay in the protagonist hating him because he had actually recommended the lovers to stay together. Finally the coast seems clear for this to happen, albeit belatedly, but the apparition reveals that the girl knew of the murder. Here the story closes. What started as a narrative of obsession turns into an ironic tale of ignorance.

In all the cases considered so far the supernatural invades the quotidian world. The tales which frame *Uncanny Stories*, however, break through

the realist barrier of death by pursuing characters beyond the grave. 'Where their Fire is not Quenched' describes a brief passionate affair conducted with a married man by Harriott Leigh which is kept a secret even on her deathbed. Once she dies she reverts to earlier and earlier points in her life, as if attempting to get back to a period before her guilty liaison. But the two lovers are figured as 'being drawn towards each other across the room, moving slowly, like figures in some monstrous and appalling dance'.[43] This fatalistic movement reinforces the invasion by Harriott's lover of all remembered space. The story's power lies in this fantastic posthumous extrapolation of the protagonist's guilt filling her entire consciousness.

By contrast, the concluding story, 'The Finding of the Absolute', gradually occludes its personal theme. Spalding, the protagonist, is a compulsive speculator in metaphysics. After his death he finds himself reunited with his wife and lover in a 'grey space' where their bodies are 'netted in'. To Spalding's astonishment this featureless space is transformed into a beautiful Italianate landscape carrying a 'serene, unearthly radiance'.[44] This has been thought into being by the wife and lover who explains: 'Here we are all suspended in a web, immersed, if you like in a sea, an air of this matter. It is utterly plastic to our imagination and our will.'[45] The narrative has turned into a Kantian fantasy of idealism where space and time are created by the perceiving consciousness. Indeed Spalding wills up the form of Kant and the story concludes with a Socratic dialogue on the metaphysical context from which the uncanny might emerge. The tale in effect questions the 'absolute' of its title. While the dead poet insists to Spalding that beauty is absolute, the tale presents reality itself as an inchoate kind of protoplasm which constantly changes form according to the perceiving consciousness. Sinclair's pursuit of her characters beyond the grave could thus be taken as an estrangement device having more in common with science fiction than the ghostly since the tale explores abstract speculations about the real, not the emotional impact of divergences from reality.

For Sinclair, realism functions in these stories as a set of inadequate representational conventions which can then be disturbed by the paranormal. Like Virginia Woolf, she uses the supernatural as part of an ongoing polemic on behalf of new dimensions to the real which can only be represented ambiguously through disruptions of 'normality'. Just as Woolf enjoined us to 'look within' in 'Modern Fiction', so Sinclair speculated on a 'form of sight [. . .] more brilliantly and exquisitely revealing than our earthly sense'.[46] Wherever this new domain of

heightened perception was located, for both writers its possibility demanded new means of representation.

Notes

1. Edith Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror: a Study of the Gothic Romance* (London: Constable, 1921), pp. 227–8.
2. George M. Johnson, ' "The Spirit of the Age": Virginia Woolf's Response to Second Wave Psychology', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 40 (2) (1994), pp. 140, 146.
3. F. W. H. Myers, 'The Subliminal Consciousness', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 7 (1891–2), p. 306.
4. Virginia Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf. Volume 2, 1912–1918*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1987), p. 87.
5. Ibid., p. 219.
6. Henry James, *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, ed. Richard P. Blackmur (New York and London: Charles Scribner's, 1937), p. 169.
7. Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. Robert Kimbrough (New York: Norton, 1966), p. 17. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
8. James, *Art of the Novel*, p. 176. Emphasis in original.
9. Ibid., p. 256.
10. Henry James, 'The Altar of the Dead', in *The Complete Tales of Henry James. Volume 9, 1892–1898*, ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1964), pp. 250, 232.
11. Virginia Woolf, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf. Volume 3, 1919–1924*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1988), p. 321.
12. Henry James, 'The Way it Came', in *Tales, Vol. 9*, p. 373.
13. Virginia Woolf, *Essays, Vol. 3*, p. 325. On Henry James's knowledge of psychical research, partly through his brother William, see Francis X. Roellinger, 'Psychical Research and "The Turn of the Screw"', Kimbrough, pp. 132–42; and Martha Banta, *Henry James and the Occult: the Great Extension* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), pp. 14–36, 42–50.
14. Virginia Woolf, *Essays, Vol. 3*, p. 324. Similarly in her review of Edith Birkhead's *The Tale of Terror* earlier in 1921 Woolf had declared: 'it is at the ghosts within us that we shudder' (ibid., p. 307).
15. Virginia Woolf, *Essays, Vol. 2*, p. 219.
16. Dorothy Scarborough, *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* [1917] (New York: Octagon Books, 1967), pp. 72, 298, 84. Introducing a later anthology, Scarborough notes: 'Present-day writers skilfully combine various elements of awe with the supernatural, as madness with the ghostly, adding to the chill of fear which each concept gives' (*Famous Modern Ghost Stories* (New York: Putnam's, 1921), p. xvi).
17. Virginia Woolf, *Essays, Vol. 2*, p. 218.
18. Virginia Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past', in *Moments of Being* (St Albans: Triad/Panther, 1978), pp. 77–8.
19. Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* [1925] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 200. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.

20. *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, revised edition ed. Susan Dick (London: Hogarth Press, 1989), p. 260.
21. Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* [1927] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 172. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
22. Virginia Woolf, 'A Haunted House', in *Complete Shorter Fiction*, p. 122. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
23. Virginia Woolf, 'A Mark on the Wall', in *Complete Shorter Fiction*, p. 86.
24. Virginia Woolf, *Night and Day* [1919] (London: Grafton, 1978), pp. 168, 377.
25. 'It is just life going on and on. It is Miriam Henderson's stream of consciousness going on and on. And in neither is there any grossly discernible beginning or middle or end' (Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman and Olga Taxidou (eds), *Modernism: an Anthology of Sources and Documents* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 353).
26. Theophilus E. M. Boll, *Miss May Sinclair: Novelist* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1973), p. 105.
27. May Sinclair, *A Defence of Idealism* (London: Macmillan, 1917), pp. 283, 6.
28. May Sinclair, 'Introduction', MS, May Sinclair Collection, University of Pennsylvania Library, pp. 1–2.
29. *In Defence of Idealism*, p. 298; A. R. Orage, 'Man's Survival of Bodily Death', *Readers and Writers (1917–1921)* [1922] (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1969), pp. 88–91. Orage comments cautiously on the possibility that 'such facts before us as telepathy, dissociated personality, subconscious complexes, autosuggestion and suggestion' only *might* suggest posthumous survival (p. 90).
30. Gardner Murphy and Robert O. Ballon (eds), *William James on Psychical Research* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), p. 324.
31. Letter quoted in Boll, p. 87. The *OED* definition of 'uncanny' continues 'mysterious, weird, uncomfortably strange or unfamiliar'. The first usage recorded of 'uncanny' with this meaning occurs in Bulwer Lytton's *The Last of the Barons* (1841).
32. Maria Louisa Molesworth, 'The Man with the Cough', in *Uncanny Tales* (London: Hutchinson, 1896), p. 99. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
33. Sigmund Freud, *Art and Literature*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 340. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
34. Boll cites 1905 (p. 81); Leon Edel gives 1912 as the date of their meeting (*Henry James: The Master, 1901–1916* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1972), p. 483); Boll, pp. 109, 140–1.
35. May Sinclair, 'The Intercessor', *English Review*, 8 (1911), p. 586. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
36. The parents' preservation of the girl's possessions is described as an 'altar of the dead' (p. 601).
37. Gardner Murphy and Robert O. Ballon (eds), *William James on Psychical Research*, p. 27.

38. May Sinclair, 'The Flaw in the Crystal', in *Uncanny Stories* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), p. 120. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
39. Boll, p. 92.
40. May Sinclair, *The Three Brontës* [1912] (London: Hutchinson, 1914), p. 216.
41. May Sinclair, 'If the Dead Knew', in *Uncanny Stories*, p. 208.
42. May Sinclair, 'The Nature of the Evidence', in *Uncanny Stories*, p. 211. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
43. May Sinclair, 'Where their Fire is not Quenched', in *Uncanny Stories*, p. 40.
44. Cf. Woolf's famous definition of reality as an aura, the 'semi-transparent envelope', in 'Modern Fiction'.
45. May Sinclair, 'The Finding of the Absolute', in *Uncanny Stories*, p. 344.
46. May Sinclair, 'Introduction' to *Uncanny Stories*, p. 4.

4

The Ghost and the Omnibus: the Gothic Virginia Woolf

Judith Wilt

In 1921 Virginia Woolf, writing of that generation we call 'modernist', warns the aspiring ghost story writer that 'your ghosts will only make us laugh' if they simply aim at the obvious sources of fear. For after world war, tabloid journalism and mass mechanical production 'we breakfast upon a richer feast of horror than served our ancestors for a twelvemonth . . . we are impervious to fear.' It only remains for us modernist writers, Woolf notes, to change the point of attack, to find 'the weak spot in the armour' of the impervious modern mind, to specify a new fear.[1]

For fearlessness, properly speaking, is a treasure won from the sensitive experiencing of ideas or events genuinely fearful: it is not the affectlessness or moral stupidity that sometimes masquerades as fearlessness. The next year, 1922, would see the appearance of the first two great modernist tales of terror, *The Waste Land*, and *Ulysses*. Forster's demonically possessed Adela Quested and the ghost of 'Esmiss Esmoor' joined the spooked narrator of Eliot's poem and the mother-vampire-pursued young pedant of Joyce's novel with the publication of *A Passage to India* in 1927. And by the time Virginia Woolf had offered her variants of the modernist ghost in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *The Waves* (1931), that haunted decade had fully earned 'us moderns' our new Gothic spurs, showing us the way to fearlessness through the encounter with our modern fear of the death of our most cherished illusion – ego, the self.

Like Henry James, her mentor and foil in this respect, Virginia Woolf went to the Gothic pantheon for 'agents' of the marvellous because these agents traditionally enforce in characters and readers that sudden opening, widening, shattering of consciousness, that dissolving of rational boundaries, which was one of the goals of her fiction.[2] Like

him, she sought with conscious virtuosity a shattering which did not derive from crude 'violence'. Unlike him, at least in the novel she most admires in this respect, *The Turn of the Screw*, she did not link ghostly agency only with its traditional function of awakening men to the presence and power of moral evil. 'What is this terror? What is this ecstasy?' marvels Peter Walsh at the climax of *Mrs Dalloway*.[3] The ecstasy is that he has seen a ghost: the terror is that he has felt ecstasy.

Yet there is evil and danger in the world of Woolf's novels, as well as joy, and to the description of those natural supernatural realities Virginia Woolf, like the moderns of every age, brings the subtle and complex linguistic and philosophic agency of the Gothic: of beast and demon, of that modern agent, the ghost, and his profoundest modernist extrapolation, what T. S. Eliot called in 'Little Gidding' the 'familiar compound ghost' of the writer-thinkers of the past. The multiple poet-ghost of Eliot's *Four Quartets* seems a fundamentally life-giving presence, offering models to a brother poet in exchange for his embodiedness: so, on the whole, is the presence named Shakespeare's Sister who haunts the narrator of *A Room of One's Own*. But the individual poet killed herself, and was buried at the omnibus crossing, like a witch. The poetic spirit Rhoda in *The Waves* seems to have set out to cross busy Oxford Street on the arm of her novelist friend Bernard, and was killed by the omnibus. To give up the body to inhabit its personal eternal ghost, psyche, is a common, an ancient and respectable form of fearlessness. To give up the body and the individual ego it symbolises to inhabit the compound impersonal living stream, the core of matter/energy symbolised in the modernist omnibus, touches a profounder fear. Enables, perhaps, a profounder fearlessness.

Before turning to the ghosts in the Gothic of Woolf's writing, however, it might be well to attempt a brief taxonomy of Gothic fixtures and their traditional functions. We might start with a proposition from the protagonist of Peter Straub's Gothic novel *Ghost Story* (1980), who claims that there is really only one genus of supernatural visitant, the empty-hungry demon who swallows human spirits, and whose varied forms – vampire, werewolf, ghoul, ghost-of-one's beloved, dark doppelgänger – are merely the roles by which the demon seduces his victims according to the weak point in their individual mental armour.[4]

But of course the point of literary Gothic is exactly to arouse and depict particular forms of the imagination of the demonic in different ages and artists. It does matter in literature which role, which Gothic agent, penetrated the imagination (the character's, the author's) under study. It matters that Lawrence is fascinated by the ghoul, the flesheater;

Coleridge by the blood-drinker; Mary Shelley by the male-mothered monster; Stevenson by the virile repressed amoral alter-ego, and Dickens, Emily Brontë, Henry James and Virginia Woolf by the ghost.

It is the special task of the ghost in the Gothic to stand for unfinished human business (that of the dead, that of the living). The ghost enforces the idea of the continuingness of human activity as well as the boundarylessness (body-spirit, living-dead, my haunter-self).

The ghost plot in fiction moves either towards exorcism or incarnation, though often the exorcism involves a kind of embodying too. In *Bleak House*, for instance, the arrogantly futile Dedlocks are rather proud of the dragging female footsteps on the Ghost's Walk which prophesy family ruin: the housekeeper at Chesney Wold actually regards a ghost as one of the privileges of the upper class. The terror of this upper-class ecstasy, attachment to a defining but also crippling past, waits for the woman, Honoria Dedlock, whose body will contain that ghost, whose flight from the haunted Walk will accomplish the ruin, whose daughter will survive to exorcise the ghost legend. In *Wuthering Heights*, on the other hand, Heathcliff exhorts the dead Catherine upon the immutable 'rock' of their shared being to haunt him in any form whatsoever rather than leave him in the abyss of castrated being. The appearance to Lockwood at the opening of the novel of the waif-child who is Heathcliff's most desired Cathy signals the beginning of that incarnation which for a while tempts Heathcliff towards Cathy's daughter, to love and loathe, but for which at novel's end he will lay down his own earthly body, already become immaterial to him, in exchange for the ghostly but somehow more substantial form that links him with his beloved.

And James's *The Turn of the Screw*, with its possessing compound ghost of all tutoring 'initiators', still 'makes us afraid of the dark' of our own hungry development, Woolf comments in her essay on the novel. The life of the young boy, possessed by his teacher, is no doubt a terror to the often-possessed Woolf.[5] But Miles's death, the death of illusion consequent on the governess's exorcism, is another kind of terror, perhaps a worse one. The possessed heart beats in ambiguous fever, the 'dispossessed heart', as James tellingly phrases it in the story's last line, just stops. 'The dead leap out on us at street corners,' Bernard recognises in *The Waves*,[6] trying to extricate himself from possessing memories, but for all that, ghosts are properly one of the privileges of humanity, not just of the upper classes. The real death is the one Miss Latrobe suffers, momentarily, when no figures appear on the stage of her county pageant in *Between the Acts*, and 'the illusion petered out'.[7] In compensation, in contradiction, from the meadow beyond, where the servants

tell of the whispering ghost of a lady who drowned herself in the lily pond, a cow, prodded by . . . something, a whisper from the lady whose job it is to keep writing (*The Waves*), keep the party going (*Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*), lifts up her voice in maternal solicitude, bridging the gap, continuing, as ghosts do, the human business.

In Virginia Woolf's novels the terror of death and of the burden of the finished past and its continuing warning presence balances the contemplation of an ecstatic 'letting go', or 'throwing it away'; the worship of 'this life' coexists with a gallant, ever careless delight in the capacity to say, like Mrs Ramsay or Mrs Dalloway, flashing one's spectacles, brandishing one's sword, 'nonsense! nonsense!' to this overvalued claustrophobic 'life' that has got one by the throat. There is too in the novels an appreciation of the misty fluidity of the substance of the self, a quasi-scientific recognition that there is more space than substance even in our material selves, let alone our psyches, that we are all, for all the tender specificity of description that must be applied to render 'Mrs Brown', really more a wave than a particle, a field rather than a thing, flowing and shaping itself in 'moments', not objects, of being.[8] Two things yield those moments. One is the ghostly ubiquity of certain charismatic figures – Clarissa Dalloway, Mrs Ramsay, Percival. The other is the shadowier but pervasive rolling forward into real 'time' of some eternal substantial force, 'something that leered, something that lurched',[9] something that gathers and climaxes and breaks, something free of any motive but continuation, something mysteriously allied with those charismatic persons, or they with it.

In this world of somethings, emanations and apparitions, the Gothic figure of the ghost is pervasive and complex, the ghost as privilege and punishment, the ghost exorcised and incarnate, single and 'omnibus'. I want to isolate and examine the figure here especially as it is made to operate in *Mrs Dalloway* and *A Room of One's Own*.

Mrs Dalloway contains two ghost-plots, one relatively conventional, centring on the haunted young war veteran and husband Septimus Warren Smith, the second, containing and extending the first, centring on the haunting young/old party-giver and wife, Clarissa Dalloway. Inheriting these plots, I will argue, by way of a key omnibus ride towards the end of the novel, is Elizabeth Dalloway, the daughter of these not-married ghosts.

Septimus Warren Smith, dreamer, poet and naif, went to war in 1914 for an England 'which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square' (p. 130) and

experienced love and death there. He suppressed both his love for his friend and commander Evans, and his grief and outrage at his death, for 'the War had taught him' not to feel, to be reasonable and self-protective, to survive. 'It was sublime', that survival, until, sitting in Milan when the Peace came, Septimus was visited by 'panic', by 'sudden thunder claps of fear' that 'he could not feel' (p. 131). Rightly interpreting the human world's contradictory exhortation to feel and not to feel, Septimus pronounces himself guilty on both counts. As a punishment for the crime of not-feeling Evans's death, as a reward for his creative feeling-fear, Septimus receives Evans's ghost: 'White things were assembling behind the railings opposite. But he dare not look. Evans was behind the railings!' (p. 36).

Sitting in Regent's Park with his loving despairing wife, Septimus talks to the dead man at whom he cannot look, moving towards the terror and the ecstasy, the embodiment of the vision, in an image which appears over and over in Woolf's novels: 'He himself remained high on his rock, like a drowned sailor on a rock. I leaned over the edge of the boat and fell down, he thought. I went under the sea. I have been dead, and yet am now alive . . . something tremendous was about to happen' (p. 104).[10] A convergence of all potent myth occurs, Greek, Christian, Shakespearean: 'the dead sang in Thessaly', Christ the 'Lord of men' becomes Septimus himself, the drowned sailor from *The Tempest* whom the poet of *The Waste Land* admits he cannot resurrect, breathes again. And beauty, which had like all sensual and emotional experience been alienated 'behind a pane of glass' (p. 132) while he was practising the War's lesson and repressing the knowledge of death, Beauty embodied as in a Keatsian apotheosis in the risen Death, 'was the truth now' (p. 105).[11]

One moment of terror remains for Septimus, fear of the ghost-as-punishment, of Evans returning and pointing accusingly to his wounds: 'For God's sake don't come!' Septimus cries out. But 'the branches parted', the apparition materialises as a man in grey walking towards the Smiths in Regent's Park. The man has no wounds, the ghost is a privilege, not a punishment: 'It was Evans! He was not changed' (p. 105). And the war and its disfiguring lessons are undone.

Evans incarnated in the man in the grey suit answers the cry we heard once from Heathcliff – haunt me then, take any form, drive me mad, only do not leave me in the abyss of meaninglessness. Like Heathcliff Septimus receives his ghost-reward because his actions, incomprehensible and even cruel to the 'normal' around him, all pointed to a desire for, and therefore the enduring presence of, the thing he lacked. The Septimus who coolly considered himself lucky not to feel his friend's

death had as a direct consequence of that affectlessness come to coolly consider, 'looking at England from the train window . . . That it might be possible that the world itself is without meaning' (p. 133). The incarnated apparition restores meaning, indeed carries so sweeping a revelation, that the ecstasy at first looks and feels, to him and especially to those 'normal' around him, like the madness of meaninglessness.

The restored meaningfulness does not seem to lie in love, however, as it does in Brontë's novel. Though Rezia Warren Smith senses that some crisis has been passed in Regent's Park, something lost regained, some foundation established, she knows it is not love, at least 'It was not marriage; it was not being one's husband to look strange like that' (p. 212). Though Evans has come back, it is not even love of Evans that builds the foundation we see as Septimus returns to their apartment in Bloomsbury. Not love, but beauty is the specific: what was once the 'heat of the sun' has become 'the watery gold . . . going and coming, beckoning, signalling', restoring meaning, touching into life the wallpaper inside, the omnibus passing outside. Nature or reality itself, making signals, 'stand[s] close up to breathe through her hollowed hands Shakespeare's words, her meaning' (p. 212).

Her meaning, the book's revelation, Evans's song, astonishing and ordinary, something to live for, something to be martyred for if necessary, are the words from *Cymbeline* which are alive in the London streets, articulating with mystic clarity the ancient half-made effort of articulation associated with the beggar-woman's chant at the Underground Station. 'Ee um fah um so' (p. 122), the sounds issue from the omnibus under the earth, and 'Fear no more the heat o' the sun', Shakespeare translates.

'Beauty was the truth.' 'Fear no more.' On this foundation Septimus begins, in Bloomsbury, putting together a conversation with Rezia about real, small, ordinary things which like great and ideal things are blessed and animated by beauty and stilled and ordered by fearlessness. 'Gathering courage' (p. 215), assembling sense impressions, he moves carefully from his sofa to design a frivolous hat of beads and flowers for his wife to sew, and then, in partnership, 'Hat, child, Brighton, needle . . . she built it up, sewing' (p. 122). To put his faith in that normality underlit still by the revelation that was Evans's ghost's gift, Septimus relinquishes the visionary madness consuming itself in mad visions. Evans appears no more: Rezia replaces him. Not as a lover but as a 'signaller'.

Yet she is small and fragile, like her signs. The powerful doctors who would separate and confine him, who offer a cannibal 'conversion' whose foundation is fear, can put her aside. As Dr Holmes jovially mounts the

stairs to offer him this fear, Septimus considers, very rationally indeed (or so the prose makes us feel), his choices – the breadknife? The gas fire? The razor? The window? To Drs Holmes and Bradshaw, to his well-wishing neighbours and the nameless old man arrested coming down the staircase opposite the window, his death will seem melodramatic, Gothic, even tragic, he understands, but it was 'their idea of tragedy, not his, or Rezia's' (p. 226). To the hearty rationalist it seems an act of insane ego or wanton caprice or cowardly self-pity to shout 'I'll give it [to] you!' and plunge 'vigorously, violently down on to Mrs Filmer's area railings' (p. 226). But when we who regularly read the Gothic later learn that those railings were piercing spikes, and reconsider the invasion of the doctor and the staking of the madman, we find in fact the classic vampire death scene – meaningfully inverted.

There seems no one on the scene who understands this death, or who can catch what Septimus had launched into the air, this ritual treasure passed on by his ghost in the true meaning of the apparently defiant last words, 'I'll give it [to] you!' But there are two. In one scene bookending this Gothic death, Elizabeth Dalloway, young daughter of Clarissa, rides the omnibus which like the clouds above contains 'a solemn assemblage' of particles both individual and ineffably collected in this very modern image (pp. 210–11). In omnibus motion she ponders a sudden vision, catches a sudden sight, of an open window within which, or through which, someone had 'breathed her last', 'brought off that act of supreme dignity' (p. 209). In a following scene Peter Walsh, Clarissa's lover when she was Elizabeth's age, passes through Bloomsbury and hears the bell of the ambulance bearing Septimus's body: 'sucked up to some very high roof' of emotion by the contemplation of 'this ambulance, and life, and death', he suddenly remembers a long-ago conversation with Clarissa 'on top of an omnibus going somewhere', where she defiantly affirmed, against her horror of death, her theory that the individual self persisted in its assembly of connections with persons, places, ideas, 'that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death . . . perhaps' (pp. 231–2).

Harbouring these visions and memories, they have been summoned to a party by the person in whom the other ghost plot centres. Both of them are reluctant to come: both of them are drawn there anyway, to receive something passing from Septimus via the mother, the lover, Clarissa Dalloway.

As a kind of boasting chorus of the cheap 'tragedy' of the haunted war veteran and his 'shell shock', Dr Bradshaw also comes to Clarissa's party, and 'oh!' she thinks, putting her hand out instinctively to an accompanying spectre, 'in the middle of my party, here's death' (p. 279). In the next sentence the hostess deserts her crowded salon for an empty room: 'perhaps there was somebody there'. But there was no body there, except the clear 'impress' of the bodies of the Prime Minister and Lady Bruton, 'she turned deferentially, he sitting four-square, authoritatively'. Sliding into those impresses now, he the authority, she now deferring, are the ghost of Septimus Warren Smith, and the receiver of the ghost, Mrs Dalloway.

To understand what happens in that room, the transaction that climaxes the novel, it is necessary to go back and see how Clarissa's ghost story plot has always encircled Septimus's. It was Clarissa, stopping in the first pages of the novel to look at the omnibuses passing, who mused in the wisdom of age that it was foolish to define anyone as 'this or that' (p. 11). This indefinability is a condition of her faith that while, to our relief, 'death ended absolutely', nevertheless, also to our relief, 'somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived . . . being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches'. But it spread even farther than that, her self, it spread and dissolved and attenuated and made her 'part of people she had never met' (p. 12). A 'brutal monster' at the bottom of her soul, roused as competitive ego, as self-defending self-accusing hatred by other rival control-bent entities like Miss Kilman, makes her despair, robs living of beauty, brings her to ground occasionally. But her being's fundamental desire is to be lifted up and spread, integrated as herself with other beings in the atomic stream of delicate molecular structure, feeling, not fearing, the immense spaces of her self as well as its intense filaments, poised as a ghost on the interface of matter and energy.

The catalyst to this fearless throwing out of herself, as with Septimus, is beauty. Choosing flowers in a shop, going 'from jar to jar' taking and letting go, 'lifted up' by 'this beauty, this scent, this colour, and Miss Pym liking her, trusting her' (p. 19), Clarissa meets Septimus on the Ether, in the London streets. As he begins his epic descent towards the underworld, towards the apparition of Evans, Clarissa begins her progress towards his ghost. At the same time, the man who might have been her more vivid lover, Peter Walsh, hesitates before the door of St Paul's church and the sacred symbols contained there, now all alienated from him, 'disembodied, ghostly'. He wrestles with a desire to 'enter in'

(p. 42), and then, turning away from that more banal sanctuary towards the truer holier ghost for him, moves to intersect Clarissa in her Westminster parlour, carrying, fondling ambiguously, his large-bladed pocket knife.

Irritatedly Peter seeks the ghost of his once-magical Clarissa within the now formalised 'Mrs Dalloway'. Peter himself is still the same troubling, hot and intimate person at sixty he was at twenty; he is in love, multiply, with a woman he met on the boat going over to India, with a woman he met later in India, with young Clarissa, older Mrs Dalloway, or rather, with a ghostlier mythic figure, with 'someone raised up in the dark so that you could not touch her but must lay your garland down on the grass in the dark' (p. 66). Filled with spaces and forces, 'lifted' like Clarissa, 'rushed through the air on the shoulders of the people he could no longer see', he weeps in her parlour, and she kisses him, all up in the air herself, feeling 'silver flashing – plumes like pampas grass in a tropic gale in her breast' (p. 69) before she grounds herself.

For, like Septimus, she is animated by beauty and abstract things, not love. Peter, the lover, walks away from that parlour experience still irritated with Mrs Dalloway, still seeking that ghostly Clarissa raised up in the dark. When he crosses paths with Septimus, Peter-in-love becomes to him the embodied form of the ghost of the loved Evans, walking in his grey suit. But Peter himself, following a strange woman from Trafalgar Square, dreamingly creates out of park vista and branches 'the spectral presence . . . the giant figure . . . risen from the troubled sea . . . to shower down from her magnificent hands compassion, comprehension, absolution' (pp. 85–6). Heathcliff-like, he is still calling his ghost to him, for Clarissa to take body as a ghost, terrible and ecstatic. That is why at the end of this day he comes, against his conscious will and judgement, to the Dalloway party, why he wanders through the rooms looking for Clarissa, unable to feel her there, though she is there, talks briefly to him, walks constantly among the crowd before him, as 'Mrs Dalloway'.

As Peter, who contains the ghost of Evans, waits in the parlour for his apparition, for the ghost-Clarissa, Clarissa greets Dr Bradshaw, who brings the ghost of Septimus, and then walks with that ghost into a private room for a deferential talk with life-after-death, authoritative. She undergoes his death: 'up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes' (p. 290). More, she feels and celebrates the meaning of that death: 'he had flung it away', 'it', life in its terror-aspect, that life one is ignominiously tied to by the horror of

death. At the same time, 'a thing there was that mattered, a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day', and, she intuits, 'this he had preserved'. A thing, life in its ecstatic aspect, life as unforced souls, life as streaming mist, life holding but not held-by death, the ghost life, she let drop, but she knows also how to fling it into the air, and receive it back again. She had once, oddly delighted, 'thrown a shilling into the Serpentine' (p. 280). What is in the air, or indeed in the water, is available to lives lifted up – 'I'll give it [to] you.'

The scene in the private room in Westminster then takes a ritual turn, paralleling the scene of the earlier death in Bloomsbury, as though the ghost of Septimus is repeating its journey in Clarissa, with significant variations. As with Septimus the communicated beauty, the foundation of this 'thing' and the source of the recognition of meaningfulness, is challenged by the thought, the physical presence outside the private door, of the men who force the soul. There follows the terror, the incapacitation, the movement to the window whence the 'thing' might be dropped or flung.

But in the Bloomsbury room the young Septimus had just had his first fragile experience of 'building it up', building the faith in living, and it shatters under the terror. Clarissa on the other hand has had years of experience at losing and then gradually reviving her structure of meaning, built on beauty, on the flame of that 'immeasurable delight' which arises from 'rubbing stick to stick, one thing with another' (p. 282). When Septimus went to the window he saw an old man on the opposite staircase staring at him: life suddenly opens into life. But no communication occurred, the terror was too strong, 'Holmes was at the door.' Clarissa looks out her window and sees an old woman staring straight at her, and the sudden eruption of life into life, potent streaming of the gazer into the gazed-at, 'fascinates' her and actually begins that revivifying process, stick against stick, the idea of the old lady's life against the idea of Septimus's death, against the idea of the people 'still laughing and shouting in the drawing room' (p. 283). He, living within her, juxtaposed with the gazing old lady and the laughing partygoers, 'made her feel the beauty, made her feel the fun' (p. 284).

As Evans (Peter) had come to Septimus, so Septimus came in this scene to Mrs Dalloway, as the ghost who is the punishment (Oh, here is Death) and the privilege of those who guiltily feel their way towards fearlessness. Similarly, Clarissa comes at the end of the party to Peter, as the ghost he desires. 'I shall come back' she had said to him before

greeting the Bradshaws and their ghost (p. 275) and 'she must go back' Clarissa thinks after her tête-à-tête with the ghost, 'And she came in from the little room' (p. 284).

'But where is Clarissa?' Peter asks in the next sentence. Now, the delay between Clarissa's coming and Peter's seeing is on one level the novel's flashback to a conversation between Peter and Sally Seton that began with Clarissa's disappearance into the little room. But at another level it is one of the many tricks of the narration in the party scene which prepare us, and Peter, for the terror and ecstasy of the final moment. In this moment, somehow, beyond her normal corporeal presence all during the party, all during the novel, she is finally, for the first time, invested with the revelation of the ghost and possessed of 'the thing that mattered', the life which uncannily survives time and death, the fearless self-abandonment which locates the soul, 'there'. 'For there she was', the novel's last sentence reads, not an old matron with a heart condition but a Power. The effect is as if she had died in that room and come back her own ghost. 'What is this terror? What is this ecstasy? It is Clarissa' (p. 296).

It is through this privileged, inspiriting and adventurous ghost that we hover on the edge of being. And we survive death in this form if we have established that permeating relationship not just with people but with that multifaceted omnibus 'reality' which is our true partner, as Woolf comments at the end of *A Room of One's Own*. In this respect it is important to note that Elizabeth Dalloway, so different and even resistant at this moment, is her mother's daughter, and indeed participates in a climactic self-ghosting paralleled to Clarissa's at the end of the novel. Like Clarissa in the first section she has walked the London street at mid-novel alternately establishing and losing boundary between herself and the seductive personalities, sights, ideas she is encountering. That adventure culminates in her entrance, 'calmly and competently', into the omnibus (p. 211), that multiple human and material compound which stands for that key partnership in Woolf. And like Clarissa she is a surprise, a terror and ecstasy, a self not herself, in the penultimate moment of the party: Richard Dalloway, like Peter, looks at the entering young woman and marvels 'Who is that lovely girl? And it was his daughter!' (p. 296).

In the realistic novel Woolf has written we see mother and daughter returning to their men: in the Gothic ghost story she has written we might see a mother laying down her body, giving over her spirit, to her daughter, while, as a ghost, she herself dazzles, and compels, as a display of 'the thing that matters'. *To the Lighthouse*'s Mrs Ramsay is

another such ghosted mother, passing along the life she has lived but also passing among the lives she remembers and those she enspirits. As her dinner party flows and merges around her, gaining 'body' from the reflection of its activity in the dark windows, she sinks down from the iridescent surface towards the impersonal 'wedge-shaped core of darkness' (p. 95) which grounds every 'personality', and revisits, 'gliding like a ghost', the drawing room of friends seen twenty years before: 'she went among them like a ghost' (p. 132). The surprise (the terror, the ecstasy) of her death takes palpable form in Part II in the ghost to whom Mr Ramsay wordlessly stretches out his arms, and in Part III the shape – 'Ghost, air, nothingness, a thing you could play with easily and safely at any time out of the night' – which suddenly 'put her hand out' to Lily Briscoe and 'wrung the heart' with its absent presence, so that the cry 'Mrs Ramsay! Mrs Ramsay!' functions on the knife-edge of time and space as both a glad recognition and an achingly unmet summons to return (p. 268).

We last see Mrs Ramsay-in-the-flesh, as we last saw Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, drawn to the window, to the impersonal core on the other side of the lighted room painted on the dark window glass. Septimus disappears into it, but the women, responsible wives and mothers, experienced self-abandoners and soul-reclaimers, turn back, smiling, to the lighted human rooms in which, the narrator of *A Room of One's Own* reminds us, 'women have sat all these millions of years, so that by this time the very walls are permeated by their creative force'.[12]

Invisible, anonymous, this 'force' may, in the modality of angry incitement, form a haunting presence both terrible and potentially liberating – like the female presence crawling behind and eventually beyond the yellow wallpaper of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's famous story. Or it may, in the more complex modalities of incitement signified in *A Room of One's Own* by 'traditions', be a vehicle for that rhythm of immersion in, expression of and emergence from 'the common life which is the real life' (p. 113) of humanity in the aggregate.[13]

The sign of this vehicle throughout Woolf's work is the omnibus in the street. The dead poet who was Shakespeare's Sister, the continuing presence who incites to write, escaped the confinement of her father's rooms and desired, like her brother, to roam the streets, feed upon and record the 'accumulation of unrecorded life' (p. 89) pulsing there in the branches and market stalls and corner gatherings. Confined again by pregnancy she killed herself and was buried, like other witch/women with abnormal cravings, at the crossroads 'where the omnibuses now

stop' (pp. 48, 113). Crossroads are difficult to traverse, and the streams of humanity moving through the omnibus may seem at times inimical to the ego, but immersion there – getting on, getting off, getting on – is central to the power of the ghost. The 'peroration' of *A Room of One's Own* is an invocation to the ghost: 'the dead poet who was Shakespeare's Sister will put on the body she has so often laid down . . . she would come if we worked for her' (p. 114). But this work itself requires a relaxation of our individual hold on 'the little separate lives we lead' (p. 113), a giving up of one ghost to get another.

The peroration of praise to the dead poet, who is the compound ghost of the creative force figured in the common life which is the real life, is anticipated in a dozen ways in the rhetoric of *A Room of One's Own*. Its narrator(s) – 'call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please' (p. 5) – is a compound of 'Marys' from a sixteenth-century ballad by 'anonymous': the Mary Hamilton of the title died as a consequence of an illegitimate pregnancy. The Marys are also characters in the work, which like the ballad masks an argument as a story: Mary Beton was 'my' namesake aunt, Mary Seton is my schoolfellow friend, Mary Carmichael writes the contemporary novel. And while '"I" is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being' (p. 4), when Mary Beton ceases to speak, that beingless fiction emerges to speak the peroration 'in my own person' (p. 105). The narrator lunches in supreme bodily comfort as a guest of a male Oxbridge college, and hears the absent presence of a ghostly 'humming noise, not articulate' (p. 12), translatable as the last century's romantic mating call between men and women. It is retranslated as the narrator crosses the garden afterwards into a revelation of the 'beauty of the world', its terror and its ecstasy, half revealed in 'phantom' shapes culminating in the Clarissa-like apparition of another figure of intellectual maternity – 'could it be the famous scholar – could it be J. H. herself?' in the 'flash of some terrible reality leaping, as its way is, out of the heart of the spring' (pp. 16–17).

In less bodily comfort, but still part of a compound, the narrator moves through Bloomsbury ('London was like a workshop. London was like a machine. We were all being shot backwards and forwards on this plain foundation to make some pattern') to settle beneath the dome of the British Museum reading room not just like a thinker but like a thought among many thoughts behind 'the huge bald forehead' of the structure (p. 26). There her research among the books written on the history and nature of women makes her feel like an alienated and 'somewhat harassed thought' (p. 29), targeted in advance by male

thinkers whose anger at the 'thought' of women is grounded in their fear of losing the feminine 'mirror' in which the merely human male is compounded into the superhuman masculinity he thinks he has to be.

In the 1919 essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', T. S. Eliot had argued that only those who have personality can know what it means to want to escape to impersonality, to that tradition which inspirits the individual talent in a complex rhythm of possession and dispossession. Utterly de-personalised, the mirror and the superman petrify and are petrified, but im-personalised, one experiences the common life which is the real life, as it is laid out among, not in, the atoms of personhoods, and made accessible, writing or reading, in books. Books, like people, Woolf's narrator says, 'are not single and solitary births, they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice' (p. 65). We are most comfortable, wear most gracefully, the 'mass' experience of the generation behind us, the ghosts of our parent-poets, our ancestors' feelings, she suggests: the 'mass' of the present we experience as velocity, 'a feeling actually being made and torn out of us at the moment' (p. 14), and we fear dissolution at its hands. So we 'forget' it, experiencing its sudden claims as the ghost which terrorises rather than the spirit that binds.

The path to a solution, or re-solution, lies in the direction of immersion in the mass, towards the vehicles which allow us to sport in that river's current – the punt with its cargo of undergraduates and leaves oaring its way through the whole (reflected) world which opened and closed behind him 'as if he had never been' (p. 5), the spectrally driven taxi with its willingly joined male and female passengers pointing to the multiplicity in the 'unity of mind' (pp. 96–7), and the 'omnibus in the uproar of Piccadilly', shooting the rapids of 'reality' (p. 110). The reward, again, is fearlessness, born out of time and effort as 'the habit of freedom and the courage . . . to think of things in themselves' (pp. 113–14).

Ghosts included.

Notes

1. See 'Henry James's Ghost Stories' (1921), reprinted in *Collected Essays by Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 1 (London: Hogarth Press, 1968), p. 288. Woolf wrote several review essays for the *Times Literary Supplement* in the late teens and early 1920s which allowed her to specify the 'modernity' of the ghost story, including 'Gothic Romance' (1921), meditating on 'the ghost within us' (p. 133) and 'The Supernatural in Fiction' (1918), speculating on 'the strange human craving for the pleasure of feeling afraid' (p. 293).

2. In a fine searching recent essay George M. Johnson argues that Woolf's early anxiety of influence – not only about the Edwardian novelists holding the field, whom she could safely indict as 'materialists', but also about those contemporaries and potential rivals like James, and May Sinclair and Dorothy Richardson – lent an edge of stress to her insistent deployment of a vocabulary of spiritual, paranormal, even 'psychical' terminology about character, which always has an element of the 'apparitional' about it. See 'Ghostly Presences in Virginia Woolf's Essays and Early Fiction', in *Virginia Woolf and the Essay*, ed. Beth Carol Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 236–9.
3. References to *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) are to the Harcourt Brace & World edition (New York, 1953).
4. Peter Straub, *Ghost Story* (New York: Pocket Books, 1980). Straub's popular novel features a young English professor hero who recognises the evolution of these shapeshifting soul eaters in stories by Poe and James, Hawthorne, Lawrence and Hollywood films. By some half-conscious intuition which he never follows up, he makes his female monster, in her 1970s' incarnation, a Berkeley graduate student writing a PhD thesis on Virginia Woolf.
5. The issues attending definitions and creative causes/consequences of Woolf's bouts of 'madness', her inhabitation by 'voices', are most delicately treated by Lyndall Gordon in *Virginia Woolf: a Writer's Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984) , especially in the chapter 'The Question of Madness'.
6. Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (1931, rpr. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), p. 274. I have proposed a Heideggerian reading of the nature of self-ghosting especially in Bernard's character in '"God's Spies": the Knower in *The Waves*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (April 1993), pp. 180–99.
7. Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (1941, rpr. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969), p. 140.
8. This sense of the space-within is first articulated by Woolf with the relatively conventional psycho-dramatic phrase 'the ghost within' in her reviews of supernatural tales as noted above. But this crude demonology gives way in her novels to a subtler sense of the ghost as both projection of and invitation to that state of 'impersonality' and boundaryless 'shapelessness' which is part of the modernist aesthetic. From this perspective I would take some issue with too facile an assignment of Woolf's characters as doubles and projections of one another, or of her. Harvena Richter's careful and important chapter on 'A Multiplicity of Self', for instance, leaves too little room for that dimension of psyche which is neither the mythic double nor the repressed other, nor even, as is hinted in *The Waves*, the multiplex self, but is rather space, not-self, even non-being (*Virginia Woolf: the Inward Voyage* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970]).
9. Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927, rpr. New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1955), p. 209.
10. Woolf's female protagonists are especially prone to this leaning over the water towards the self-ghosting figure of the drowned/risen voyager, among them Rachel Vinrace in the last 'Sabrina-fair' chapter of *The Voyage Out*, Rhoda on the Rock of Gibralter in *The Waves*, and *Between the Acts*'s Isa, communing with the imagined ghost of the lady who had thrown herself into the lily-pond.

11. Phyllis Rose is especially sensitive to the Keats who mediates Shakespeare to the world of *Mrs Dalloway*. She reminds us that the Shakespearean 'Fear no more' motif there was accompanied by a reference to 'Adonais' and Keats's imagined escape from the 'contagion of the world's slow stain', and she challenges any too-easy relinquishment of Septimus to the madhouse: 'One does not have to invoke R. D. Laing to endorse at least partially the validity of Septimus's response to life' (*Woman of Letters* [New York, Oxford University Press, 1978]), pp. 127–9.
12. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929, rpr. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1989), p. 87.
13. Gillian Beer also connects *Mrs Dalloway*, 'the first of her works . . . [to] explore the mass behind the single voice', with *A Room of One's Own*, where 'Virginia Woolf is seeking a written "I" which can . . . include a serenely and laterally shifting population' (*Virginia Woolf: the Common Ground* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996]), p. 52.

5

Strolling in the Dark: Gothic Flânerie in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*

Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik

Djuna Barnes's best known work, *Nightwood*, published in 1936, is, like Joyce's *Ulysses*, a quintessentially urban novel. Barnes's expatriate Paris forms the setting for a dark and bizarre encounter with boundaries which, once transgressed, then have their very existence called into question. *Nightwood*'s representation of an alienated and angst-ridden urban existence means that it has generally been received as a modernist text but, we shall argue, it is also linked to the Gothic tradition through its use of characteristic Gothic tropes and its preoccupation with boundaries. These are crucial generic signals which indicate a powerful Gothic legacy at work. In this context, the characters who between them represent both physical and metaphysical wandering (the garrulous doctor and the enigmatic central female character) are of key importance. In enacting the identity of the flâneur, a distinctive modernist figure, they also evoke Gothic resonances of monstrosity and vampirism. Through them those boundaries which demarcate 'normality' and 'civilised' behaviour are destabilised. If *Nightwood*'s remarkable conflation of modernism and Gothic made it a deeply disturbing text for Barnes's contemporaries, early twenty first-century readers may find it particularly so in the ineradicable knowledge that it was published at a time when Europe was moving towards profound upheaval.

In spite of its Parisian setting, *Nightwood* owes much to the tradition of American Gothic. Like Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story, 'Young Goodman Brown', it presents the wilderness of the forest as a space which reveals the other, demonic side of 'civilised' human nature.[1] Barnes's 'wood' of unconscious desires and hatreds is, however, located not outside the city settings of the novel, but within them. Thus, the

Paris of *Nightwood* is represented as dark and labyrinthine: a Gothic space in which the boundaries of an everyday reality threaten to dissolve. Symbolically this is marked by the novel's emphasis on the grey areas between night and day or, as the French would put it, the time 'entre chien et loup' – that moment which divides domesticated daylight from the savagery of the dark.[2] Our attention is drawn to the twilight and the dawn; even the accurate Parisian topography, with its identification of the rue du Cherche-Midi seems fortuitous. The world beyond Paris is also represented through Gothic spaces: the Volkbeins' Viennese home, complete with ancestral but fake portraits, displays many of the trappings of the traditional Gothic novel, as does the ruined chapel on Nora's estate in America, which provides the setting for the novel's final, shocking scene. More generally, in focusing on the 'wood' of the dark unconscious as the underside of the bright modern polis, *Nightwood* signals a rejection of the traditional binaries and divisions which mark post-Enlightenment thought and a denial of the Enlightenment's legacy of rationality. The novel's portrayal of a European *Zeitgeist* suggests a continent moving during the 1920s towards an apocalyptic moment in history.[3] Through its variously damaged and suffering characters, *Nightwood* offers a profoundly pessimistic view of the world; in the doctor's words, 'There is not one of us who, given an eternal incognito, a thumbprint nowhere set against our souls, would not commit rape, murder and all abominations.'[4] The sense of personal pain and exclusion expressed by these characters is adumbrated by their situation within a wider social hierarchy which denigrates minorities (Jews, the Irish, blacks, 'inverts') as 'freaks'. *Nightwood* challenges us to make such connections whilst acknowledging that the reader might have difficulty in understanding them: 'the tree of night is the hardest to mount, the dourest tree to scale, the most difficult of branch' (p. 123).

The tale of Robin Vote and her lovers appears to be a tale of transgression; in telling it, however, *Nightwood* questions the very validity of terms such as 'transgression' and 'normality'. Robin, who has a predilection for reading de Sade (p. 73), and who denies the claims of heterosexuality and motherhood, indulges in cross-dressing, promiscuity, lesbianism and bestiality. In so doing, she becomes a personification of abjection, defined by Kristeva as that which 'disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.'[5] The novel also destabilises the boundaries between Jew and Gentile, masculine and feminine, human and animal, savage and civilised, sane and insane, dream and 'reality'. Moreover, it offers alternative 'family' structures to the conventional

nuclear family of the modern period (exposed as destructive and abusive both here and in Barnes's other writings). Several 'trinities' replace the holy trinity of father, mother and child: Jenny, Robin and the child Sylvia; Robin, Nora and the doll; Felix, Frau Mann and young Guido; Nora, Robin and the dog. Despite the emotional anguish of these triads, such 'families' are seen as no more damaging than the conventional nuclear family. In particular, Nora's memory of her grandmother as a woman who 'dressed as a man, wearing a billycock and a corked moustache' (p. 95) and who, it is intimated, sexually abused her as a child, signals such suffering.[6] The memory surfaces in a dream where it becomes externalised as being inflicted on Robin, a Robin 'disfigured and eternalised by the hieroglyphics of sleep and pain' (p. 96). 'Normality' as benign is therefore thrown into question, particularly by Robin Vote; in Matthew O'Connor's words, 'She was always holding God's bags of tricks upside down' (p. 162). Robin's Lady Macbeth-like behaviour ('Felix . . . found her standing in the centre of the floor holding the child high in her hand as if she were about to dash it down', p. 74) suggests that the constraints of 'normality' can drive people to desperate acts. Certainly the novel seeks to strip away the patina of cultural idealisation from 'the family' in order to reveal its power dynamics as inherently exploitative and destructive.

Nightwood's emphasis on what has frequently been seen as degenerate behaviour, together with its focus on the irrational and its destabilisation of boundaries, has provoked quite different and often contradictory interpretations. In an influential feminist reading of the novel which sees it as exploring the political unconscious of the rise of fascism, Jane Marcus claims that '*Nightwood*'s project is to expose the collaboration of Freudian psychoanalysis with fascism in its desire to "civilize" and make "normal" the sexually aberrant misfit. *Nightwood* asserts that the outcast is normal and truly human'.[7] Erin G. Carlston, on the other hand, places the novel within the matrix of Decadence, Catholicism and fascism that developed from the mid-nineteenth century and which came to a peak in Europe in the 1930s. Choosing to interpret the doctor's disquisitions as completely unironic, Carlston sees the book as flirting with fascist thought:

> In *Nightwood* . . . the boundaries between humans and animals, or humans and reified works of art waver and dissolve in the figures of Robin and Nikka the Nigger. In both cases, what is called radically into question is the notion of rational subjectivity on which liberalism and Marxism insist. *Nightwood*, like many fascist texts, treads the

> ground where the borders of that subjectivity disintegrate; like fascism, it occupies the territory of the irrational.[8]

However, whilst *Nightwood*'s modernist credentials seem generally accepted by readers such as Marcus and Carlston, its Gothic inheritance has, we suggest, been largely overlooked. In failing to note *Nightwood*'s debts to the Gothic tradition, critics have missed crucial generic signals. The way in which *Nightwood* challenges boundaries, questions the validity of 'normality' and focuses on the irrational underside of 'civilised' life indicates an important Gothic legacy at work in the text. The novel's Gothic challenge to post-Enlightenment rationalism is signified by the Beast which brawls; associated 'with the stench of excrement, blood and flowers' (p. 130), it represents abjection as something fissured by beauty. Prowling through the 'wood' of the night(mare), the Beast is indicative of the fears and desires to be located in the dark unconscious which, like the sea and the dream, 'eats away its boundaries' (p. 127) and destabilises 'normal' identities. The Beast, like the unconscious itself, is neither good nor evil, but a source of both or either. In this respect, Barnes's novel resonates with Jung's words:

> If, as many are fain to believe, the unconscious were only nefarious, only evil, then the situation would be simple and the path clear: to do good and to eschew evil . . . but what is 'good' and what is 'evil'? The unconscious is not just evil by nature, it is also the source of the highest good: not only dark but also light, not only bestial, semi-human and demonic but superhuman, spiritual, and, in the classical sense of the word 'divine'.[9]

It also, however, accords with David Punter's definition of the Gothic:

> Gothic . . . is intimately to do with the notion of the barbaric . . . (since) those writers who are referred to as Gothic turn out to be those who bring us up against the boundaries of the civilized, who demonstrate to us the relative nature of ethical and behavioural codes, and who place, over against the conventional world, a different sphere in which these codes operate at best in distorted forms.[10]

This correlation should not surprise us, of course, given that psychoanalysis and Gothic writing set out to tell the same (hidden) story; in both discourses, to visit the unconscious is to explore the dark dungeons, labyrinths and cellars or the unvisited sinister attic of the otherwise

well-lit house of the Enlightenment.[11] Thus, although it eschews the supernatural, *Nightwood*'s emphasis on beasts and dreamworlds, transgression and abjection, the unconscious and the irrational, brings it into the Gothic genre. Its thesis, that intimations of the sublime may be connected with the socially most abject, also derives from the Gothic vision.

The novel's debts to, and parodic reworking of, the Gothic tradition are evident from the first chapter. The Volkbeins' home in Vienna is curiously like a Gothic mansion, 'large, dark and imposing', its floors covered with a 'thick dragon's blood pile of rugs from Madrid' (p. 17). The portraits of Guido Volkbein's mother and father, hanging against the panels of oak, turn out to be fakes ('Had anyone cared to look into the matter they would have discovered these canvases to be reproductions of two intrepid and ancient actors' [p. 19]) and suggest the falsely-claimed ancestry common to the plot of many Gothic novels (for which Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* [1765] was the prototype). Guido Volkbein's determination to manufacture a respectable ancestry is, however, a result of his social vulnerability: he is a Jew of Italian descent living in Vienna. In this character, Barnes gives us the wandering Jew who haunts many Gothic texts but situates him in a European capital where anti-Semitic feeling was stronger than its German counterpart during the 1920s.[12] Nor does Felix, the half-Jew, half-Gentile son of Guido Volkbein and his goose-stepping Austrian wife, Hedvig, escape the Jewish stereotype: 'the step of the wandering Jew is in every son . . . When Felix's name was mentioned, three or more persons would swear to having seen him the week before in three different countries simultaneously' (p. 20). The Christian perception of the Jew as strange and Other resonates with a more general sense of freakishness in the novel, represented for example by the curious circus population we see in Paris and New York. Indeed, in describing the tattooed body of Nikka, 'the nigger who used to fight the bear in the *Cirque de Paris*' (p. 31), Doctor O'Connor mentions that his back was covered by 'a terse account in early monkish script – called by some people indecent, by others Gothic – of the really deplorable condition of Paris before hygiene was introduced, and nature had its way up to the knees' (p. 33). In *Nightwood*, then, we see the modern city through the eyes of the unconventional, the marginalised, the abjected. In recent theoretical explorations of Gothic writing, critics have used Kristevan theory to explore how representations of the abject in selected Gothic texts relate to certain discourses and cultural values at particular historical moments.[13] Kristeva's concept of the abject enables readers to define

how shared constructions of 'otherness' across Gothic works are predicated upon shared cultural values: you may know a culture by what it abjects, or 'throws off'. That which becomes abject is not annihilated but lingers in the margins, representing a threat to stable cultural values. Abjection within the Gothic text can thus be seen to signify both fear concerning the breakdown of culturally constructed boundaries of identity at a particular historical moment and an attempt to shore them up. Read in this light, *Nightwood* reveals an understanding of how the process of cultural abjection, founded on a deep-seated fear of the unclean, is intrinsic to 'civilisation'. Indeed, in a speech which resonates with the fascist agenda of the times, the doctor himself articulates the link between 'hygiene and intolerance' of the socially abject:

> The doctor reached out for the bread. 'So the reason for our cleanliness becomes apparent; cleanliness is a form of apprehension; our faulty racial memory is fathered by fear. Destiny and history are untidy; we fear memory of that disorder . . . '
>
> (pp. 170–1)

As 'a divine idiot and a wise man' (p. 52), the doctor is aware that the sufferings of himself and of the night are the product of fear – fear of the unusual, the 'abnormal', the marginal: 'The very constitution of twilight is a fabulous construction of fear' (p. 118). Such fear drives political and social policy: 'No man needs curing of his individual sickness, his universal malady is what he should look to' (p. 52).

However, as a fake doctor and a transvestite, Matthew O'Connor is himself a 'freak'. His ancestry and interests bring together some extraordinary oppositions: 'An Irish man from the Barbary Coast (Pacific Street, San Francisco), whose interest in gynaecology had driven him half around the world' (p. 29), he is also a Catholic who performs abortions and who is obsessed by death and the night. His anguish at not having been born as a woman is overlaid by a weary cynicism concerning love and happiness. At times he sounds like a cross between those two icons of modernist nihilism, Céline and Beckett:[14] 'I tell you . . . if one gave birth to a heart on a plate, it would say "Love" and twitch like the lopped leg of a frog' (p. 46); 'We are but skin about a wind, with muscles clenched against mortality . . . ' (p. 122). Characters bring their sufferings to him and ask for explanation: at one point Nora says, 'Doctor, I have come to ask you to tell me everything you know about the night' (p. 117); indeed we learn that 'his favourite topic . . . was the night' (p. 118). Although he is a Catholic (albeit one who

masturbates in church) and an American of Irish descent, the doctor's role in the novel allies him with the sensibilities of the wandering Jew who, in Gothic literature, 'stands for a mind depressed by human suffering, also for the suffering inflicted by society, for the search for an absconded God, and for the immense difficulties of striving for self-realisation . . . '.[15] Indeed, in trying to distinguish between the Jews and the Irish, the doctor concludes that there is little to choose between them: 'All right, Jews meddle and we lie, that's the difference, the fine difference' (p. 51). (We learn later that he lies to people in order to alleviate the misery that is life, 'to take the mortal agony out of their guts' [p. 193].) His interest in the unconscious, signified by his identification with the night, also allies him with the Beast which crosses all boundaries and which brings together the abject and the beautiful within the sublime.

But perhaps the most important Gothic feature of *Nightwood* is the way in which we are invited to read its protagonists as aspects of each other, a strategy of doubling which emphasises the instability of the boundaries of the self. In taking Robin as her lover, for example, Nora acknowledges the alien side of herself: 'She is myself. What am I to do?' (p. 182). The most significant instance of this feature, however, is the presentation of the doctor and Robin Vote who are linked together in several ways. They both share a love for members of their own sex: 'what is this love we have for the invert, boy or girl?' asks the doctor of himself (p. 194). They both live what Nora describes as 'dissolute' lives (p. 220), continually challenging oppressive boundaries, not least those of gender (Robin dresses like a boy and the doctor wears women's make-up and clothes at night). They both share an American expatriate identity. Both associate themselves with the night and with the wood of nightmares: the doctor may be a priest of the night, but Robin is also 'in her own nightmare' (p. 205) and has 'darkness in her mind' (p. 220). Finally, in an affiliation which seems to challenge the very boundaries of the human, both are allied with the animal in various ways. As we have seen, the doctor is strongly linked with the Beast of the night, and Robin's connection with animals reaffirms the breakdown of the boundary between animal and human represented throughout the novel. We first meet her in a room which looks like 'a jungle' (p. 56); she is described by the narrator as 'a woman who is beast turning human' (p. 59) and later, by the doctor, as 'a wild thing caught in a woman's skin' (p. 206). In its final chapter, 'The Possessed', the novel culminates in Robin performing a bizarre ritual with Nora's dog. We thus cannot to fail to note the way in which Robin and the

doctor reinforce each other's characteristics and predilections, as if they were two sides of the same person. It is as if both characters have experienced the same reality and the same pain, but whereas Robin reacts to them physically (her 'sleepwalking' state emphasises her lack of intellectual and/or emotional engagement with the world), the doctor withdraws into metaphysics and the word (including telling lies) in order to cope.

We suggest, however, that their complementarity is significant in a more precise way in that they jointly illustrate a particular figure of modernity – the flâneur. Whereas Robin represents the flâneur's characteristic act of strolling, the doctor articulates the flâneur's perspective of alienation and anomie. The quasi-cataleptic state that descends on Robin just before she becomes pregnant seems to stay with her and induces a sleepy wandering (hence the title of the second chapter, 'La Somnambule'):[16]

> she took to going out; wandering the countryside; to train travel, to other cities, alone and engrossed. Once, not having returned for three days, and Felix nearly beside himself with terror, she walked in late at night and said that she had been half-way to Berlin.
>
> (pp. 70–1)

After the birth of young Guido, 'Robin took to wandering again', returning in a 'disinterested' state; she was, we are told, 'almost never home' (pp. 74–5). Later, when she moves in with Nora, Robin takes to nocturnal strolling, wandering in the dark city spaces of Paris, going from café to café, 'from table to table, from drink to drink, from person to person' (p. 89). Travelling in the States with Jenny Petherbridge, Robin goes 'wandering without design' (p. 234). All this movement is intimately tied up with her thoughts: she 'walked in a formless meditation'; her 'thoughts were in themselves a form of locomotion' (p. 90) but we are never made privy to them. Indeed, she speaks no more than ten times in the novel. There is, then, no point in our looking 'to the sleeper for the secret that we shall not find' (p. 129); instead, we look to the garrulous doctor for a transcription of the night's meaning and for the significance of Robin's quest. In the long chapter 'Watchman, what of the Night?' Matthew O'Connor gives us his reading of the 'Town of Darkness' (p. 119) and of the night, just as the watchman in the Book of Isaiah (which provides the chapter's title) tells of the fall of Babylon. The night here is presented as 'a life' (p. 121), the life of the dispossessed:

> those who turn the day into night, the young, the drug addict, the profligate, the drunken and that most miserable, the lover who watches all night long in fear and anguish . . . When one meets them at high noon they give off, as if it were a protective emanation, something dark and muted.
>
> (p. 137)

Between them, then, Robin Vote and Matthew O'Connor enact the physical and the metaphysical wanderings of the flâneur.

Associated particularly with Paris in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, flânerie has become emblematic of modernism and of a modern subjectivity shaped by the urban experience. Moving between Vienna, Paris, Berlin and New York, *Nightwood* is set mainly in the French capital, and embraces the modernist preoccupation with the city as a defining element in the evolution of a modern consciousness. *Nightwood*'s topography is limited but significant: we are made aware of the café society and come to know the names of characters' favourite haunts. The action moves between three quarters: the Luxembourg quarter, Montparnasse (both left-bank and associated with artists and writers) and the Palais Royal (right-bank and the home of business and politics). Jenny Petherbridge's social aspirations are signified by her association with the Palais Royal Quarter, noted also for its libertinism since the eighteenth century (we are told that she 'haunted the Comedie Française', which has been at the Palais Royal since 1799, and that at night she takes dinner in the Bois de Boulogne [pp. 101 and 103]). Certain elements of the Palais Royal link her, then, with Robin and the doctor who are inhabitants of bohemian Paris. The 'doctor', Matthew O'Connor, lives 'close to the Church of St. Sulpice'; he is, we are told, 'a feature' of the Place de St. Sulpice and his favourite haunt is the Café de la Mairie du Sixième (p. 48). Robin Vote is associated with Montparnasse: she stays at the Hôtel Récamier on arrival in the city;[17] she moves into Nora's flat on the rue du Cherche-Midi (which leads from the Luxembourg Quarter to Montparnasse) and her degenerate night wanderings in cafés and bars take place in this area. Significantly, both the Luxembourg Quarter and Montparnasse are part of what has been defined by authors such as Shari Benstock as 'expatriate Paris';[18] Montparnasse, in particular, became the home of many avant-garde artists, poets and writers from the turn of the century. As expatriate flâneurs in Paris, Robin and the doctor are thus figures of a double alienation.

The association of Paris with the figure of the flâneur derives mainly from Baudelaire's celebration of him as an artist nauseated by

bourgeois domestic life who seeks meaning in the public space of the city.[19] For Baudelaire, the flâneur is the hero of modernity, a man who, in the words of Benjamin, 'goes botanizing on the asphalt'.[20] Haunted by a sense of dissatisfaction and of incompleteness which compels him to look for fulfilment outside himself, he gazes upon and interacts with the city space. The resulting urban epistemology comes to represent a valuable form of knowledge in an increasingly secular world: 'La connaissance du coeur humain, c'est l'érudition des flâneurs' in the words of François de Curel.[21] Such knowledge, however, is that of the artist, a detached and isolated figure whose alienation from modern consumer life is one of the conditions of his being and whose state of anomie precludes creativity but induces meditation and dreaming (interestingly, Benjamin draws a close link between flânerie, imagination and dreaming[22]). According to Keith Tester, the flâneur:

> waits to be filled because, in himself, he is utterly empty . . . It is likely that the emptiness of the flâneur is the reason for *the fear of the night* and of sleep which Baudelaire attributes to Guys . . . In these terms, the figure, and the activity, of the flâneur is essentially about freedom, the meaning of existence (or the lack of a meaning of existence) and being-with-others in the modern urban spaces of the city.[23] (our italics)

Thus, although the flâneur figure derives from a certain kind of urban behaviour which emerged in nineteenth-century Paris, the city itself becomes emblematic of urban modernity and the flâneur becomes generally symbolic of an alienated modern consciousness. Hence, as Tester suggests, the endurance of the flâneur in twentieth-century works such as Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea* (1938), Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* (1954) and Georges Perec's *Life: a User's Manual* (1987) in which the figure is remodelled in order to explore the changing nature of society. The fact that the flâneur is often a journalist as well as an artist suggests his capitulation to market forces despite his abhorrence of them: 'He is the genius, whose spirit has been capitalized' according to Bruce Mazlish.[24] (It is perhaps worth noting here that Nora Flood, a character loosely based on Barnes herself, is seen by Diane Chisholm as 'a freelance journalist and a full-time flâneur', indicating that flânerie in the novel is not limited to Robin and the doctor.)[25] Nevertheless, the observations of the flâneur (like those of Matthew O'Connor) distil a mode of modern consciousness and he becomes

a kind of 'critic and judge, writing *feuilletons* about a salon of capitalist scenes'.[26] The flâneur is also associated, in the work of writers such as Baudelaire, Eugène Sue and Victor Hugo, with the criminal, since both are downwardly mobile and live outside the confines of bourgeois life. Like the criminal, the flâneur threatens the fabric of society: 'The danger of excessive and thus anomic individualism . . . makes the flâneur a potentially treacherous friend and a dysfunctional social element who provokes the need for discipline.'[27] The flâneur, then, like the Gothic Other, threatens the rational basis on which modern society is structured. In essence, the doctor's cynical and highly poetic monologues on the meaning of life and the night are the thoughts of the flâneur; indeed, he can be seen in the same light that Adorno portrayed Kierkegaard: 'Thus the flâneur promenades in his room; the world only appears to him reflected by pure inwardness.'[28]

But what of Robin Vote? We perhaps need to place her wanderings in the context of the recent debate concerning the figure of the flâneuse. It is evident that for Baudelaire and Benjamin the flâneur was, by definition, male. A woman wandering alone in Paris was, until the late nineteenth century, likely to be seen as a prostitute and as something to be 'enjoyed' along with other city sights by the male spectator. Indeed, Baudelaire's interest in the underworld was marked by a particular fascination with the prostitute, 'who came to symbolize for him not only his own situation and that of capitalism itself but also the fact that beauty was to be found in evil',[29] a perspective of no little relevance to the doctor's evocation of his encounter with 'A Tuppeny Upright' in *Nightwood*. However, Haussmann's grand boulevards changed the face of Paris in the mid-nineteenth century and with the subsequent advent of department stores, the nature of the strolling population changed also, since it now included respectable bourgeois women out shopping. Because her goal was the active consumption of commodities, rather than the cultivation of a perspective detached from and critical of capitalism itself, there has been some debate as to whether the female shopper can be regarded as a flâneuse. Clearly, in the terms of Baudelaire's and Benjamin's definitions, she cannot be. However, the advent of both department stores and public eating houses did legitimise the presence of women in public spaces from the fin-de-siècle onwards, making possible for the first time the presence of women in these places who were not regarded as themselves purchasable commodities.[30] In the early twentieth century, as Janet Wolff points out, in the artistic communities of Paris, such as Montparnasse, 'an active lesbian subculture produced its own gender inversion, in terms of behaviour and

dress' which allowed for subversion of conventional bourgeois codes of behaviour.[31] This is the background against which we should view the transgressive wanderings of Robin Vote, whose promiscuous dalliances drive her lover, Nora, to distraction. In this context, Robin's practice of cross-dressing (like that of the doctor) can be seen as a cultural strategy of subversion since imitation of gender, according to theorists such as Judith Butler, exposes the imitative nature of gender itself and reveals it to be performative rather than essential.[32]

However, in her predatory wanderings and her 'feeding off' her café victims, Robin demonstrates not only the sexual voracity of the vamp, but also the desires of a quasi-vampiric figure.[33] We should, therefore, perhaps also view her in the context of Barnes's complete *oeuvre*, in particular the early play *The Dove*, in which, as Bonnie Kime Scott notes, intimacy is associated with 'vampirism and eating the beloved'.[34] There are also more general links between the flâneur and the vampire: as Keith Tester suggests, 'Could it be that the flâneur is rather like a metropolitan vampire – a domesticated variant of the figure popularized by Bram Stoker?'[35] Barnes, in interleaving the figure of the vampire and the flâneuse within the character of Robin Vote, gives us a modernist reworking of a Gothic trope in order to explore states of alienation in 1920s and 1930s Europe. Rootless and dislocated from her environment, Robin embodies a type of homelessness that has implications beyond the physical: in Heidegger's words, 'Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world.'[36]

As the two 'faces' of the flâneur, Robin and the doctor exemplify the Cartesian dualism and split subjectivity of modernity. The novel's shocking culminating scene relocates the modernist sense of alienation which they exemplify away from its characteristic urban setting and places it within a traditional Gothic milieu. Robin's strange union with a dog in a decaying chapel on Nora's American estate recalls the traditional Gothic novel's fondness for the sacrilegious act – for example, the rape of the drugged Antonia by Ambrosio the monk in the Convent of St. Clare that we find in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), or the staking of Lucy Westenra's body in the churchyard in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). In acting out what O'Connor calls 'the brawl of the beast' (p. 123), Robin visibly transgresses the boundary between animal and human, an act which leads to a final moment of bleak climax and reconciliation:

> He ran this way and that, low down in his throat crying, and she grinning and crying with him; crying in shorter and shorter spaces,

> moving head to head, until she gave up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned and weeping; and the dog too gave up then, and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his head flat along her knees.
>
> (p. 239)

The setting of the chapel frames the act as one in which boundaries which recur in Gothic texts – spiritual/physical, sacred/profane and obscene/sublime – are also breached. Thus it would seem that the novel's climax articulates the insight that modernism's anxieties concerning the fragmentation of the self are essentially Gothic. Gothic's uncanny darknesses are not eliminated by the modern city but are the very foundations of its urban subjectivity just as the fear of the fragmentation of the self has been a haunting presence in Gothic narratives. Robin's activities as flâneuse lead inexorably to an encounter with the beast within and an accommodation with it. Her transgression of the boundaries of civil society have represented a freedom but a freedom that ultimately leads to the breakdown of the boundaries of a socially constructed self. In *Nightwood*, modernist narrative leads to a recognition of what the marginalised Gothic tradition has always inscribed; Gothic's devices and desires, its mannered archaisms, are ways of expressing the essentially fissured nature of a modern subjectivity.

The doctor shows a profound and ironic awareness of such fragmentation: 'Even the contemplative life is only an effort . . . to hide the body so the feet won't stick out' (pp. 191–2). In associating the doctor with the mind and Robin with the body, *Nightwood* might seem on a superficial reading to be a reactionary text, confirming the phallic hierarchical binaries which equate man with metaphysics and culture whilst woman is consigned to the body and nature. However, Robin Vote's androgynous first name and her surname (which suggests an affiliation with the women's suffrage movement) militate against such a reductive reading, as does the doctor's sense that he should have been born a woman: 'am I to blame if I've turned up this time as I shouldn't have been, when it was a high soprano I wanted, and deep corn curls to my bum, with a womb as big as the king's kettle, and a bosom as high as the bowsprit of a fishing schooner?' (p. 132). Here, as elsewhere, the novel deflects definitive readings and resists its containment by the boundaries it seeks to dissolve. It thus anticipates the deconstructive analyses of the mind/body split offered by twentieth-century theorists such as Judith Butler and Elizabeth Grosz.

As we suggested earlier, there has been some critical resistance to seeing *Nightwood* as a Gothic work. Bonnie Kime Scott notes that the

novel 'has been called, alternatively, surrealistic, Eliotic, Dantesque, fugal, Elizabethan, baroque, *even gothic*' (our italics), and Diane Chisholm argues for the novel's debts to surrealism rather than the Gothic tradition.[37] This refusal to acknowledge the strong Gothic legacy evident within *Nightwood* perhaps derives from a too limited conception of the Gothic genre. Angela Carter, a writer whose interest in de Sade, the fantastic and the Gothic has echoed that of Barnes, defines the Gothic as a genre which:

> grandly ignores the value systems of our institutions . . . (and which) deals entirely with the profane . . . Character and events are exaggerated beyond reality, to become symbols, ideas, passions. Its style will tend to be ornate, unnatural – and thus operate against the perennial human desire to believe the word as fact . . . It retains a singular moral function – that of provoking unease.[38]

As critical responses continue to testify, Barnes's *Nightwood* does nothing if not provoke unease. If, as Nancy J. Levine and Marian Urquilla claim, 'Barnes's work can itself help to redefine our notions of modernism',[39] that is partly because the extraordinary conflation of the Gothic and the Modernist we find in *Nightwood* renders it a *tour de force* in the demolition of cultural, philosophic and generic boundaries. Modernism's engagement with discourses of fragmentation (such as psychoanalysis and degeneracy) are in this novel shown to be a reworking of the key concerns of a marginalised Gothic tradition. The uncanny meeting of the atavistic and the modern in the novel's final scene is the ultimate destination of Robin's 'strolling in the dark'; the events in the ruined chapel may also be seen as an encounter between modernism and Gothic in which, in the words of T. S. Eliot:

> . . . . the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.[40]

Notes

1. We owe this connection to Janet Beer of Manchester Metropolitan University. According to one critic, Barnes had the Black Forest in mind when writing *Nightwood*: see Louis F. Kannenstine, *The Art of Djuna Barnes: Duality and Damnation* (New York: New York University Press, 1977), p. 179. The novel's title might also evoke, for the knowing reader, the name of Thelma Wood, Barnes's lover between 1920 and 1931 and upon whom the character of Robin Vote is based (see Gillian Hanscombe and Virginia L. Smyers, *Writing*

for their Lives: the Modernist Women 1910–1940 (London: The Women's Press, 1987), pp. 97–102.

2. We owe this pertinent comment, and several others on the Parisian setting of the novel, to Geoffrey Harris of the European Studies Research Institute, University of Salford.
3. For an exploration of the novel in this light, see Jane Marcus, 'Laughing at Leviticus: *Nightwood* as Woman's Circus Epic', in Mary Lynn Broe (ed.), *Silence and Power: a Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), pp. 221–50.
4. Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (1936) (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), p. 128. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
5. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 4.
6. Nora's recollections of her grandmother are clearly based on Djuna Barnes's memories of her unusually close relationship with her own grandmother, Zadel Barnes. For documentation (and two different readings) of this relationship, see Phillip Herring, 'Zadel Barnes: Journalist' and Anne B. Dalton, '"This is obscene": Female Voyeurism, Sexual Abuse, and Maternal Power in *The Dove*', both in *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Vol. 13, No. 3, Fall 1993, pp. 107–16 and 117–39 respectively.
7. Jane Marcus, 'Laughing at Leviticus', p. 233.
8. Erin G. Carlston, *Thinking Fascism: Sapphic Modernism and Fascist Modernity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 70.
9. Carl Jung, *Practice of Psychotherapy: Essays on the Psychology of Transference and Other Subjects, Complete Works*, Vol. 16, Second Edition; trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge, 1954 [1993]), p. 192.
10. David Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, Vol. 2, *The Modern Gothic* (2nd edition, London: Longman, 1996), pp. 183–4.
11. See the chapter entitled 'The Mysteries of Enlightenment; or Dr. Freud's Gothic Novel' in Anne Williams's *Art of Darkness: a Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995) for a fuller version of this argument.
12. See P. G. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (New York and London: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964) for the reasons for this.
13. See, for example, Anne Williams (cited in note 11) and Jerrold E. Hogle, 'The Gothic and the "Otherings" of Ascendant Culture: the Original Phantom of the Opera', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 95, No. 3 (Fall, 1996), pp. 157–71.
14. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the author of the *Times Literary Supplement* review of *Nightwood* likened its 'sickness of the soul' to 'M. Céline's otherwise quite different book *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit*' (Jane Marcus, 'Mousemeat', in Mary Lynn Broe, *Silence and Power*, p. 196). The anti-hero of Céline's novel is also a doctor.
15. Hans-Ulrich Mohr on 'The Wandering Jew (Ahasuerus)' in Marie Mulvey-Roberts (ed.), *The Handbook to Gothic Literature* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 249–51.
16. Diane Chisholm, citing Breton's *Nadja*, has pointed out that 'According to André Breton, the Paris twenties hosted that phase of Surrealism known as

the "sleeping fits" or "Nap Period".' See her 'Obscene Modernism: *Eros Noir* and the Profane Illumination of Djuna Barnes', *American Literature*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (March 1997), p. 201. Several critics have also suggested a link with Bellini's opera *La Sonnambula* (1831).

17. The Hôtel Récamier was named after Juliette Récamier (1777–1849), a beautiful woman who had many literary figures as admirers including Germaine de Staël, Benjamin Constant and Chateaubriand.
18. Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris 1900–1940* (London: Virago Press, 1987, 1994).
19. See Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (1863; Oxford Phaidon Press, 1964).
20. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: a Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1973), p. 36.
21. Cited in Rob Shields, 'Fancy Footwork: Walter Benjamin's Notes on Flânerie', in Keith Tester (ed.), *The Flâneur* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 62.
22. Ibid., p. 75.
23. Ibid., pp. 6, 8.
24. Bruce Mazlish, 'The Flâneur: From Spectator to Representation', in Tester (ed.), *The Flâneur*, p. 47.
25. Diane Chisholm, 'Obscene Modernism', p. 183.
26. Mazlish in Tester (ed.), *The Flâneur*, p. 50.
27. Rob Shields in Tester (ed.), *The Flâneur*, p. 71.
28. The quotation is from T. W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 42 and is cited in David Frisby, 'The Flâneur in Social Theory', in Tester (ed.), *The Flâneur*, p. 91.
29. Ibid., p. 51.
30. Major participants in this debate have included Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity', *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1985), pp. 37–48; Griselda Pollock, 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity', in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 50–90; Elizabeth Wilson, 'The Invisible Flâneuse', *New Left Review*, No. 191, January/February 1992, pp. 90–110. See also Scott McCracken, 'Embodying the New Woman: Dorothy Richardson, Work and the London Café', in Avril Horner and Angela Keane (eds), *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, Corporeality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 58–71.
31. Janet Wolff, 'The Artist and the Flâneur: Rodin, Rilke and Gwen John in Paris', in Tester, (ed.), *The Flâneur*, p. 126.
32. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).
33. For the suggestion that Robin Vote should be seen as a vamp, see Nancy J. Levine, '"I've Always Suffered from Sirens": the Cinema Vamp and Djuna Barnes', *Women's Studies: an Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 16, Nos 3–4 (1989), pp. 271–81. For the connection between the vampire, the vamp and fictional representations of women, see Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik,

'Daphne du Maurier and Gothic Signatures: Rebecca as Vamp(ire)', in Horner and Keane (eds), *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, Corporeality*, pp. 209–22.

34. Bonnie Kime Scott, *Refiguring Modernism: Postmodern Feminist Readings of Woolf, West, and Barnes* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 112.
35. Keith Tester, *The Flâneur*, p. 19.
36. Cited in Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 1.
37. Bonnie Kime Scott (ed.), *The Gender of Modernism: a Critical Anthology* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 23 and Chisholm, 'Obscene Modernism', especially p. 185.
38. Angela Carter, 'Afterword', *Fireworks: Nine Stories in Various Disguises* (Cambridge: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 133.
39. Nancy J. Levine and Marian Urquilla, introduction to *The Review of Contemporary Fiction, Special Issue on Djuna Barnes*, ed. Levine and Urquilla, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Fall 1993), p. 9.
40. T. S. Eliot, from 'Little Gidding' in *Four Quartets* (1944; London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 59.

6

'Thick Within Our Hair': Djuna Barnes's Gothic Lovers[1]

Deborah Tyler-Bennett

Djuna Barnes's literary output was varied, ranging from plays and poems, to short stories, novellas, novels, almanacs, and visual art. Yet, literary critiques of her work often pigeonhole the author, until she becomes viewed as chiefly a novelist and, at best, one who is celebrated for a single work, *Nightwood* (1936). This exploration of a doomed lesbian love affair is set against expatriate night-life in 1920s Paris and Berlin, and appears to brand Barnes as an archetypal female modernist – composing a text which identifies the fragmentary nature of modern life, with characters whose lives and psyches are devoured by hostile urban environments (night-clubs, bars, dance halls etc.). Despite Barnes's longevity (1892–1982), and the eras of literary experimentation through which she lived, and in spite of feminist analyses of novels such as *Ryder* (1926), her output has been most often critically defined using terms derived from T. S. Eliot's original introduction to *Nightwood*.[2] This defined the text as being both gloomy and Jacobean. Feminist critics, such as Mary Lynne Broe and Sheryl Stevenson, have explored Barnes's texts as referencing ideas both of the grotesque body and of the carnivalesque.[3] Whilst such readings possess much to recommend them, it is worth noting that few theorists have considered Barnes's use of the Gothic as a key to reading her texts.

Yet, Barnes often deployed images from Gothic texts and visual art, and these inform and shape many of her works, from well-known pieces such as *Nightwood* to largely unexplored early poems. Gothic influences on such texts range from nineteenth-century vampire fiction, to Pre-Raphaelite morbidity, and early European horror cinema. For example, in an early text such as *A Book* (1923), Barnes creates images of lovers 'doomed', not by their chosen gender orientation or objects of desire, but by an enclosingly Gothic sense of mortality.[4] Such

awareness of near death leads the reader to experience that oppression of the senses familiar from Poe's poems and short fictions, here expressed by Barnes's assertion (in 'Six Songs of Khalidine') that 'thick within our hair' lie the 'dusty ashes that our days prepare'.[5]

Many of these early poems combine modernist conceptions of gender, with a distinctly Gothic vocabulary which is more Victorian than Jacobean. This vocabulary concerns 'trysts' between living lovers and dead 'beloveds'. Drawing on images recalling nineteenth-century symbols of mortality and forbidden desire (employed a century earlier by authors diverse as Tennyson, Rossetti, Poe, Le Fanu, Braddon and Mary E. Coleridge, and the folkloric texts which inspired them), Barnes created poetic and prose narratives using pastiche. Such pastiche combines the imagery of twentieth-century lesbian relationships, with nineteenth-century archetypes of the 'ghostly' or 'deadly' tryst between mortal lover and dead/occultly animated beloved. It is the events, symbols and images which occasioned this remarkable fusion of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century images of love, loss and premature resurrection.

This aesthetic strategy is thought to have been inspired by the death of Barnes's (possibly first meaningful) lover, the noted Greenwich Village character and beauty, Mary Pyne, in 1915.[6] Yet, Barnes's Gothic literary strategy can be seen as also influencing the visual art which she created in the same year, aimed at criticising the war in Europe. Pyne's death from tuberculosis (coming as it did in the midst of a European war which Barnes was lambasting in paintings as embodying the death of youth) places her in a symbolic literary pantheon of tubercular, mercurial 'beloveds': ranging from Poe's Virginia, to the pale, vampiric women described by Mary E. Coleridge, and Rossetti's depictions of his deathly mistress/muse, Elizabeth Siddal. In an early, prophetic, painting 'The Doughboy', probably completed and exhibited in 1915, Barnes prefigured America's entry into the war in 1917. 'The Doughboy' portrays a huge, Golemesque, wraith stalking an expressionist no-man's-land in a manner similar to that of illustrations depicting Bram Stoker's 'Invisible Giant' from *Under the Sunset* (1882 edn).[7] Although the war fought by the American doughboy is often understandably undermined by comparison to that of his European counterpart, it is worth recalling that the psyches of Barnes's male compatriots, such as Harry Crosby and Ernest Hemingway, were formed and often irreparably damaged, by the Great War's closing years. Barnes's literary treatment of Pyne's death, with its grisly overtones, could be aligned to a visual Gothic aesthetic which she was already using to satirise the war in Europe.

'The Doughboy' is a figure haunted by war and ghosting the landscapes over which he strides. Likewise, poems dedicated to Pyne's memory, including 'Six Songs of Khalidine' and 'The Flowering Corpse' (1922), are both spectral and haunting. Both pieces are startling visual reminders of how much the nineteenth-century Gothic ghosts modernist texts, as they bear great resemblance to literary legends of death and exhumation, such as those surrounding Dumas's *Lady of the Camellias* and the Pre-Raphaelite model/muse/artist, Elizabeth Siddal. As with Dumas's anti-heroine, Marguerite Gautier, Siddal's untimely death (from a laudanum overdose in 1862) at the age of thirty-two, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's exhumation of her body seven years later (to retrieve poems he'd buried with her) have, as Jan Marsh indicates, passed into public legend.[8] Likewise, accompanying images of Siddal's famous red hair growing luxuriantly long after death (with overtones of Poe's 'Berenice' [1833]) and her pallid beauty remaining intact (a legend also attaching itself to the exhumation of Lord Byron, the model for Polidori's 'Vampyre' of 1819) formed in 1938, as Marsh indicates, a potent symbol for women poets.[9]

Barnes's Mary Pyne figure shares much with the model for Rossetti's famous icon of death in life/life in death 'Beata Beatrix' (three versions c.1860s). Firstly, there is Pyne's red hair which (in 'Khalidine') 'crawls' and 'creeps' like Siddal's flaming locks:

> Like stately ferns above an austere tomb
> soft hairs blow;[10]

This hair's vitality is contrasted with the poem's 'stately' lyrical and formal stillness. Of course, hair as a symbol which lives and is luxuriant beyond its owner's lifespan, is the staple of much European vampire folklore, and was appropriated by French symbolists such as Verlaine and Rimbaud. It is worth indicating that Barnes's poems appear to fuse the purple textures of the decadents with Tennyson's mossy blacks.

Secondly, there is the austere vigil which the living lover keeps over the dead beloved's body. Here, imagery suggests that the dead lover is sleeping. Although one partner is dead, this image implies a bond between the living and the dead which cannot be severed, recalling Gothic funerary monuments.[11] This leads to the concept of the 'deathly bride', conjuring images of vampiric women from European folklore, literature, and visual art, ranging from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Christabel' (1816), to Le Fanu's 'Carmilla' (1872), and Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).

Similar to these shadowy women, the persona of Barnes's beloved is resurrected via motifs of mortality and desire. She is rendered scarcely dead, thus bearing a disquieting resemblance to her living self. Indeed, as with many polarities between the dead and living described in Stoker's *Dracula* (where the male vampire's vitality is contrasted with the passivity of both Jonathan Harker and Lucy Westenra's three 'husbands' and where Lucy's demonised body is a much more potent icon of sexuality than is the living Mina's), it is Barnes's living observer who appears to be less actual than her dead companion.[12] In 'Six Songs of Khalidine', the red hair is vital and possesses an eerie agency, whilst the narrator speaks in flat, monotone cadences. Likewise, in 'The Flowering Corpse', passion flowers bloom beneath the beloved's armpits, recalling both Catholic accounts of saints' active corpses and those Gothic/decadent texts which subvert these. That disconcertingly familiar sensuality which is a part of good vampire fiction also informs Barnes's early poetry. Thus many of her female personas appear to be subverted saints, similar to those decadent 'idols of perversity' (images and symbols of both female lust and death) explored by Bram Dijkstra and Ewa Kuryluk, whilst also containing those elements connecting passive femininity and death (often re-workings of the old theme of death and the maiden) analysed by Elizabeth Bronfen.[13]

In 'She Passed This Way', an early Barnes lyric, a lover laments her dead beloved, whilst on a literal quest to capture her partner's soul, a quest which re-figures the Pre-Raphaelite adaptation of the *doppelgänger* archetype.[14] Here, Barnes reverses the haunting process, so that the living lover appears to dog the track of the dead beloved: the poem therefore develops a metaphoric border crossing. In this piece, the beloved passes from life into a type of limbo, and the lover follows her, describing the supernatural landscape to the reader. One might define this poem as embodying that Jacobean quality so admired by Eliot, yet it is mostly nineteenth-century Gothic fictions which Barnes draws upon to create her meditation on passion and the betrayal of love by death.

Again, hair imagery is crucial here. As with symbols defining both vampiric female archetypes and the bodies of actual women such as Siddal and Alphonsine Plessis (on whom Dumas's heroine was based), Barnes's bereft lover seeks to pin her partner's spirit down. In folkloric terms she attempts to prevent her soul from wandering. To achieve this, she describes braiding her lover's hair into a love amulet in order to track her down. As with Robert Graves's superb lyric, 'The Stake', where a dead man's (or vampire's?) heart is enfolded and plaited by tree roots,

so Barnes's imagery conveys both entrapment and destructive love.[15] It is interesting to note that, whilst much has been done to compare Barnes's poetic output with that of Dylan Thomas, few critics have contrasted her early works to those by Graves or Edith Sitwell, both of whom rely, to some extent, on images adapted from the Gothic. 'She Passed This Way', the 'Khalidine' poems and 'The Flowering Corpse' bear comparison to pieces by Graves such as 'The Visitation' and 'The Children of Darkness', or Sitwell's eerily satirical 'Four in the Morning'.[16]

So why did Barnes select the Gothic as a springboard for early works dealing with Pyne's death? The Gothic might appear as an odd choice to form the background to a series of modernist laments, associated as the genre inevitably must be with sensationalist fictions and suggesting a possible trivialisation of Pyne's life and demise. However, ignoring the risk of cliché which the genre also embodies, one can outline strategies derived from Gothic texts which enable border crossings between literary mode and content to take place. To Barnes, Mary Pyne symbolically represented dead love and neglected opportunities (a 'land of lost content' personified), but also symptomatic of a woman fated to become a deathly archetype. As Marsh notes, by the early part of the twentieth century, the legend of the Pre-Raphaelite muse gaining in beauty after death, had become over familiar due to a plethora of artists' memoirs.[17]

When analysing her writings on Pyne, it becomes obvious that Barnes recognised how Pyne's 'Greenwich Village Beauty' status obliterated every other aspect of her personality from memoirs and anecdotes. As with Elizabeth Siddal and Alphonsine Plessis, Pyne was fated to become the eternal icon, interpreted by artists, her image refigured to suggest uncorrupted youth and beauty. Field notes that, when Barnes produced a drawing of Pyne, it was of a woman prematurely aged (Pyne died in her twenties).[18] In this eerily direct portrait, it appears that Barnes may have sought to bestow on Pyne the years she lost by dying young, rather than trying to visually re-create the ravages of tuberculosis, as Field suggests.[19] Extending the motivation behind this visual aesthetic to the 'Pyne' poems, one might consider that the ornate Gothic of the poems both places Pyne within an archetype into which memoirs fit her, and indicates that archetype's shortcomings to the reader. Other workings of this deadly beloved archetype can be found in the Gothic realist paintings which Ferdinand Hodler did of his dying lover, Valentine Gode-Darel, between 1914 and 1915, and 'Le Trajet' (c.1911), a painting in which Barnes's friend, Romaine Brooks, portrayed a dead/

dying/vampiric-looking woman captured in limbo between life and death.[20] In Barnes's case, the lovers in 'Six Songs of Khalidine' and 'The Flowering Corpse' appear lessened by the corpse's agency, whilst the pursuer in 'She Passed This Way', never catches up with her dead partner. For Barnes, it seems, writing and painting the Gothic also introduces formal limitations, as the reader/viewer recognises the boundaries of the poetic/visual images displayed.

Elsewhere in her career, Barnes was to delight in the clichés offered by the Gothic interior, and in the satire afforded by the use of sinister symbols. The vampire bride, with her pale face, nest of hair, and predilection for draining life from her victims, could be played with as a clichéd, and thus undercut, symbol of destructive femininity. The 'corpses' in early poems become fleshed-out in later fictions, thus attaining new agency. As with many writers of her generation, Barnes's poems, short fictions and novels seek to satirise past literary trends (including the Gothic) which previously held sway. Barnes's female personas often appear Ibsenesque in their overriding determination to self-destruct. They also satirise Pre-Raphaelite and symbolist female archetypes. As has been stated, women in the early poems are often depicted as dead, near dead, or keening over the dead. Resembling Stoker's brides they are 'recalled to life' or, as with Siddal and the fictional Gautier, exhumed by lovers who are unwilling to let them rest. Other female personas appear suicidal, another possible end for the Gothic anti-heroine. In 'Lullaby' (1923), a woman tells of lying gazing at a pistol, haunted by the fact that all her days will be similar.[21]

Before intimating the way in which such Gothic flourishes influence Barnes's poems and fictions, one does well to indicate that certain images of the occult occurring in her work have their basis in actual events and persons occupying Paris during Barnes's sojourn there between c.1920 and 1929. In exploring Barnes's work, recognition and exploration of links between historical period and literary fictions remains crucial, as otherwise theoretical/historical analysis of Barnes's text remains hampered by late twentieth-century critical preoccupations and fashions, some of which regard texts in an ahistorical light. A reading of Barnes without historical emphasis would only scrape the surface of texts rich in allusion both to other literary forms, and expatriate life in the 1920s.

Barnes moved to Paris from Greenwich Village, as a freelance journalist for magazines such as *McCall's* and *Vanity Fair*. Between 1929 and 1931 she was chiefly back in New York, and between 1932 and 1941 travelled widely, visiting Berlin, Paris, Vienna, Budapest, Munich, Tangiers (and

Devon). From her return to New York in 1941 to her death in 1982, she lived at Patchin Place, Greenwich Village, becoming increasingly reclusive. Considering her early travels and their influence on her fiction, one becomes aware of how seemingly fictional episodes have some basis in reality. This factual grounding, from which Barnes weaves fantastic texts, remains crucial to an understanding of her work, as actual events expressed via the grotesque enact border crossings between realism and the magic realism of which Barnes is often regarded as an early exponent. Although true that as so many memoirs of Paris in the 1920s exist it is often difficult to sort post-event anecdote from historical event, it remains possible to indicate elements of Parisian expatriate life which shaped Barnes's use of Gothic material.

In the 1920s, Paris was a city brimming with 'occultists' and their followers. All her life, Barnes remained both drawn to and repelled by such disputed charlatans. These probably reminded her of her 'occultist' father, Wald Barnes, a man who tried to sell the eighteen-year-old Barnes to a middle-aged friend, maintained several aliases throughout his life, and sired over fifty illegitimate children in New York State alone.[22] Both Wald and his mother, Zadel Barnes Gustafson, claimed to be spiritualists, as were Zadel's first and second husbands, Henry Budington and Axel Gustafson.[23] References to spiritualism, occult/cabalistic texts, houses with 'eerie' atmospheres and charlatans, such as Dr Matthew O'Connor (from both *Ryder* and *Nightwood*), frequent Barnes's works. Such characters and references are often accompanied by imagery and symbols taken from seventeenth-century chapbooks, eighteenth-century broadsheets and almanacs (both genres collected by Barnes in Paris) and folklore – texts dealing with subjects such as witchcraft, black magic and the occult.

As Peter Washington, Alex Owen, Ellic Howe and Ronald Pearsall all note, 'occultist' charlatans who inhabited major European cities at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century were legion.[24] These included Alistair Crowley (under all his many aliases), Rudolph Steiner, Raymond Duncan, George Gurdjieff, Khrishnamurti, Madame Blavatsky, and disciples participating in societies such as various theosophical groups, groups worshipping images taken from Ancient Egyptian ritual, and magic groups such as the Order of the Golden Dawn, who had a temple of Ahathoor in Paris between 1894 and c.1902.[25] Some of these individuals professed to be white magicians, whilst others, such as Crowley, claimed to be adept in the Black Arts. The presence of such groups and individuals was fairly long lasting in cities such as Paris, and some of the Golden Dawn's quasi-Egyptian

symbolism was later developed by some of Barnes's compatriots, such as Harry Crosby. Crosby, the husband of Caresse Crosby, one of the group Barnes satirised in her *Ladies Almanack* (1928), committed suicide in 1929, in a bizarre pact with his mistress, the heiress, Josephine Roche Bigelow.[26] Crosby, who had been mentally disturbed since seeing a friend blown to pieces in front of him during the First World War, perhaps represented the living outcome of Barnes's 1915 'Doughboy' painting. In a single violent afternoon, he shot Bigelow and then himself dead, in a 'tryst' involving a Golden Dawn-esque worship of Ra, the ancient Egyptian sun-god, whose symbols were tattooed on the soles of the couple's feet. Barnes's friendship with the Crosbys adds to her experiences of those who claimed to speak either for or with the dead: Henry Budington, Axel Gustafson, Zadel and Wald Barnes; Crosby and Bigelow; Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, the *Little Review* editors who were passionate about Gurdjieff; Alistair Crowley (the model for the sinister Oliver Haddo in Somerset Maugham's *The Magician* [1908]); and Natalie Barney, many of whose salon members were part-time dabblers in mysticism and the occult.[27] Studying *Nightwood*, one becomes aware of references to demons, cabalistic and automatic writing, vampires, ghosts, blood, occult books and somnambulism.

If, in *Nightwood*, Barnes's vision of expatriate life is full of references to people who convinced others that they had supernatural powers, then her novel also owes a clear debt to expressionist cinema. Barnes (an acquaintance of Chaplin) was knowledgeable on contemporary cinema and, between 1914 and 1931, had interviewed stars including John Bunny, Alla Nazimova and Raymond Hitchcock.[28] In *Nightwood* she names Robin Vote 'La Somnambule' and has her suffer somnambulism in one of the novel's crucial sections.[29] Robin is woken from her trance by Dr O'Connor, *Nightwood*'s pivotal talker, a Crowleyesque charlatan, bearing much in common with Maugham's Haddo, who, at one juncture, names himself 'God of Darkness' (p. 180). It is interesting to note that, whilst critics are beginning to discuss the impact of 'magical writings' and horror novels on modernist authors, Maugham's one fully Gothic novel has been, thus far, ignored. Yet, Haddo, a patchwork of Crowley and others, could be seen as influencing Barnes's portrayal of O'Connor, as well as later fictional 'men of magic', such as those created by more formulaic authors, like the prolific Dennis Wheatley. Barnes's Gothic lovers, such as Vote and Flood, are influenced by textual men of magic, like O'Connor, and this imagery of lover/beloved/supernatural source, is what links *Nightwood* so strongly with the early poems of love and death.

Somnambulism is, of course, a crucial image in Robert Wiene's expressionist masterwork, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919). As with Cesare, Caligari's somnambulist (played by Conrad Veidt) and *Nightwood*'s 'sleeper', Robin Vote, destroy the lives of others without any obvious motivation. Nora Flood, Jenny Petherbridge, Felix Volkbein, even O'Connor himself, suffer under actions taken by Robin's somnambulistic personality. She moves into seemingly passionate relationships and then wrecks these with an icy detachment. Yet there seems to be little malice (or, indeed, motive) behind her actions, which are those of a somnambule. Indeed, it is striking how much Vote resembles the dead beloveds of the poems. It is worth recalling that both popular entertainment and expressionism used the idea of somnambulism, in 1907, the *Rêve d'Egypte*, a salacious mime piece which appeared at the *Moulin Rouge*, featured Colette and her lover Missy (Mathilde de Morny) as Egyptologist and 'somnambulist' ancient Egyptian.[30] Wiene's film, however, probably contains the most potent image of somnambulism to come from the early part of the twentieth century. If Robin Vote is similar to Cesare, then some moments in her 'awakening' refigure images from the film. S. S. Prawer notes that Cesare awakes with 'disconcerting' eye movement and, likewise, Barnes describes Vote as awakening with her eyes eerily highlighted.[31] After this, it is impossible for readers to regard Vote as anything but somnambulistic and disconcerting. Later, Vote is described as a vampire, 'infected' by the past and with blood on her lips.[32]

If Vote is similar to Wiene's Cesare, then O'Connor represents a Caligariesque figure (a composite of Wald, Crowley, Haddo, Frank Harris, Dan Mahoney and others), at once seeking to be in control of the lives around him, whilst engineering mayhem which almost brings about his own destruction. It is worth noting that O'Connor, a shabby charlatan garbed in black, cuts a figure visually similar to Werner Krauss's Caligari, who dresses mostly (when he is not cross-dressing) in a shambolic black showman's suit. In such a suit, O'Connor ministers to the unconscious Robin Vote, as either shaman or impostor.[33] Later, when he is informed by Felix that Robin's child, Guido, no longer grows, the Doctor dissects the situation and offers a type of 'medicine show' wisdom, much as Krauss's asylum doctor/fairground mountebank does throughout the film. As Peter Washington's text demonstrates, one man's guru is often another's charlatan, and the type of advice O'Connor offers is usually lofty and semi-mystical, as were the words of gurus from Steiner to Gurdjieff.[34] If Robin's son by Felix possesses vampiric or somnambulistic tendencies (and the novel hints

that there is something supernatural about the child) then it is O'Connor who knows how to manipulate him.

In one of the novel's closing sections, O'Connor appears to reminisce over the eighteenth century as if he witnesses it at first hand, much to the discomfort of an ex-priest.[35] Such disquieting images recall the Doctor's 'God of Darkness' incarnation, and make the reader wonder whether his occult powers are actual or feigned or, indeed, whether such distinctions possess any value, questions also raised by the claims of the fictional Oliver Haddo and the actual Crowley.

If *Nightwood* replicates Jacobean tragedy, as Eliot suggests, then it also retains a closeness to both nineteenth-century Gothic and early twentieth-century adaptations of the genre, such as Maugham's and those of cinematic expressionists such as Wiene. Paris, at the time Barnes lived there, was, as Prawer notes, one of the epicentres of *avant-garde* European cinema, its arts heavily influenced by German expressionism.[36] Indeed, Prawer goes on to cite *Caligari*'s influence on writers, such as Barnes's friend, Parker Tyler, co-author of the gay classic *The Young and Evil* (1933).[37] Billy Kluver and Julie Martin list expressionist-influenced films, puppets, dolls, paintings, party costumes, music and clubs in Paris in the mid-1920s, during Barnes's period of residency.[38] Thus Barnes's novels can be placed alongside these genres, whilst also being regarded as continuing the imagery of Gothic lovers begun in her early poetry.

In both later poetic and prose works by Barnes, and those short fictions which preceded *Nightwood*, she returns constantly to imagery of the dead and undead. The catalyst for such images is most likely Pyne's death in 1915, coupled with the First World War, a carnage which led to violent actions by survivors in the 1920s (such as Crosby's suicide pact, where he felt he was going to join, not only the ancients, but the recent war-dead whose deaths he witnessed). Yet the imagery of death and life in death was also occasioned by the history of those artists and lovers in Paris between 1900 and 1930 outlined by Kluver and Martin. The tragic ends of many of Barnes's friends and acquaintances from Paris (pre-figured by Natalie Barney's lover's, the poet Renée Vivien, suicide in 1909), were often avoidable – Crosby's pact, Dolly Wilde's overdose in 1941, and the shocking death, from starvation, of the Japanese artist, Toda.[39] Other violent and Gothicised anecdotes of death and disorder which haunted the expatriate community and contributed to the type of Gothic modernism produced by Barnes were legion. They included: the duel between artists Moise Kisling and Leopold Gottlieb in Montparnasse in 1914; the death of Modigliani, and the suicide of his pregnant wife, Jeanne, in 1920; and the tragic death of Barnes's

acquaintance, Raymond Radiguet, in 1923, at the age of twenty.[40] Modigliani's death mask by Lipchitz, became an icon for Parisian artists in the early part of the twentieth century, as did a plaster death mask, supposedly from Paris in the 1880s, of a drowned girl, known simply as *L'inconnue de la Seine*.[41] *L'inconnue* could well have been a fake, and many claimed to have seen the original girl upon whom she was based. Also, the suicide of the popular bohemian artist, Pascin, in 1930, which was interpreted by many as representing the end of an era, might be regarded as the last of these Parisian tales of death, which influenced so much of the period's writing and visual art.[42]

Such events, plus a further war in Europe, caused a shift in Barnes's Gothic-based aesthetic. Images of cemeteries, or monuments in public parks which resemble funeral statuary, fill many short fictions, such as the much anthologised 'Vagaries Malicieux' where Paris itself appears to be a vast mausoleum.[43] Again, one is drawn to Parisian necrography and funeral monuments from Père Lachaise, the Panthéon, Montmartre, St Vincent, St Étienne-du-Mont, Les Invalides, Passy, and St Germain-des-Prés, sites familiar to Barnes. One only has to recall the amazing tomb of poet George Rodenbach (1855–98) at Père Lachaise (near where Natalie Barney's friend Remy de Gourmont is buried) to recall how the Gothic intensity of some memorials worked on Barnes's imagination. Rodenbach is carved as literally bursting out of his tomb, and offering a rose to passers-by.[44] Barnes's sense of the Gothic developed via her witnessing the way in which such monuments to the dead intersect the world of the living, images also heavily played upon in films such as Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), and Dreyer's *Vampyre* (1932).

Later poems by Barnes, composed, at least in part, after she left Paris, take up the undead theme. Dating Barnes's poetry is often problematic, as many works were composed early in her career and then revised, a process often taking decades. As Barnes got older, an exploration of the ageing process entered her Gothic-based aesthetic, and poems which were probably begun in her youth were given a new twist. During her life at Patchin Place, young journalists eager to know about her Paris years would visit her, convinced that they knew the truth behind her reclusive lifestyle. Often, she ignored, humoured, or confronted them. She steadfastly refused to write a memoir (the form bored her), despised most anecdotes composed about her, and poured most of her energies into writing or re-forming poetry, to include an exploration into old age and mortality.

'The Walking Mort' (1971) is most likely, as Nancy J. Levine suggests, part of an unpublished sequence by Barnes, probably entitled 'As

Cried'.[45] At first glance, the poem's agenda appears to deal specifically with ageing processes. Yet, the piece's terms of reference are not as immediate as one might consider. 'Walking Mort', often a poem which is critically depicted as voicing Barnes's disgust with those who relish rehashing old anecdotes, is much more subtle and complex than ideas about it being an aesthetic tool for settling old journalistic scores would suggest.[46] As indicated in the following critique, the poem cuts between the old meanings of specific terminology used, and established Gothic archetypes concerning passion, age and death.

Andrew Field and Nancy J. Levine have both variously described the poem's themes as being 'about' ageing, or the resurrection of the dead.[47] Levine defines the title as coming from the old meanings of 'mort' referring to either death or a sweetheart.[48] Yet, the other old meaning of the word was an underworld term for a specific type of woman. As Partridge's *Dictionary of the Underworld* and similar texts confirm, as early as 1566, the 'Walking Mort' was defined as a wandering vagrant woman, part prostitute, part thief and fence, who followed an 'upright man' or gentleman thief, and who was never allowed to stay in one community for long.[49] Thus, whilst Field and Levine are right in part, the poem's specificity has, thus far, gone unregistered. Barnes was a collector of sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century chapbooks and broadsheets, available to buy (usually pasted by nineteenth-century collectors into albums) from *Les Bouquinistes* who lined the Seine's river banks. As such, she would have undoubtedly come across references to 'walking morts'. Such imagery would appear to endorse Eliot's view of Barnes's work as Jacobean, yet there remains a Gothic element throughout.

As Levine notes, in 'Walking Mort' the figure appears to be animated by the last trump, and resurrected.[50] True to Partridge's definition, in death the mort 'wrangles' for money, bartering her sexuality much as she had done in life.[51] Yet the linguistic nature of the text (which uses words such as 'bait', 'task', 'grave' and 'gait') implies that, rather than being summoned by the last trump, Barnes's mort is undead and, like a crone version of Le Fanu's Carmilla, has existed over centuries. Thus, her wandering female vagrant resembles a feminised Ancient Mariner, Flying Dutchman, or even Nosferatu, doomed to traverse the Earth, disquieting the living with her eternal degeneracy. If the 'walking mort' archetype is undead, rather than resurrected, the image develops an aura of eternal abandonment, and thus implies a type of continuous prostitution unhindered by either the passage of time, or the ageing process.

As with many of O'Connor's speeches in *Nightwood*, the imagery of blood and death permeates 'Walking Mort' and, by implication, the 'As Cried' sequence. O'Connor's speech towards *Nightwood*'s conclusion, where he warns of love falling 'arse up', and foretells a dénouement full of anger, recriminations and crying, is similar to the nameless mort's appearance, prefiguring the poetic narrator's sense of bloody mortality.[52] At several junctures, O'Connor envisions himself as a 'tupenny-upright', the cheapest type of vagrant prostitute, descendant of the 'walking mort'. In his descriptions of this figure, O'Connor links her to the undead, a kind of Gothic zombie, strolling on a final 'rotten row' (p. 156). Inhabiting both Barnes's poetry and prose, such figures embody pastiche created from a range of places including chapbooks, Gothic literature and film and European expressionist cinema. Barnes uses such pastiche to question ideas of gender, desire, mortality and sexuality, continually revising her 'Gothic lovers' imagery. Often, the very objects of desire within her texts become questionable and insecure.

As with the 1923 film *Galerie des Monstres*, directed by Jaque Catalain, and starring, amongst others, Kiki of Montparnasse, Flossie Martin, Tylia and Bronia Perlmutter, Lois Moran, the dwarf *Le Tarare*, and Catalain himself, Barnes's use of both Gothic and expressionist tropes creates a kind of 'human circus'.[53] As Jane Marcus notes, Barnes's circus is almost prophetic, as those who people it, Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, cabaret and circus performers, were to represent Nazism's premier targets.[54] Some of Barnes's most Gothic images, such as that of Basquette, a legless beauty who wheeled herself around Paris on a board, were based on actual people, as Brassai's photographs testify.[55] Thus, Djuna Barnes's use of the Gothic is both unexpectedly varied, and prophetic, employing images and ideas from Gothic cinema, illustration and texts. If her human circus is peopled by the living, then it is also a necropolis stalked by the dead and undead, a modernist updating of Margaret Oliphant's 'beleaguered city', perhaps.[56] Both Barnes's Paris and Berlin, at times, take on aspects of a necropolis, and her somnambules, tupenny-uprights, and walking morts, embody types of vicious and undesirable eternities.

In later life, Barnes was often quoted as saying she believed she'd lived too long.[57] For those critics who insist that all the 'undead' figures created by her merely embody this personal agenda, the problematic fact remains that she created many of these images whilst still a young woman, and continued to work on them for the rest of her long life. Barnes's Gothic circus, a macabre meeting place for the dead and living, rarely embodies a single aesthetic, but implies unanswerable questions

connecting worlds which are long past with those which are current. Anyone considering 'The Doughboy', striding his no-man's-land with caustic gaze, could be drawn to the conclusion that this 'Frankenstein's monster' of a creation begins a chiefly post-war aesthetic, where the Gothic is used to both accuse and prophesy. The night-clubbers filling *Nightwood*'s necropolistic cities, are damned as they head towards fascism's terrors, the walking mort pays eternal witness to a 'hell' far worse than nineteenth-century vampire fiction could engender.

Notes

1. Djuna Barnes, 'Six Songs of Khalidine,' *A Book* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1923), pp. 145–6. Originally a *Bruno Chapbook* (New York: Bruno, 1915).
2. T. S. Eliot, 'Foreword' to Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), pp. 1–7. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
3. See Mary Lynne Broe (ed.), *Silence and Power: a Revaluation of Djuna Barnes* (Carbondale, 1991; the same volume, 'Writing the Grotesque Body: Djuna Barnes's Carnival Parody', pp. 81–91).
4. Barnes, *A Book*, pp. 145–6.
5. Ibid., p. 146.
6. See Andrew Field, *Djuna: the Formidable Miss Barnes* (Austen: University of Texas Press, 1985), pp. 103–4.
7. In Christopher Frayling, *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), illustration 12.
8. See Christine Issartel, *Les Dames Aux Camellias: de l'histoire à la légende* (Paris: Chêne Hachette, 1981), p. 42. John Nicholas (ed.), *Violetta and Her Sisters: the Lady of the Camellias, Responses to the Myth* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 94. The basis for much of the legends surrounding Dumas's 1848 novel is charted in Charles Dolph, *The Real 'Lady of the Camellias' and Other Women of Paris* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1927). See also Jan Marsh, *The Legend of Elizabeth Siddal* (London: Quarter, 1989).
9. Marsh, *The Legend of Elizabeth Siddal*, p. 4. Also, Frayling's book mentions both Polidori and Poe's images of the undead. An interesting account of Byron's exhumation can be discovered in David Crane, *Lord Byron's Jackal: a Life of Edward John Trelawney* (London: Harper Collins, 1988), p. 363.
10. Marsh, *Legend of Elizabeth Siddal*, pp. 127–55, Barnes, *A Book*, pp. 145–6.
11. See David Robinson and Dean Koontz, *Beautiful Death: the Art of the Cemetery* (New York: Penguin, 1996).
12. Bram Stoker, *Dracula: or The Undead* (1897) edited by Leonard Wolf as *The Essential Dracula* (Harmondsworth: Plume/Penguin, 1993).
13. Saints whose corpses or attributes 'bloomed' include Zita, Rose of Lima, Therese, Elizabeth of Hungary, Cecile and others. See Tom Morgan, *Saints: a Visual Almanac of the Virtuous, Pure, Praiseworthy and Good* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1994). Also see, Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), Ewa Kuryluk, *Salome and Judas in the Cave of Sex* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1987), and Elizabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body:*

Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

14. See Marsh, *Legend of Elizabeth Siddal*, pp. 56–7. Also, Djuna Barnes, 'Two Lyrics: She Passed This Way and The Flowering Corpse', *Vanity Fair* (20 March, 1923), p. 14.
15. Djuna Barnes, 'Two Lyrics'. Robert Graves, 'The Stake', *Poems 1914–26* (London: Heinemann, 1928), pp. 70–1.
16. Robert Graves, *Collected Poems* (London: Guild, 1986), pp. 36, 204. Edith Sitwell, 'Four in the Morning', *Selected Poems* (London: Duckworth, 1936), pp. 178–80.
17. Marsh, *Legend of Elizabeth Siddal*, pp. 50–79.
18. Field, *Djuna*, illustrated section.
19. Ibid., p. 103.
20. Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body*, pp. 39–43. See Meryl Secrest, *Between Me and Life: a Biography of Romaine Brooks* (New York: Macdonald and Jane's, 1974), illustrated section. The topic of the body caught in this limbo is also dealt with in Brooks's lover, Natalie Barney's novel *The One Who is Legion: or A.D.'s Afterlife* (London: Partridge, 1930).
21. Barnes, *A Book*, p. 179.
22. Field, *Djuna*, pp. 170–5.
23. Ibid.
24. Peter Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: Theosophy and the Emergence of the Western Guru* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1993); Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1989); Ronald Pearsall, *The Table Rappers* (London: Michael Joseph, 1973); Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn: a Documentary History of a Magical Order 1887–1923* (London: Aquarian, 1985).
25. Howe, *Magicians*, p. 295. A relic of this temple may have conceivably continued for longer, as did many Golden Dawn establishments.
26. Djuna Barnes, *Ladies Almanack* (Dijon: Darrantière, 1928). For the best account of Crosby's life and death see Geoffrey Wolfe, *Black Sun: the Brief Transit and Violent Eclipse of Harry Crosby* (New York: Random House, 1976).
27. W. Somerset Maugham, *The Magician* (London: Pan, 1978). This novel is set in Paris, and prefaced by an account of Maugham's impressions of Crowley.
28. Djuna Barnes, *I Could Never Be Lonely Without a Husband: Interviews by Djuna Barnes edited by Alyce Barry* (London: Virago, 1987), pp. 94–104, 125–35, 360–75.
29. Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*, pp. 48–61.
30. Genevieve Dorman, *Colette: a Passion for Life* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), pp. 148–9.
31. S. S. Prawer, *Caligari's Children: the Film as a Tale of Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 165–200.
32. Barnes, *Nightwood*, p. 60.
33. Prawer, *Caligari's Children*, p. 174, Barnes, *Nightwood*, p. 57.
34. Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon*, pp. 154, 175.
35. Barnes, *Nightwood*, p. 230.
36. Prawer, *Caligari's Children*, p. 166.
37. Ibid. See Charles Henry Ford and Tyler Parker, *The Young and Evil* (Paris: Obelisk, 1933).

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39. Tony Allan, *Paris: the Glamour Years, 1919–40* (London: Bison Books, 1977), pp. 65, 72, 92–3.
40. Kluver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, pp. 54–5, 90–1, 116–17.
41. Ibid., pp. 90–1. Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body*, pp. 206–7.
42. Kluver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, pp. 204–5.
43. Djuna Barnes, *Vagaries Malicieux: Two Stories by Djuna Barnes* (New York: Frank Hallman, 1974), pp. 5–28.
44. Julie Cuthbertson and Tom Randall, *Permanent Parisians: an Illustrated Guide to the Cemeteries of Paris* (London: Robson Books, 1986), p. 31.
45. Nancy J. Levine, 'Works in Progress: the Uncollected Poetry of Djuna Barnes' Patchin Place Period', *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* (Fall 1993), Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 187–200. See also Djuna Barnes, 'Walking Mort', *New Yorker* (15 May 1971), p. 34.
46. Ibid.
47. Field, *Djuna*, pp. 241–2; Levine, 'Works in Progress', p. 190.
48. Ibid., p. 196.
49. Eric Partridge, *The Wordsworth Dictionary of the Underworld* (1950) (London: Wordsworth, 1995), p. 759. The influence of Barnes's collection can be perceived in most of her works, plus her additions to the *avant-garde* cookbook, *The Gourmet's Almanac*, ed. Allan Ross MacDougal (London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1931).
50. Levine, 'Works in Progress', p. 196.
51. Partridge, *Wordsworth Dictionary*, p. 759.
52. Barnes, *Nightwood*, p. 233; Barnes, 'Walking Mort', p. 34.
53. Kluver and Martin, *Kiki's Paris*, pp. 128–9. This imagery was also explored by Hollywood, in Todd Browning's hardly mainstream horror film *Freaks* (1932).
54. Jane Marcus, 'Laughing at Leviticus: *Nightwood* as a Woman's Circus Epic', in Broe, *Silence and Power*, pp. 221–50. The Nazis regarded cabaret, dadaist happenings, and puppetry as degenerate; neverthless, puppeteers continued with their 'daisy shows' (growing in spite of fascism), and cabaret persisted throughout the Nazi occupation of Paris.
55. Brassaï, *The Secret Paris of the Twenties and Thirties* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 53.
56. Margaret Oliphant, *The Beleaguered City* (London: Macmillan, 1888). In this novel, a city of the living is plagued by its former dead occupants.
57. See Hank O'Neal, *Life is Painful, Nasty, and Short . . . In My Case it has Only Been Painful and Nasty: Djuna Barnes, an Informal Memoir* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), pp. 33–4.

7

'The stern task of living': *Dubliners*, Clerks, Money and Modernism

Jeff Wallace

> It is hard enough by giving lessons all day to keep body and soul together in Paris; and how you can expect to do that, and at the same time qualify as a doctor, passes my comprehension.
>
> William Archer, letter to James Joyce, 25 November 1902[1]

> I am an English teacher here in a Berlitz School. I have been here for sixteen months during which I have achieved the delicate task of living and supporting two other trusting souls on a salary of £80 a year.
>
> James Joyce, letter (from Trieste) to Grant Richards, 28 February 1906[2]

> My home was simply a middle-class affair ruined by spendthrift habits which I have inherited. My mother was slowly killed, I think, by my father's ill-treatment, by years of trouble, and by my cynical frankness of conduct. When I looked on her face as she lay in the coffin – a face grey and wasted with cancer – I understood that I was looking on the face of a victim, and I cursed the system which had made her a victim.
>
> James Joyce, letter to Nora Barnacle, 29 August 1904[3]

In the *Dubliners* story 'Two Gallants', Lenehan presents an enigma: 'No one knew how he achieved the stern task of living.'[4] James Joyce himself knew enough, it seems, about the 'stern' or 'delicate' task of keeping body and soul together. By 1904, the year Joyce met Nora Barnacle, the rapid financial decline of John Joyce's family had led them from independent propertied income to the virtual poverty of 7 St Peter's Terrace, Dublin, where the cramped space was occupied

by the recently-widowed father and his nine children. When Oliver Gogarty inquired about the illness which had caused his friend's disappearance for two days, Joyce cited 'inanition'.[5] The procurement of money through ingenuity and stealth, coupled with 'a remarkable capacity to fall from every slight foothold, to teeter over every available precipice',[6] becomes the keynote of Joyce's early adulthood and beyond. He writes, in his first letter to Nora, of his home as 'simply a middle-class affair ruined by spendthrift habits which I have inherited'. Relating the tale of one of Joyce's failed financial strategems, Richard Ellmann observes that 'he had almost as much trouble finding a shilling' as finding the £2000 he at that time (1903) sought to establish a socialistic literary newspaper entitled *The Goblin*.[7] The association of Joyce, money and cunning is secured in the comment which will now forever accompany Constantine Curran's photograph of his friend as an impish, slightly brazen 22-year-old. What had he been thinking at the time? – 'I was wondering would he lend me five shillings.'[8]

Like most of the stories in *Dubliners* (1914), 'Two Gallants' involves 'poverty of purse', the desperate struggle to procure money and material sustenance. The potent image of Lenehan, scraping together the twopence-halfpenny necessary for his seedy lunch of a plate of peas and a bottle of ginger beer, is a scene to which I will return later in this essay. The closing image of the story, the small gold coin shining in Corley's palm, has been read as 'the major obscenity of the book'.[9] However, as this observation begins to suggest, the material dimension of the Lenehan emigma is overlaid by moral or even ontological considerations. What kind of living creature is Lenehan? Is his life not, in fact, a kind of death? Once the waves of amused, 'twinkling' enjoyment at Corley's monologue have passed, Lenehan's face has 'a ravaged look'; his hair is 'scant and grey', his voice 'winnowed of vigour' (pp. 47–8). He is a 'leech' and a 'sporting vagrant . . . ', 'adroit' and 'eloquent', yet 'insensitive to all kinds of discourtesy'. In the shop, he must adjust in order to 'appear natural' to the nearby mechanic and work-girls, blurring the edges of his evident gentility. His ghostly emptiness recalls the 'vacancy' of his friends, or the fact that he 'could see nothing' in Corley's face. Plagued by hunger as he wanders the Dublin streets in order to 'pass the hours' until the rendezvous with Corley, Lenehan is clearly a variant on the *flâneur*, subject of restless anomie, a new yet unmistakable cultural and sociological type.[10] Whilst showing residual traces of the higher social status of the original Baudelairean model, his poverty keeps him locked into the circuits of bare survival. This tension between cultural capital and material impoverishment is captured,

with perfect discursive economy, in the matter of Lenehan's biscuits: scrounged earlier that morning from 'two grudging curates' as an improvised breakfast, they resurface in a phrase of affected, aestheticised sycophancy: ' "That takes the solitary, unique, and, if I may so call it, *récherché* biscuit!" ' (p. 48).

In the present essay, I want to trace some connections between the representation of this particular sociological type, and the apparatuses of the Gothic, in *Dubliners*, at the same time placing Joyce's stories in comparative relation with other instances of literary modernism. In the words of an early reviewer, Joyce was concerned in *Dubliners* only with those who 'would be submerged if the tide of material difficulties were to rise a little higher'.[11] This translates into a focus on the figure of the office clerk, the 'professional common denominator' of *Dubliners*, with 'eminent claims of respectability but often with only a tenuous hold on economic solvency'.[12] This 'tenuous hold', so characteristic of Joyce's own experience, cannot, I will argue, be divorced from certain more fundamental questions about the functional and symbolic status of money and its circulation, and its relation to the vexed question of keeping 'body and soul' together, in the *Dubliners* stories. The Gothic mode is tied to these concerns: issues of economy, circulation, calculation and ingenuity are integral to Joyce's ghostly tales. However, I want to suggest that Joyce's famous diagnosis of the 'paralysis' or 'corruption' of modern Dublin is only partly explicable in terms of a Marxian critique of the dehumanising, 'vampiric' propensities of capital. The specific post-colonial context of Ireland necessitates this distancing, as I hope to suggest in my closing commentary on what the economies of Samuel Beckett's *Murphy* (1938) might owe to Joyce.[13]

'The clerk' became a figure of macabre fascination for modernists of the Bloomsbury variety. The burgeoning of international monopoly capitalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made the metropolis a place where the clerk, that indispensable unit of the new bureaucratic and consumerist phase, and the *avant garde* artist could, in theory, coincide. Mirroring the paradoxical structure of Freud's 'uncanny', the clerk became at once deeply familiar and beguilingly strange; modernists expressed bewilderment at the sheer anonymity of the new urban multitudes, and at what individual life might be like, or even in what sense it was at all possible, in such circumstances. Automatism and predictability, yet abiding estrangement, are figured, though mock-heroic verse and the foreknowledge possessed by Tiresias, in *The Waste Land*'s 'small house agent's clerk' and his encounter with the typist. Similarly, in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), Septimus Smith, who had

been a clerk at Sibleys and Arrowsmiths before the war, is both wearily known and essentially unknowable.[14] 'To look at, he might have been a clerk, but of the better sort'; the narrative gaze can identify subtle gradations of clerkship, within an overarching, general morass of anonymity: 'London has swallowed up many millions of young men named Smith ...', all of them having 'experiences' (the narrative's vagueness is complicitous at this point) in their lodgings off the Euston Road (p. 92). Yet Septimus is 'a border case, neither one thing nor the other'; there is a bland socio-economic explanation for this condition (he 'might end with a house at Purley and a motor car', or remain 'one of those half-educated, self-educated men whose education is all learnt from books borrowed from public libraries' [p. 92]), but also an altogether more troubling liminality, poised between sanity and insanity, life and death. Highly imaginatively alert and attuned to his surroundings, we know that Septimus too, like Lenehan, inhabits a kind of living death.

Woolf perhaps derived the lineaments of her representation of the clerk (the generalising habit, the bewildered fascination) from the Leonard Bast of E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910), itself a 'border case' of a novel, poised uncertainly between the Victorian and the modern(ist).[15] When, two years after his initial encounter with the Schlegels, Leonard reappears as a clerk in the Porphyrion Fire Insurance Company, he has 'already the mournful eyes above a drooping moustache that are so common in London, and that haunt some streets of the city like accusing presences' (p. 122). Like Septimus, Leonard is in limbo, his very existence an enigma or 'haunting': 'one of the thousands who have lost the life of the body and failed to reach the life of the spirit'. Margaret 'knew this type very well – the vague aspirations, the mental dishonesty, the familiarity with the outsides of books'; yet Leonard is a reminder of the 'goblin footfall', a supernatural intimation of the 'abyss' which lay below the 'superstructures of wealth and art' (p. 57). As with Septimus, the fact that Leonard is nondescript, 'neither one thing nor the other', becomes the basis of a fugitive and subversive vitality, which can only be perpetuated through absence, or death. The phantasmic, hallucinatory nature of Leonard's murder confirms a sense that he was only ever alive in a scarcely knowable way, and that his ghostly influence must continue invisibly, or in absentia, in the form of his child with Helen. The ingenuity of *Howards End* is to incorporate a reflexive awareness of its complicity with the upper-middle-class spectralisation of Leonard – in other words, a spectralisation which it perpetuates, and at the same time constructs a persuasive materialist analysis of.[16] Not only are the very poor provocatively labelled

'unthinkable', Leonard thus scraping into the realms of the thinkable because of his position 'at the extreme verge of gentility'; but, through the astuteness of Margaret Schlegel, Forster demonstrates a thorough awareness of the 'islands of money', and thus the functional economic necessity of clerks, underpinning bourgeois culture. The psychology of Bast, unable to appreciate Beethoven or properly read the Ruskinian sentence because of the intrusion of economic necessity, reinforces Margaret's materialist analysis: 'independent thoughts are in nine cases out of ten the result of independent means' (p. 134). Significantly, then, Margaret must intervene when Bast is dematerialised, at her dinner-party-cum-discussion club, into 'Mr Bast', the subject of earnest, New Liberal, 'Condition of England' debate about social problems. Countering various proposals of indirect state philanthropy, whereby 'he might be given anything and everything so long as it was not the money itself', Margaret insists, quite simply, that Bast must be given money. What would it profit Mr Bast if he gained the whole world and lost his own soul? 'She answered, Nothing, but he would not gain his soul until he had gained a little of the world.'

The theme of living death pervading *Dubliners* can be linked, then, to the generalised ghostliness of bourgeois societies. The unrealised potential of lives in such societies is to be found in the Ibsen whom Joyce so deeply admired.[17] Equally, historians of Gothic literature have consistently drawn attention to the rise of Gothic as a complex response to the 'emergence of a middle-class-dominated capitalist economy'.[18] Punter, drawing on Lucien Goldmann, underlines the essentially mystificatory nature of a *laissez-faire* economy for the majority of the population: encouraging a radical individualism, the system nevertheless vaunted the rationality of economic laws whose logic lay beyond the individual subject, imposing inevitable and painful constraints on self-development. The Gothic, argues Maggie Kilgour, thus offers a 'nightmare vision' of fragmented individualism, 'dissolved into predatory and demonic relations which cannot be reconciled into a healthy social order'.[19] Chris Baldick's lucid reading of Gothic discourse in Marx highlights the intrinsically 'vampiric', draining or repressive nature of capital, revealing the bourgeoisie as a 'haunted, *possessed* class', its vitality drained by a feverish, uncontrolled craving for surplus value. This class can, however, only accumulate its dead labour, never spend or squander – a true 'rule of the dead over the living'.[20]

Franco Moretti has offered a more precise historicisation of Joyce's work in relation to capitalism.[21] He invokes Karl Polanyi's conception of the decline of the 'self-regulating market' in the period of Liberal

crisis leading up to the Great War, highlighting the fundamental inability of the British economy to disengage itself from earlier modes of industrialism and to develop those forms of systematic management which characterised the growing economies of Germany and the USA. British capitalism was now 'suffocated' by its previous strengths; in Lenin's terms, the 'putrefaction' of English capitalism was expressed in its gradual diversion of resources from productive activity to consumption. *Ulysses* emerges as the elaborate image of such decadence. Moretti adopts Alick West's thesis that in *Ulysses*, social relationships exist only in the framework of consumption – 'there is no sign of the productive activity without which none of this could happen . . . there is not a worker in the book' (p. 188) – but with crucial modifications. First, consumption occurs only at the level of mere survival, 'eating and drinking', otherwise demonstrating 'the *unsatisfied* aspiration to consumption, especially in Bloom'. Second, it is not that Joyce is unaware of productive activity, as West implies, but that he chooses to present a critical caricature of 'the only society imaginable' (p. 189). As Terry Eagleton later puts it, 'This "neverchanging everchanging" world, as *Ulysses* has it, is one in which space seems both fragmentary and homogeneous; and this is the appropriate space of the commodity, the fragment of matter which levels all phenomena to a common identity.'[22]

However, while *Ulysses* acts as a formal and stylistic embodiment of this critical juncture, the Gothic tales of *Dubliners* are, I would argue, equally engaged, if not more explicitly preoccupied, with the nature of work, productivity, remuneration and the 'stern task of living'. At least two of the *Dubliners* stories, 'After the Race' and 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room', suggest that the 'special odour of corruption' pervading the volume as a whole could be viewed from the specific perspective of the workings of international capital. Capital lies always elsewhere, in advanced European economies or in the British state whose economic stranglehold helped define Irish paralysis; Dublin, by contrast, has only 'money', though not enough of it at that.[23] Picking up on this distinction, I now want to look more closely at the relationship between money and the ghostly processes at work in Joyce's stories. For the purposes of this analysis, I want to turn for theoretical illustration from Marx's study of the philosophy of capital to the clearly related, yet curiously autonomous, ideas of the sociologist Georg Simmel, in his major work *The Philosophy of Money* (*PM*; first edition 1900) and his influential essay 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' ('MML', 1903).[24]

The history of money reveals the gradual coalescence of a central structuring contradiction by which it is construed as both substance and ethereal, embodied and bodiless. Corley's gold coin is an abstraction, a symbol of value and a promise of power and acquisitions yet to be realised; but it is also a palpable, weighty unit of immanent value – 'gold'. The *Dubliners* stories continually revisit the sensuality and physical manipulation of money, held tight like the florin in the hand of the boy who, after 'Araby' and the profitless decomposition of his spending capacity, 'allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence' in his pocket (pp. 32–3). Gabriel Conroy takes 'a coin rapidly from his pocket' and thrusts it into Lily's hands, as if in recompense for the fact that ' "The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you" ' (in other words, in recompense for Corleys and Lenehans). Eveline Hill holds her black leather purse 'tightly in her hand' as she does the Saturday shopping, and Maria gazes fondly on the purse which contains 'two half-crowns and some coppers' (pp. 97–8). When Farrington finally gets his hands on the cash, he joyfully makes 'a little cylinder of the coins between his thumb and fingers' (p. 90).

Money thus fetishised as precious metal, substance, thus helps to mask the purely symbolic function for which coinage was invented. From the beginning, as a medium through which use value becomes exchange value, or objects become commodities, money is abstraction, an insubstantial substance; it symbolises 'concrete values', argues Simmel, yet 'is involved in the general development which in every domain of life and in every sense strives to dissolve substance into free-floating processes' (*PM*, p. 168). The subsequent history of what Catherine Gallagher has called money's 'attempted disappearing act' only confirms the initial logic of ghostly disembodiments: 'from coins to paper to blips on computer screens', we witness a series of '*de*materializations of the signifier', it being in the nature of signifying systems to 'minimise the problematic materiality of the signifier'.[25]

Also, from its inception, money has been associated with threats to the integrity or authenticity of the human. As Marc Shell illustrates, the introduction of coinage in Greek culture provoked immediate concerns that the money economy would infiltrate the structures and processes of human thought.[26] For Simmel, the 'essentially intellectualistic character of the mental life of the metropolis' stands in 'the closest relationship' to the money economy:

> They have in common a purely matter-of-fact attitude in the treatment of persons and things in which a formal justice is often combined

> with an unrelenting hardness. The purely intellectualistic person is indifferent to all things personal because, out of them, relationships and reactions develop which are not to be completely understood by rational methods – just as the unique element in events never enters into the principle of money. Money is concerned only with what is common to all, i.e., with the exchange value which reduces all quality and individuality to a purely quantitative level.
>
> ('MML', p. 53)

The principal feature of the modern metropolitan mind is calculation, the money economy filling 'the daily life of so many people with weighing, calculating, enumerating and the reduction of qualitative values to quantitative terms' ('MML', p. 53). Language, 'with fine instinctive subtle insight', pinpoints the inexorable link between money and fragmented individualism in 'interpreting a "calculating" person as one who "calculates" in an *egoistic* sense' (*PM*, p. 444). At the same time, money ensures the ghostly, 'hollow' and 'valueless' nature of this modern subjectivity:

> To the extent that money, with its colorlessness and its indifferent quality, can become a common denominator of all values it becomes the frightful leveller – it hollows out the core of things, their peculiarities, their specific values and their uniqueness and incomparability in a way which is beyond repair. [. . .] We see that the self-preservation of certain types of personalities is obtained at the cost of devaluing the entire objective world, ending inevitably in dragging the personality downward into a feeling of its own valuelessness.
>
> ('MML', p. 55)

Joyce was felt to have produced an almost libellous picture of cold cynicism in his fellow Dubliners. Pointing to the consistent absence of love, compassion and empathy in the stories, Phillip F. Herring maintains that this has 'little to do with mystery or uncertainty, but everything to do with privation'.[27] Corley's elaborate strategems for extracting sex and money from 'tarts' may produce, as Benstock suggests, the book's nadir, but the principles of commodification and calculation are pervasive, heavily informing its sense of a bleak automatism in human relations, borne out of economic necessity. There is, for example, the exploitation and selling of daughters by mothers. Mrs Mooney, 'a woman who was quite able to keep things to herself', extracts fifteeen shillings a week from her resident population

of clerks, '(beer or stout at dinner excluded)' (p. 60). Her 'firm' and 'cunning' economies involve keeping the sugar and butter 'safe under lock and key' yet giving her daughter, Polly, 'the run of the young men', none of whom seems to mean 'business' until developments with Bob Doran are observed. The story is unequivocal about the depth of Mrs Mooney's calculation, as she 'reconstructs' an interview with Polly in which the tortuous routes of her strategy are made syntactically evident. Time has been internalised as a commodity; she glances 'instinctively' at the clock and knows that, at 11.17 a.m., she still has time to confront Doran before catching 'short twelve' at Marlborough Street. Weighing up the chances, as her clerks weigh up favourites and outsiders, she is 'sure she would win'. Some mothers, she reflects, would be content to cover their daughters' disgrace with 'a sum of money'; the preferred 'reparation', marriage, only emphasises her thoroughly materialistic conception of the latter. With the knowledge that Doran has 'a good screw' and 'a bit of stuff put by', Mrs Mooney's feeble gesture towards a genteel disdain of base coinage is decisively put to rest. By comparison, a few notches up the scale of gentility, Mrs Kearney's determination to 'take advantage of her daughter's name', to exploit her cultural capital through the Irish Revival, brings her precisely to the point of an ignominious squabble with 'Hoppy' Holohan over pounds and shillings. 'A Mother' stages a subtle, pointed confrontation between bourgeois financial preoccupations which are masked by the conventions of professionalism and gentility – the drawing up of a contract, the importance of remaining 'ladylike' – and the dubious strategems of our more familiar Dublin denizens. Holohan thus mischievously calls Mrs Kearney's conduct into question as she is left insisting that Kathleen would not perform until she gets 'four pounds eight into her hand' (p. 146).

The transaction or financial arrangement of marriage is, both stories suggest, precariously subject to chance: Mrs Mooney has escaped from her husband's violent dissipation, while the 'sober, thrifty and pious' Mr Kearney has proved a 'model father' in providing for his daughters. Eveline Hill must therefore 'weigh each side of the question' with minute calculation before deciding on life in Buenos Ayres with Frank. She 'wanted to live', but has 'food and shelter' at home, as well as the injunction bequeathed by her dying mother to 'keep the home together as long as she could' (p. 37), reminding us of Stephen Dedalus's response to his mother's haunting: '"let me be and let me live!"' The price of home and family, whether in the role of daughter or wife, is the impossibility of economic independence: Eveline surrenders the whole

of her seven shillings wage to her father, who accuses her of 'squandering' it and of having 'no head', though he takes his drinking money before returning the remainder for her 'marketing'. At least for Maria, in 'Clay', where the impossibility of marriage becomes the basis of the story's cruel trick, there is the sense of 'how much better it was to be independent and to have your own money in your pocket' (p. 99). Again, however, Maria has been and continues to be a surrogate mother, and is hence locked into the calculation which comes of nurturing: she 'arrange(s) in her mind all she is going to do' on the evening in question, temporally and economically. The absent-minded loss of the plumcake quickly becomes the pain of 'throwing away' two and fourpence, at which 'she nearly cried outright' (p. 101).

The 'scrupulous meanness' of style and close-knit narrative economies of the *Dubliners* stories embody a sense of automatic, endlessly repetitive cycles of relationship between the sexes. While women's ingenuities are channelled into modes of preservation, Joyce's male clerks are assessed in terms of resistance to domestic calculation – in other words, to the possibility of expenditure or dissipation. Doran, a wine-merchant's clerk at the industrious end of the spectrum, lives a regular life for 'nine-tenths of the year', and the warning voice of his instinct – 'Once you are married you are done for' – seems vindicated by the experience of Tommy Chandler, a 'neat modest' clerk at the King's Inns, in 'A Little Cloud'. Confronted by Gallaher's patronising generosity, and his intention to marry only 'money', Chandler reflects on the domestic meannesses which extend from mere economic necessity to a certain attitude to life. Annie's 'cold', ladylike primness is encapsulated in the painful memory of the blue summer blouse which he bought for her, its reception marred by her reaction: 'when she heard the price she threw the blouse on the table and said it was a regular swindle to charge ten and elevenpence for it' (p. 80). Bast-like, Chandler fantasises escape through culture, poetry, but his drinking session with Gallaher, however reluctant, together with the final anger at the child ('He was a prisoner for life'), aligns him with a pattern to be discerned at the other end of the spectrum. In escaping from the closed domestic economy which soaks up all available cash and allows neither saving nor dissipation, Joyce's clerks equally lock themselves into a bleakly familiar cycle: from money, to drinking, to violence.

'It is significant', writes Georg Simmel, 'that we term money in circulation "liquid" money: like a liquid it lacks internal limits and and accepts without resistance external limits that are offered by any solid surroundings' (*PM*, p. 495). Joyce showed himself aware of one specific

version of this liquidity in popular discourse when he referred to the drinking habits of the father-in-law, a baker, he never met: 'Papa drank all the buns and loaves like a man.'[28] 'Drinking money', a common phrase, can suggest, by a slight shift of syllabic stress – 'drinking *mon*ey' – a strange, direct transubstantiation of money into corporeal form. Maud Ellmann, writing of the circulation of money in Stoker's *Dracula*, notes Goethe's description of money as ghostly, in that it 'has no stable body of its own but is constantly reincarnated in the bodies of commodities'.[29] Consumer and commodity are thus fused in the body of, for example, the commercial traveller Kernan in 'Grace'; while his family are 'waiting for him to come home with the money', he is already returning it to circulation, albeit at the temporary expense of his consciousness.

Joyce's most sustained treatment of this cycle of masculine behaviour is through the psychology of Farrington in 'Counterparts'. The beating administered to his son at the end of the story is anticipated in an opening sense of simmering violence. Compounded in Farrington's alienation are the repression and alienation of his work as a copying clerk, figured in his paralysis at the defamiliarised phrase *Bernard Bodley be*, and personal antagonism towards Alleyne, whose symbolic function, Trevor L. Williams argues, is 'to remind Dubliners of their dependence upon outside agencies and to mock (since he has all the power) their recourse to a bankrupt discourse (Farrington's "witty" response) as a mode of resistance'.[30] Farrington 'felt strong enough to clear out the whole office single-handed. His body ached to do something, to rush out and revel in violence. All the indignities of his life enraged him' (p. 88). His essential weakness, it seems, lies in the compulsion to repeat a drinking ritual which is also, simultaneously, a ritual of expenditure. 'The dark damp night was coming and he longed to spend it in the bars'; finding security in his fifth visit to 'the dark snug of O'Neill's shop', the drink is a swift and straight transaction. His powers of calculation and ingenuity almost exhausted – 'he must get money somewhere or other' – the pawn-shop saves him. The progress of Farrington's evening of pleasure is then a close intertwining of alchohol and expenditure, or of drinking money. The narrative focuses in obsessive detail on the economics of the round – who entered and left and at which points, who stood drinks and what kind of drinks, which drinking houses are visited – until Farrington's awareness that the newcomer Weathers is a 'sponge' prefigures the public confirmation of his own weakness in the arm-wrestling bout. Returning with twopence in his pocket, Farrington senses merely dissipation and impotence without

even having achieved the goal of getting drunk. The hollow circularity of his life is confirmed, not only with the violence to his child, but also with his recourse to a mimicry which re-echoes the 'bankrupt' resistance to Alleyne.

The haunted quality of Joyce's *Dubliners* thus has much to do with the 'corruption' of the money economy and the hollowed subjectivities which are an image of the ghostly, dematerialised substance of money itself. There remains, however, in the final section of this essay, a further question to ask of this deployment of the Gothic – a question about the critique it seems to serve. Prevalent in other versions of Gothic modernism is the diagnosis of a failure of life, the signalling of lack or absence. There is 'not the least doubt' that Bast is 'inferior' to rich people in health, intelligence and general lovability (p. 58); despite the intriguing fugitive vitality, a little money and high culture in the right conditions would not go amiss. Conversely, D. H. Lawrence's analysis of the pervasive spectrality of the modern – 'We, dear reader, you and I, we were born corpses, and we are corpses . . . (O)ur world is a wide tomb full of ghosts, replicas'[31] – is precisely related to the possession of money, and an idealised ethic of self-preservation, which prevents us from inhabiting, and experiencing ourselves as, living bodies. 'Our last wall', writes Lawrence, 'is the golden wall of money. This is the fatal wall. It cuts us off from life, from vitality, from the alive sun and the alive earth, as *nothing* can.'[32]

Yet the moralities implicit in either Bloomsbury culturalism or Lawrentian vitalism are alien to *Dubliners*. It may be that in the young Joyce's cursing of 'the system' which killed his mother there is the common currency of the 'socialistic artist'[33] and, as I have tried to show, the *Dubliners* stories can be wedded to a radical critique of this kind. But it is much more difficult to trace any proposition of an originary 'other' or metaphysical presence, any 'life', which money is thenceforth held to contaminate. We cannot, for example, hold the stories to the view that we would be more authentically alive were it not for money, or that those who have money can only live less vividly. On the contrary, in an essay on *Ulysses* of some significance here, Maud Ellmann discusses Joyce's response to what she calls *vivocentrism*, 'the fiercest and perhaps the founding bigotry of all'. 'What could be blinder', argues Ellmann, 'than refusing to believe in ghosts? Our ghost-free civilization depends upon the myth that presence is superior to absence, and that absence is a lack of presence rather than an independent power'.[34] Terry Castle's account of the invention of the uncanny in eighteenth-century culture supports this claim, though somewhat

paradoxically.[35] Why is it, Castle asks, that a supernaturalisation of the mind and the everyday, typified by writers such as Radcliffe, arises precisely at the moment of the decline of traditional supernatural belief and the ascendancy of the principles of rationality and *laissez-faire*? The answer lies in a vivocentrism so idealised that it could not accept death and the frailties of the body, instead spinning ironically into a 'growing dissociation from corporeal reality' (p. 129). A 'new and unprecedented antipathy towards death in all its aspects' coincides with a growing spectralisation of the other in modern societies, a sense of the ghostliness of other people as a reality more palpable than that of material being. 'The terrible irony – indeed the pathology – of the romantic vision', writes Castle, 'is that even as people come to hold a fascinating eminence in the mind, they cease to matter as individuals in the flesh' (p. 136).

The ghosts Ellmann finds in Joyce are not these spiritual essences bespeaking the denial of mortality, but demystifications of life and presence, the 'independent power' of absence depending precisely on the fact that a material body *has been* but *is* no longer. The fact of death becomes a way of reassessing life, freeing our evaluations from romanticised, vitalistic criteria. This, I would argue, applies as much to *Dubliners* as to *Ulysses*: 'That the dead do not stay buried is, in fact, a theme of Joyce from the beginning to the end of his work'.[36] *Dubliners* was written in an era in which conceptions of life and health seemed to have been corralled by discourses of political reaction: eugenics, sexology, racial science. Perversely then, Joyce's intimate and unmoralised account of the closed economies of Dublin lives is as much about the stern task of dying as of living; his most significant ally, in opposing reactionary and undialectical discourses of 'life', was Freud's theorisation of thanatos, the death-drive which represents not just the tendency of all organisms towards inertia, but the determination to exist in order to fashion one's own death. As Steven Connor argues, Freud did not place the death-drive in simple opposition to the life-instincts: 'Rather, its function is to bind and control excitations, in order that the individual can pass through life, taking "ever more complicated detours" on the way to death, experiencing difference in order to bend it back towards death'.[37]

In the obsessive concern of the *Dubliners* stories with money and calculation in the lives of those suspended precariously above the abyss, whose ghostly existence is an enigma; in the absence of a scale of morality against which 'life' might be calibrated; and in the 'scrupulous meanness' of their style, a challenge is laid down. Are we automata?

Are we compelled to set aside 'higher' human motives in order to scrape for survival through the exercise of stealth and cunning – selling our daughters or our countries, deceiving our families, tricking employers and coldly rejecting lovers who later perish? Does not this condition of instability or emptiness, liquidity or hollowness, in fact mirror the conditions of the money and commodities we are obliged to pursue? Let us, then, embrace and explore this condition, understand our automatism, revealing 'the system' as it exists in us, but also the persistence of those elaborate strategies, the 'ever more complicated detours', by which we attempt to lay hold of our living and dying. The fruits of this challenge are evident in a late, transitional text of Irish modernism, Samuel Beckett's *Murphy*, from which, in conclusion, I offer a brief illustration.

Life, health and presence for Murphy are certainly not all they are cracked up to be. Tethered to his chair, 'curtained off from the sun', Murphy strives to gain something of his mentor Neary's 'Apmonia', an ability to place the heart in a state of suspension or balance which enables 'dead sleeps'. The influence of Neary's tractate, *The Doctrine of the Limit*, is everywhere apparent in ideas of life as a closed circuit or economy: as Neary puts it, 'what I make on the swings of Miss Counihan, I lose on the roundabouts of the non-Miss Counihan' (p. 37). Whilst regular employment is incompatible with Murphy's desired state of poised inactivity, he is compelled into job-seeking by the importunities of Celia. The novel here revisits the daily ritual of the lunch, as it had been performed for example by Lenehan, or by James Duffy ('a bottle of lager beer and a small trayful of arrowroot biscuits' [p. 106]). Murphy demonstrates his powers of calculation and subterfuge through the fourpenny lunch, a cup of tea and a packet of assorted biscuits, as it consistently expands in value to the tune of 0.83 cups of tea. By appealing for China rather than Indian (or, presumably, vice versa), and then by complaining of an excess of milk, Murphy 'defrauds a vested interest' on a daily basis.

> The sum involved was small, something between a penny and twopence (on the retail valuation). But then he had only fourpence worth of confidence to play with. His attitude simply was, that if a swindle of from twenty-five to fifty percent of the outlay, and effected while you wait, was not a case of the large returns and quick turnover indicated by Suk, then there was a serious flaw somewhere in his theory of sharp practice. But no matter how the transaction was judged from the economic point of view, nothing could detract

> from its merit as a little triumph of tactics in the face of the most fearful odds.
>
> (p. 50)

Later in this particular lunchbreak, Murphy profits further, to the tune of a penny, when he is recompensed by Miss Dew after her dachshund, Nelly, consumes his biscuits. Just as Murphy's daily lunch is an exercise 'vitiated by no base thoughts of nutrition', Miss Dew's futile attempts to feed lettuce to the Hyde Park sheep similarly highlight a scepticism towards romanticised vivocentrism, and issue a reminder of the tenuous, enigmatic status of bodily existence: too weak even to back away from the approaching Miss Dew and her lettuce, the sheep 'simply stood, in an attitude of profound dejection, their heads bowed, swaying slightly, as if dazed' (p. 59).

Steven Connor has noted the crucial role of repetition in Beckett's work, as a means of exploring the implications of death-in-life and life-in-death; he thus also draws attention to the intimate relationship in Beckett between repetition and originality. Following Freud, Beckett does not simply set repetition and the death-instinct against the pleasure principle, but 'enfolds' the pleasure principle within them, 'affirming life at the moment of death, openness within the jaws of closure' (p. 10). Repetition might be impossible without some prior, original material; but originality is equally impossible without repetition, as pure repetition is itself impossible, and must always involve the production of difference, however small. *Murphy* is 'not just a grimly self-annulling anti-novel', but combines parsimony and closed economy with linguistic excess, a register 'lying somewhere between the summing-up of an exceptionally profuse and opinionated High Court judge and a philosophical dissertation of more than usual barrenness' (p. 23). What Connor implies but neglects to identify outright here is the exuberant deadpan comedy of Beckett's post-humanism – a re-working, I would argue, of a Joycean legacy which was able, both to utilise the critical potential of the Gothic as Marx and Simmel deployed it, and at the same time to celebrate the subversive potential of those ghostly lives locked into the closed economic circuits of the struggle for survival. In this light, Eagleton's observation on the aesthetics of Joyce and Beckett calls for some modification. Modern Dublin may have leapt from the cultural margin to the centre because 'the life-rhythms of such a parochial spot, with its set routines, recurrent habits and sense of inert enclosure, are coming to seem exemplary of the shrunken, self-sustaining, repetitive sphere of monopoly capitalism itself'.[38] But the analogy or repetition is

never exact, and the element of difference prises open a space, within which the possibility of some measure of influence over one's own death-in-life, some assertion of desire, can be dimly perceived. It has been said that Joyce's citizens 'circulate to no purpose'.[39] But then what purpose, other than circulation and the renewal of desire it brings, might there be?

Notes

1. Quoted in Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 113.
2. Richard Ellmann (ed.), *The Letters of James Joyce, Vol. II* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 131.
3. Ibid., p. 48.
4. James Joyce, *Dubliners* (1914; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 48. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
5. Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 148. For the financial decline of the Joyce family, see also Brenda Maddox, *Nora: a Biography of Nora Joyce* (London: Minerva, 1989), pp. 48–9.
6. Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 264.
7. Ibid., pp. 146–7.
8. Ibid., plate IV.
9. Bernard Benstock, *Narrative Con/Texts in 'Dubliners'* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 105.
10. See e.g. Keith Tester (ed.), *The Flâneur* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).
11. Unsigned review, *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 June 1914, in Robert H. Deming (ed.), *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage, Vol. I, 1902–1927* (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 60.
12. Benstock, *Narrative Con/Texts in 'Dubliners'*, p. 87.
13. Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (1938; London: John Calder, 1977). All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
14. Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992). All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
15. E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (1910; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980). All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
16. Terry Eagleton insists on seeing this strategy as part of liberal humanist ideology. 'A novelist like E. M. Forster is perfectly capable of discerning something of the exploitative conditions on which his own liberal humanism rests, without thereby ceasing to be a liberal humanist. Indeed a guilt-stricken insight into the sources of his own privilege is *part* of his middle-class liberalism; a true liberal must be liberal enough to suspect his own liberalism.' Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: an Introduction* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), p. 61.
17. James R. Baker, 'Ibsen, Joyce and the Living-Dead', in James R. Baker and Thomas F. Staley (eds), *James Joyce's Dubliners: a Critical Handbook* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company Inc., 1969), pp. 62–71.

18. David Punter, *The Literature of Terror, Volume 1: The Gothic Tradition* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), p. 112.
19. Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 12.
20. Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 127–9.
21. Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Literary Forms* (London: Verso, 1983). All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
22. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 318.
23. See e.g. James Fairhall, 'Big-Power Politics and Colonial Economics: the Gordon Bennett Cup Race and "After the Race"', *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Winter 1991), pp. 387–97. Fairhall's research enables us to trace a common source for these stories: the expected coincidence (which did not, in the end, occur) of the official visit of Edward VII to Ireland, and the country's first staging of a major international automobile race, in 1903.
24. Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Fursby (2nd edition, 1907; London, Henley and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978). Simmel, extract from 'The Metroplis and Mental Life', in V. Kolocotroni, J. Goldman and O. Taxidou (eds), *Modernism: an Anthology of Sources and Documents* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998). All subsequent references are to these editions, marked as *PM* and 'MML' respectively, and are given in the text after quotation.
25. Catherine Gallagher, 'Raymond Williams and Cultural Studies', in Christopher Prendergast (ed.), *Cultural Materialism: On Raymond Williams* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 315–17.
26. Marc Shell, *Money, Language and Thought: Literary and Philosophic Economies from the Mediaeval to the Modern Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).
27. Phillip F. Herring, '*Dubliners*: the Trials of Adolescence', in Mary T. Reynolds (ed.), *James Joyce: a Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), p. 71.
28. Quoted in Maddox, *Nora*, p. 23.
29. Maud Ellmann, 'Introduction' to Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. xx.
30. Trevor L. Williams, 'No Cheer for "the Gratefully Oppressed": Ideology in Joyce's *Dubliners*', in *Re Joycing: New Readings of 'Dubliners'*, ed. R. M. Bollettieri and H. F. Mosher Jr. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), pp. 87–109; 94.
31. D. H. Lawrence, 'Introduction to These Paintings' (1929), in *Phoenix: the Posthumous Papers, 1936*, ed. Edward D. McDonald (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), pp. 569–70.
32. D. H. Lawrence, 'Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine', in *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and other Essays* (London: Martin Secker, 1934), p. 219.
33. '"Cursing the system" was not uncommon (in life and in English fiction) around 1900.' Patrick Parrinder, *James Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 2.

34. Maud Ellmann, 'The Ghosts of *Ulysses*', in Augustine Martin (ed.), *James Joyce: the Artist and the Labyrinth: a Critical Re-evaluation* (London: Ryan Publishing, 1990), pp. 193–4.
35. Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
36. Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 253.
37. Steven Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 9. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation. For a fascinating recent reassessment of Freud on thanatos, see Adam Phillips, *Darwin's Worms* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), especially the chapter 'The Death of Freud'.
38. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 322.
39. John Gross, *Joyce* (London: Fontana, 1971), p. 38.

8

The Modernist Abominations of William Hope Hodgson

Kelly Hurley

Some of the most innovative works of fiction in the British anti-realist tradition can be found amongst popular genres – Gothic Horror, sensation fiction, science fiction – at the *fin de siècle*. Strongly influenced by such scientific and sociomedical discourses as evolutionism, degeneration theory, and psychology, *fin-de-siècle* popular literature challenged traditional conceptions of human identity at every level: by theorising human species identity as both hybridised and metamorphic (H. G. Wells's 1896 *The Island of Dr Moreau*, John Buchan's 1898 'No-Man's-Land'); in its representations of an admixed, fluctuable, even chaotic human body (M. P. Shiel's 1895 'Huguenin's Wife', Richard Marsh's 1897 *The Beetle*); in its speculations on the incoherence of a human subjectivity fractured by the unconscious (Joseph Hocking's 1890 *The Weapons of Mystery*, Arthur Conan Doyle's 1894 *The Parasite*). The innovation of such texts does not merely consist in thematic treatments of a dangerously unstable human identity. They engage in narrative experimentation more consistently than their mainstream contemporary counterparts within the realist or naturalist tradition, foregrounding issues of narrativity, refusing to lay claim to narrative objectivity or omniscience, renouncing verisimilitude and narrative logic in favour of the production of sensation and affect. For example, witness the intricate nesting of interpolated story within story in Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1890) or Ernest R. Suffling's *The Decameron of a Hypnotist* (1898), the deployment of textual 'editors' and/or multiple narrative perspectives in such novels as H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1887) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), or the deliberately alogical narrative structure of Gothic picaresque novels like Fanny and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Dynamiter* (1885) and Machen's *The Three Imposters* (1895). Whether understood as proto-modernist or early modernist, the

tradition instantiated by novels can be seen as on a continuum with such twentieth-century movements as 'high' modernism and surrealism.

If twentieth-century British modernism's indebtedness to *fin-de-siècle* popular genres such as the Gothic has been overlooked by critics, it is not surprising that those twentieth-century authors whose work best exemplifies the Gothic tendencies of modernism should be neglected as well. One such author is William Hope Hodgson, whose fiction and poetry (excepting posthumous publications) first appeared between 1904 and 1918, when he was killed in the Great War. Hodgson's novels and short stories experiment with a variety of anti-realist and innovative narrative techniques, and work relentlessly to fracture traditional constructions of human identity. A thorough post-Darwinian, Hodgson deploys evolutionism within the framework of Gothic Horror in order to imagine a startling variety of monstrosities; of particular interest are his posthuman subjects – admixed and metamorphic entities that Hodgson would refer to as 'Ab-humans' – conceived as species hybrids, abominations of a natural evolutionary process or the products of human degeneration. Novels like *The Boats of the Glen Carrig* (1907), *The House on the Borderland* (1908) and *The Night Land* (1912),[1] designed to multiply and elaborate rather than contain the possibility of a chaotic, fluctuable abhuman identity, are themselves chaotic in structure, marked by narrative discontinuity and confusion, bizarre anachronism of language and syntax, and the predominance of atmosphere and affect over narrative logic.

In this essay I will focus especially on *The Night Land*, which splits its narrator-protagonist into two (the frame narrator, a seventeenth-century gentleman, 'dreams' the experiences of his reincarnated self) to imagine a far-distant future in which a dwindling population of 'proper' humans struggles to survive the heat-death of the sun and the long twilight of the Earth while under threat from both sinister supernatural 'Forces' and 'mighty and lost races of terrible creatures, half men and half beast' (p. 328). These 'Lower Men-Brutes', who are 'fathered of bestial humans and mothered of monster' (pp. 331, 329), are the products of human dissoluteness and degeneration. Here *The Night Land* is indebted to such *fin-de-siècle* predecessors as Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) and *Dracula*, which also link degeneration to the production of monstrosity; at the same time, the novel anticipates the fascistic tendencies of certain later modernist texts by suggesting that the slide towards degeneracy may be checked by stern militarism, totalitarian government, and the rigidification of gender roles. This is only a *tendency*: the novel's sometimes hysterical affirmation of a restabilised

and 'sound' human identity contrasts with its unabashed pleasure in the elaboration of monstrosities.

I

> And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
> Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?
> William Butler Yeats, 'The Second Coming'

> . . . a shaggy man, very brutal and monstrous.
> *The Night Land* (p. 466)

Like other anguished responses to the coming of modernity, Yeats's 'The Second Coming' expresses 'the overwhelming sense of fragmentation, ephemerality, and chaotic change' felt by so many in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[2] The populations of the industrialised and increasingly urbanised West were witness to unprecedented and explosive changes, as new modes of manufacturing and distribution, increasingly efficient information technologies, and ever-more rapid systems of transportation transformed the texture of everyday life, and as social identities were dissolved and remade within the protean space of the city. Written in 1919, 'The Second Coming' famously articulates a vision of this modern world as a world spiralling downwards into chaos and madness. The promises that the Enlightenment project had seemed to hold – the advent of democracy and other rational forms of social organisation, the improvement of human life through technological advances, the triumph of reason – are shattered: bloody warfare and 'anarchy' wrack the nations of the world; culture has lost its ascendancy over nature ('The falcon cannot hear the falconer'); and irrationality prevails as 'the centre' that held meaning-systems in place becomes dislodged.

The poem chronicles the death of religion and the advent of a new and monstrous secular order – or rather disorder – in its place. Nostalgically, the speaker yearns for 'some revelation', for the 'Second Coming' of a saviour who will confer meaningfulness upon the too-complex, incomprehensible modern world. But he is quick to acknowledge that modernity can birth nothing but admixture and abomination. The Second Coming will not bring a Christ, a man made in God's image, but something both half-human and indifferent to human aspiration and endeavour: a 'shape with lion body and the head of a man,/A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun.'

Considered within the terms of Yeats's private symbology, this sphinx-like entity is a mythic figure, retrieved from the world-spirit or collective unconscious ('A vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*/Troubles my sight'). Yet this figure is also quite historically particular: the Second Coming brings a post-Darwinian, and thus quintessentially modern, nightmare, a man made in the image of a beast. In his 1871 *The Descent of Man*, Charles Darwin had argued that 'man is descended from a hairy, tailed quadruped . . . probably derived from an ancient marsupial animal', derived through many stages from 'some amphibian-like creature, and this again from some fish-like animal'.[3] In other words, throughout its long history the human species had inhabited a multitude of forms other to 'itself', animal bodies that one could not possibly recognise as properly human, and it would continue to become other than itself in unexpected and perhaps disturbing ways, since '[i]t is manifest that man is now subject to much variability' (*Descent*, p. 413). Nor had humankind transcended its animal origins: 'man bears in his bodily structure clear traces of his descent from some lower form' (*Descent*, p. 445). As Margot Norris explains in her evocatively entitled *Beasts of the Modern Imagination*, Darwin's 'human being is no longer the prototype of ideal form in its unity, its originality, its integrity, and its perfection. Hybrid and even teratoid, as it were, in both body and mind, it contains little bits and traces of other animals',[4] numerous 'rudimentary and useless structures, which no doubt were once quite serviceable', from the many stages of its species-history (*Descent*, p. 512).

Post-Darwinian 'human identity' is construct and not essence, a convenient label for something admixed, fluctuating, unstable – and contingent, for the Darwinian theory of natural selection describes an ordering and re- or disordering of bodies that occurs randomly, governed by chance rather than providential or other design. Thus, as Norris argues, within the modern *Weltanschauung*, representations of abhuman entities – like the bizarre human–animal things painted by the surrealist Max Ernst – are not simply phantasmic, but also biologically plausible:

> Ernst assaults one's Platonic notions of form as something unified, ideal, permanent, and normative by inserting into his representations the Darwinian disruptions of form: time, mutability, variability, and chance. A post-Darwinian bird-headed man therefore produces a double shock in the viewer: the destruction of species as a normative category and the realization that, given the evolutionary play of time and chance, the creature represents a biological possibility.
>
> (Norris, 1985, pp. 16–17)

In *The Gothic Body* I have argued for the late-Victorian British Gothic as a genre thoroughly imbricated within Darwinian and other evolutionist discourses.[5] The *fin-de-siècle* Gothic did not just unfold the many repressions of a culture traumatised by fluctuating definitions of sexuality, subjectivity, race and class – though it certainly did accomplish that, as its authors and readers found themselves lost within the bizarrely transfigured, incomprehensible landscape of modernity, peopled by New Women, sexual inverts, degenerates, atavists, aesthetes, immigrants, proletarian hooligans, and other anomalies. The genre also responded opportunistically to modernity and the sensational narrative possibilities it offered. *The Beetle*, for instance, describes atrocities concealed within the labyrinthine darkness of the city and the anonymity of the suburbs, dangerous encounters between Englishman and 'primitive' in the contact zones of the Empire, and the terrifying fluidity of sexual and class identities. Most of all, the *fin-de-siècle* Gothic laid claim to the territories occupied by late nineteenth-century science – and not simply through such representations of technological marvels as can be found in novels like *The Beetle* (chemical weaponry, railway travel) or *Dracula* (photography, the typewriter, phonographic recording) or Frank Aubrey's 1903 *King of the Dead: a Weird Romance* (wireless telegraphy, the X-ray). These three novels also engage with the late-Victorian sciences of mind, as illustrated in *Dracula* by Dr Seward's studies in alienism, Dr Van Helsing's informal lectures on hysteria and the workings of the unconscious, Lucy Westenra's somnambulism, Mina Harker's susceptibility to hypnosis, and the diagnosis that the Count is a Lombrosian 'criminal type . . . of imperfectly formed mind'.[6] As evolutionary biology and the human sciences (psychology, sociology, ethnology, sexology, criminology) formulated new and strange models of human bodily and subjective identity, *fin-de-siècle* Gothic authors appropriated these models in order to imagine still stranger identities – so that Count Dracula, for instance, can be figured as atavist, 'zoophagous maniac',[7] ethnic primitive, and criminal hypnotist as well as supernatural vampire.

Some of the strangest identities were imagined through the appropriation of evolution theory, a particularly rich source for Gothic plotting. Evolutionism posited the essential mutability of bodies, and the theory of natural selection seemed to show that any morphic transmutation was possible, given time, chance and species variability, so long as the new organism was adapted to its specific environment. Gothic authors, employing a 'free invention and distortion of form unthinkable in the pre-Darwinian age' (Norris, 1985, p. 137), were thus given warrant to

create the most outrageous bodily monstrosities and the most extreme narratives of metamorphosis.[8]

Gillian Beer argues that Darwin's writing 'emphasises clutter and profusion' and 'relies on a nature which surges onward in hectic fecundity'.[9] One sees this, for instance, in the famous 'tangled bank' passage that concludes *The Origin of Species* (1859), wherein Darwin describes a pleasing confusion of 'elaborately constructed forms' within a tiny ecosystem.[10] Nature is rich in expedient – or one might say in a Gothic context, loathsomely fertile. Hodgson illustrated this admirably in his Sargasso Sea fictions, set within 'that great seaweed-laden ocean, vast almost as Continental Europe, and the final resting-place of the Atlantic's wreckage…a ghostly world of noiseless weed, fantastic, silent, and unbelievable' ('The Finding of the *Graiken*' [1913]).[11] The protagonist of 'From the Tideless Sea', whose ship the *Homebird* has become hopelessly entangled within the massed seaweed, describes the Sargasso as 'an interminable waste of weed – a treacherous, silent vastitude of slime and hideousness.…I might wander a hundred miles in any direction – and still be lost.…I have grown to believe this world of desolation capable of holding *any* horror, as well it might.'[12] Hodgson's gothicised Sargasso is a breeding-ground for monstrosities, a vast but isolated and self-contained ecosystem wherein Hodgson demonstrates the endless fascination and horror of evolution. Hodgson considered the Sargasso 'mine own happy hunting ground',[13] a setting that allowed him to repeat the same basic plot with limitless variation as he set his characters loose within the Sargasso's weed-continents and weed-islands, to be menaced or eaten by the abominable profusion of bizarre species adapted to their peculiar environment.

'It was now with the stuff [the weed] below my face, within a few feet of my eyes,' says the narrator of 'The Finding of the *Graiken*', 'that I discovered the immense amount of life that stirred among all the hideous waste' (p. 168). Close-up depictions of the Sargasso weed read like a dark parody of *Origin*'s conclusion: instead of a tangled bank populated by songbirds, flitting insects, and homely earthworms, 'The Call in the Dawn' (1920) describes a 'dreary labyrinth' of 'great weedstems…wandering amid their twistings and turning and vast entanglements' and 'a-crawl' with oversized crustaceans, eels, sea-lice, cephalopods, and various indefinable things (*Deep Waters*, p. 290). The Sargasso ecosystem is characterised by both diversity and indifferentiation: its myriad animal species are so well-adapted in colour and form that it is difficult to make them out amidst the weed. Life swarms

unwholesomely within the Sargasso – and then erupts from the weed-mass and reaches out to pull the human spectator in.

> The whole of the hitherto silent surface was all of a move in one stupendous undulation – as though life had come to all that desolation.
>
> The undulatory movement continued, and abruptly, in a hundred places, the seaweed was tossed up into sudden, billowy hillocks. From these burst mighty arms, and in an instant the evening air was full of them, hundreds and hundreds, coming towards the yacht.
>
> ('*Graiken*', pp. 172–3)

In a scene like this, where humans are attacked by Sargasso predators, the threat is that humans will be literally digested by the voracious natural world. Ironically, this is a relatively benign scenario of the loss of human specificity in Hodgson, and in its own way preferable to the possibility of undergoing metamorphosis into something abhuman and unprecedented, as occurs when humans blend with parasitical plant species in 'The Voice in the Night' (1907) and the opening sequence of *The Boats of the Glen Carrig*. In the worst scenario of all, the human subject discovers its own monstrous similitude in the uncanny natural world, as when the narrator of *Glen Carrig* finds a sort of abhuman *doppelgänger* looking back at him from within the depths of the weed. '[B]ringing my face near to the boat's rail . . . I found myself looking down into a white demoniac face, human save that the mouth and nose had greatly the appearance of a beak. . . . [The creature's] two flickering hands . . . woke in my mind a sudden memory of the great devil-fish which had clung to the side of the wreck we had passed in the previous dawn' (p. 30). In this specular moment the human subject cannot recognise itself as 'Ideal-I' or *Gestalt*, integral and complete, but sees itself reflected in the dark water as a 'turbulent' disunity.[14] The predatory 'human slugs' or 'Weed Men' (pp. 70, 67) of *Glen Carrig* are species abominations that combine characteristics of human, gastropod and various tentacled creatures. They are often figured as diabolical,[15] but within Hodgson's schema of gothicised evolution their abhumanness is a 'biological possibility', as Norris says of Ernst's bird-man. The terrible promise of evolution is that anything can develop, given a suitable environment, time and chance: Hodgson's slug-men, swine-men, shark-men, dog-men, octopus-seal-men,[16] and the multiple species abominations of *The Night Land*; the many and varied abhuman embodiments found in the modernist Gothic fictions of Machen, Marsh, Shiel, Stoker, Wells, and a score of others; the phantasmic

transmuted animal-humans found in better-respected modernist texts like Franz Kafka's 'The Metamorphosis' (1915), Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936) and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea* (1938); the composite entities formulated within surrealism. The mirror that post-Darwinian Nature holds up is unflattering, giving back the image not of 'Man' but of a heteromorphic chaos.

Yeats's 'rough beast,' then, can take its place with other man-beasts of modernity who arrive as if to proclaim that design has been eclipsed by meaninglessness, human integrity by hybridity, history by the whirling disorder of random events, purity by abomination. 'Things fall apart', and monsters will emerge from the wreckage.

II

> There came slowly the utter twilight of the world, as the sun to die the more; so that presently it gave but an utter gloomy light. And there grew upon many of the Peoples of the Cities of the Valley, a strangeness and a wildness; so that strange things were done, that had been shameful to all the Light. And there were wanderings, and consortings with strange outward beings, and presently, many Cities were attacked by monsters that did come from the West; and there was a Pandemonium.
>
> *Night Land* (p. 377)

Amidst the 'colossal ruin[s]' of the Thames Valley of the far future, the protagonist of Wells's *The Time Machine* finds a subterranean monstrosity: a 'bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing', 'ape-like' and yet recognisably human, that bears testament to the terrible malleability of the human species.[17] The Morlocks are a product of both modernity – birthed from the labour relations and urban working conditions of the industrial age – and a randomly working evolutionary process that reshapes bodies, psyches, and behaviours in response to environmental changes. 800000 years hence, the Time Traveller finds no 'true' humans save himself; the species has degenerated and divided into two distinct species, the anthropophagous Morlocks and their prey, the Eloi, relatively human in appearance but childlike, androgynous and intellectually vacant.

Night Land looks forward several millions of years to imagine life on Earth after the death of the Sun. Or rather, life within the Earth – nothing moves on the 'dead starkness' of the world's surface, long since 'given over' to frigid cold and 'Night and Silence' (p. 590), and all living

beings have retreated to a vast chasm that reaches deep into the earth's centre, formed perhaps two million years past by a massive earthquake. In one crucial sense *Night Land* is less bleak than *Time Machine*: despite 'the stupendous desolation of the dead world' (p. 444), recognisably human life is not yet extinct. In the 'great deep of the world' (p. 378), more than a hundred miles below the surface, an intact population of 'sound' humans (p. 328) still survives within the Great Redoubt, a fortified pyramid that extends eight miles above its base and 100 miles below and is powered by the 'Earth Current' of a planet still vital at its centre. But in other ways the novel is darker than Wells's, which also witnesses the heat-death of the Sun by sending its Time Traveller ahead millennia past the epoch of the Morlocks. Hodgson indulges his entropic vision more thoroughly and absolutely, taking hundreds of pages to develop a sort of Gothic natural history of this seemingly inhospitable environment that nonetheless supports an abundant variety of 'man-beasts' and non-human monsters. *Night Land*'s humans are also beset by predatory 'Outward Powers', occult forces that have taken 'material form' after being disturbed by rash scientific experimentation some millennia past and allowed to breach the 'Barrier of Life' separating their world from the known world (p. 328). Monstrosities natural and occult are embodied so variously, and clustered so densely about the Redoubt, that teratologists (the 'Monstruwacan' caste of scholars) work through the centuries to categorise and analyse them.

Like many other eschatological or apocalyptic fictions at the *fin de siècle* and after, *Night Land* and *Time Machine* follow the narrative lines laid out by nineteenth-century discourses on entropy and degeneration, twinned within the popular and scientific imagination though their compatibility was perhaps more metaphorical than real. The second law of thermodynamics, or the law of entropy, posited that all closed systems are subject to decay and dissolution, since the conversion of energy from one form to another always involves some dissipation of energy into heat, which cannot be recaptured. 'What this meant to many physical scientists was that the solar system, inasmuch as it is a closed system, must inevitably run down with the consequence that the earth would become unfit for the habitation of man': all complex forms must 'return to mere thermal energy and radical disorder'.[18] As William Thomson put it in his important 1852 essay 'On a Universal Tendency in Nature to the Dissipation of Mechanical Energy', 'Within a finite period of time past, the earth must have been, and within a finite period of time to come the earth must again be, unfit for the habitation of man as at present constituted.'[19]

Things run down, things fall apart. Five years after the publication of Thomson's essay, the French psychiatrist B. A. Morel explained the ruinous long-term effects of such problems as environmental poisons, 'insalubrious' working conditions, the abuse of alcohol and narcotics, 'overcrowded or unwholesome' urban neighbourhoods, and the 'deeply demoralising influence of poverty', including 'defective education, want of foresight . . . venereal excess, and insufficiency of food'.[20] Individuals contaminated by the toxins and social conditions of modern civilisation, he warned, would pass their nervous and physical disorders to their offspring in aggravated form, causing degeneration and eventually extinction within family lines. Later degenerationists were quick to theorise that contamination could spread through social contact as well as heredity, thus infecting not just a family but a nation or culture at large. The sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing believed that non-normative sexual practices were both the cause and effect of degeneration; Max Nordau's 1892 *Degeneration* claimed that modern innovations such as steam, electricity, railway travel and mass literacy had induced widespread heritable fatigue-hysteria as well as the widespread practice of degenerate art ('what might roughly be called intellectual impressionism or modernism'),[21] the consumption of which caused more degeneration in turn. Morel and his successors feared that the complex societies of Europe and North America were in danger of becoming undone: 'The constantly increasing number of suicides, of crimes, of offences against propriety, the monstrous precocity of young criminals, the debasement of the race which, in many localities, can no longer fulfil the conditions formerly required for Military service, are indisputable facts.'[22] And since '[a]t every point the biological model of the degenerate provided ways to theorize social decay' as well as social turmoil,[23] critics like Nordau could use degenerationism to condemn what they saw as the corruption, indolent luxury, hooliganism, shrill hysteria and decadence of the modern world.

While the ancestors of *Night Land*'s humans could not have prevented the slow death of the solar system, they were victims of their own prosperity, given to 'lawlessness and degeneracy' (p. 328): laxity and self-indulgence left them unable to cope with hardship, their scientific temerity unleashed occult forces into the world, and sexual depravity and miscegenation ('consortings with strange outward beings') bred abhuman monstrosities. 'And it did seem to me, by my reading, that Man had come at one time to a great softness of Heart and Spirit through many ages of over-ease. But that the world did come to coldness and unfriendliness, by reason of the Sun's slow ceasing'

(p. 376). Entropy might aggravate human degeneration, as the alienist Henry Maudsley speculated in *Body and Will* (1884) and as Hodgson suggests ('The evil must surely have begun in the Days of the Darkening'; p. 328), but more importantly, entropy and degeneration were compatible discourses because each set forth an extreme narrative of disaster and loss. Moreover, each was the product of a specifically modern – scientific and secular, anti-humanist – world view. Whereas optimists might argue that evolution was synonymous with progress, the means by which a divine or natural will shaped the Earth in a way pleasing to humans (Europeans, at least), the theory of entropy posited a cosmos indifferent to human aspiration, and degenerationism proposed that evolution was just as likely to move in a 'negative' direction as to progress 'forward'. More likely, in fact, since degeneration was the specific product of modernity; progress was the cause of its own undoing.

Degeneration might not just entail a straightforward move from greater to lesser complexity, however. Maudsley felt that degeneration, instantiated by the chaotic environment of modernity, might well produce unexpected and disgusting combinations of the devolved human: the 'savages of a decomposing civilisation' who are not just 'savages with the simple mental qualities of children, but new and degenerate varieties with special repulsive characters' (cited in Arata, 1996, p. 26). And Hodgson's *Night Land* is certainly populated by an astonishing variety of 'special repulsive' products of degeneration and miscegenation: 'Giants . . . seeming to be haired like to mighty crabs'; 'three great men . . . each greater than elephants, and covered a large part with a stiff and horrid hair, that did be of a reddish seeming'; 'a yellow thing which I perceived to be a man with four arms . . . a mighty and brutish thing, and so broad and bulkt as an ox'; 'an horrid white, and liver-blotched . . . thing that did be a very man-monster filled of unwholesome life'; 'an herd of squat and brutish men . . . and they to have tusks like to the tusks of pigs' (pp. 353, 395, 497, 486, 626). In Wells's vision of the end of the world, entropy yields an 'abominable desolation' (*Time Machine*, p. 98) where one finds just a few (though admittedly quite 'repulsive') living creatures. But abominations swarm in Hodgson's dying Earth no less than in the seemingly inhospitable Sargasso weed – not just 'tribes of half-human monsters' (p. 338), but gigantic slugs, sand octopuses, 'Night-Hounds', and other non-human oddities, conceived within a loosely evolutionary framework ('But rather did this thing seem to me . . . that these creatures did be but of their circumstance'; p. 454). Entropy produces a hostile ecosystem that

is paradoxically fertile, as evolution rushes to fill it with strange creatures befitting their strange environment.

III

> I told her that I did be surely her Master, in verity, and she mine own Baby-Slave. And truly you shall not laugh upon me; for I was so human as any; and a man doth talk this way with his maid.
>
> *Night Land* (p. 500)

What I have described thus far is a novel that is enthralled by the prospect of monstrosity – that uses the narrative impetuses of human degeneration, entropy, the random workings of evolution, and supernatural horror (for the occult forces materialise into a bizarre variety of biological, structural, geographical and abstract forms) to aggravate rather than contain disorder. But of course *Night Land* is not as anarchic as all that. For one thing Hodgson, like so many of his contemporaries, uses degenerationism as a cautionary model, and not just as the basis for a perversely pleasurable doomsday narrative. Degeneration's concomitant was the discourse of race regeneration, which proposed a number of ways to prevent what seemed an impending cultural collapse: medical and psychiatric 'cure' of sexual deviants and other troublesome subjects; censorship of degenerate art; the continued expansion of the Empire, which would revivify the corrupt metropolis; even the eugenic purging of those unfit to reproduce. The physical culture movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with its emphasis on the disciplining and training of the body, was a crucial tool in the project of race regeneration, to be used to bolster military preparedness as well as to check the physical deterioration of the degenerate European.[24] Body-building and virile exercise served to check the erosion of masculinity as well, in the sense that degeneration was associated with femininity (effeteness) and regeneration with masculinity (vital primitivism), as Marianna Torgovnick argues.[25]

'Then was an Age of Sorrows and Fightings, and Hardenings of the Spirit and of the Heart, for all that were of good Fibre; and this did breed a Determined Generation; and there grew up into the World a Leader; and he took all the sound Millions; and did make a mighty Battle upon all Foulness' (*Night Land*, p. 377). This epic battle accomplished a sort of racial cleansing: it served to distinguish the degenerate from the 'sound', the hybridised from the integral human; and when those of 'good Fibre' barricaded themselves within the Great Redoubt,

they ensured that a core population of proper humans would remain intact and unchanged throughout the millennia, even while 'lawlessness and degeneracy' raged without, and continued miscegenation amongst the outsider human-things diluted or confused species identity even further. As Frank Kermode and David Trotter argue, one tendency in literary modernism (the modernism of Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and D. H. Lawrence, for instance) is actively to *welcome* the coming apocalypse – for apocalypse, though it destroy modern civilisation, will yet serve to purge the decadent race.[26] Paradoxically, this fantasy of apocalypse is also a fantasy of a strictly ordered society, no longer tormented by the flux and unpredictability of stressful modernity.

Night Land describes an absolutely closed society with rigid internal controls designed to protect the population from external contamination. Women are never permitted to leave the Redoubt lest they suffer physical or spiritual corruption, and men only after extensive preparation and examination. 'And so stern was the framing of the Law, that there were yet the metal pegs upon the inner side of the Great Gate, where had been stretched the skin of one who disobeyed; and was flayed and his hide set there to be a warning in the Early Days' (p. 350). In later and more enlightened times, an offender is merely 'flogged' and 'corrected to the best advantage for his own well-being' (p. 351). The narrator takes pains to assure the reader, however, that the Pyramid's is not a totalitarian society. The fitness and justice of its age-old laws and customs are universally acknowledged, even by transgressors (who are misguided, adventure-loving youths, not rebels or criminals). Work is distributed according to talent and ability; citizens are free to choose for themselves in most matters, but would willingly sacrifice their own for the greater good in any case. They are bound together by their common peril – almost psychically so, since in its isolation the species has evolved a sympathetic unity that verges on telepathy. Modernist fantasies of perfectly harmonious societies like this (whose harmony does not preclude a few reasonable flayings and floggings) are, Harvey argues, 'a powerful tool of fascist right', which 'makes appeal to certain myths of a hierarchically ordered but nevertheless participatory and exclusive community, with clear identity and clear social bonding, replete with its own myths of origin and omnipotence' (p. 34).

Hodgson's depiction of a beleaguered but indomitable nation-state holding its own against the forces of anarchy is legible within a number of contexts, including fascism with its myths of racial purity and belligerent nationalism. 'Invasion scare' narratives at the turn of the century describe an England threatened by barbarian hordes (the

demonic Chinese of Shiel's 1898 *The Yellow Danger*, marauding troops of Welshmen, Irish, and Scots in Richard Jefferies's 1885 *After London*) or supernatural invaders from the colonies (the sinister 'Orientals' of *The Beetle* and Guy Boothby's 1899 *Pharos the Egyptian*), while imperial adventure fiction like Haggard's *Allan Quatermain* (1887) describes explorers and colonists besieged by savages. Certainly *Night Land*'s 'tribes' of fierce beast-humans, its forces of occult malevolence that cluster about the Pyramid, can be understood as the Empire's racial others,[27] just as the Night Land might be interpreted as a modern city whose labyrinthine, disease-ridden, and fearsomely populated slum neighbourhoods – 'were tracts of new degenerate energies, menageries of sub-races of men and women'[28] – which threaten to overrun the places of safety. And the fantasy of a colossal, symmetrical, perfectly fortified and perfectly impermeable Redoubt set within the seething chaos of the Night Land can of course be read in terms of fantasies described within psychoanalysis: fantasies of the ego as 'fortress' or 'stadium', fully enclosed and self-sufficient, protected from the raging forces of the id as well as the persecution of other subjects who would violate its integrity (Lacan, 1977, p. 5). Modernist psychology, including psychoanalysis, made such a model untenable at the same time that it made it urgently necessary by positing that the self was disunified and unstable, fractured by irruptions from the unconscious and by instinctual and other irrational or primitive impulses. This compensatory, 'orthopaedic' model of the self (Lacan, 1977, p. 4) is compatible with compensatory, exclusionary models of cultural self-identity like those found in imperialism or degenerationism, that define a normative social body by virtue of its distinction from the 'unsound' bodies found at the peripheries of the Empire, or within the corrupt heart of the metropolis.

Yet another solution to the problems raised by degenerationism – to the perceived decline of European civilisation – was, paradoxically, to embrace barbarism. William Morris was unexpectedly cheered by the apocalyptic bleakness of *After London*, and described his pleasure in Jefferies's vision of 'civilisation . . . doomed to destruction, probably before very long: what a joy it is to think of! and how often it consoles me to think of barbarism once more flooding the world.'[29] *Allan Quatermain*'s protagonist longs to break free from the effeteness and exhaustion of corrupt modernity, leaving behind 'this prim English country, with its trim hedgerows and cultivated fields, its stiff formal manners, and its well dressed crowds' and returning to the 'wilderness' to live and die 'among the wild game and the savages'.[30] Fearing the 'repulsive', degenerate version of savagery spawned by chaotic modernity that

Maudsley and others had envisioned, modernists from Haggard to Lawrence proposed instead a deliberate move 'backwards' into a virile, vital form of barbarism associated with medieval chivalry, or the militaristic cultures of antiquity, or the 'noble' savagery found in Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* (1926). *Night Land* indulges throughout in a kind of retro-chivalry: brought back 'nigh to the simplicity of the early world' (p. 356), its people have abjured high-tech weaponry and fight with a hand-held weapon called the 'Diskos', rather like a battle-axe. Each man must win honour in battle by the strength of his own arm and his skill in wielding the Diskos, as was true for those heroes 'of the olden days that did carry one strong sword always' (p. 385). The right kind of primitivism, Hodgson's unnamed narrator insists, is a mark of 'proper' humanity. Preparing to do battle for his beloved, Naani, he admits to 'a strange and exulting gladness that I should do that day some deed for Mine Own Maid; and truly this to be . . . the heart-cry of the barbarian, as you shall say. And this maybe; but truly I did be proper human, and to make no excuse because that I was natural' (p. 574).

The right kind of primitivism, it should be clear, is also a mark of proper masculinity. '[S]he caught my arm suddenly to discover for herself how strong I might be. And, surely, she loosed it even the more sudden, and with a little gasping of astonishment, because it was so great and hard' (p. 312). The retro-chivalric plot functions through exaggerated representations of sexual difference, emphasising the muscular courage of its hero and the tender femininity of its heroine, and the natural, irresistible attraction between 'Man' and 'Maid'. Hodgson critics are acutely embarrassed by what Lin Carter calls the 'maudlin love-dialogue scenes' of *Night Land*: 'they cannot help but strike the modern reader as appalling in their sickly sentimentality and their reflection of Victorian sexual mythology', writes Brian Stableford disapprovingly, and Carter 'judiciously trimmed' such scenes in his edition of *Night Land*, dismissing them as 'Victorian sentimentality at its nadir of taste'.[31] These comments are rather surprising. The love scenes can be 'maudlin', certainly, but they are more frequently sadomasochistic, presenting the male/female distinction as one that is on the one hand natural and on the other needs to be maintained through a little light discipline and bondage. The narrator must prove his masculinity not only by battling monsters, but also by taming his wayward and 'naughty' maid, who simultaneously welcomes and resists the knowledge 'that I did be Master unto her' (p. 542). During the return journey Naani, in between being cherished, adored and protected, is lectured,

sternly shaken, tied up, or 'whipt' for her various misbehaviours, till she finally learns the pleasures of the 'dainty pride of submission' (p. 572). 'And in verity a young man doth want that he whip his maid and kiss her, and all in the one moment. And, indeed, he to have delight in both', the narrator confides cheerfully (p. 529). This is hardly 'Victorian sentimentality'; it sounds rather more like Lawrence, whose heroines find themselves 'submitting' and 'succumbing' to the 'dominant male, shadowy, intangible, looming suddenly tall, and covering the sky.... And she was swooned prone beneath, perfect in her proneness.'[32]

Hodgson was himself a body-builder, boxer, and published author on physical culture. When he opened 'W. H. Hodgson's School of Physical Culture' in Blackburn in 1899, Sam Moskowitz tells us, '[h]is body was the big attraction': he printed out postcards showing 'front and back views of his extraordinary muscular development', and when he 'pulled off his shirt and tensed his muscles, any doubting prospects signed up.'[33] Given Hodgson's exaggerated devotion to physical masculinity – not to mention his hypochondriacal 'anxieties and phobias' about 'physical pollution' from germs and other contaminants[34] – it is easy to read the scenes in which Naani is disciplined for 'naughtiness' as thoroughly misogynist, or as an expression of a sexually hysterical sexual vitalism like Lawrence's. But it is also possible to read them as something like camp parody – the parody of a man who was not particularly invested in the distinction between masculinity and femininity, and understood them as performative rather than essential identities. Biographical information on Hodgson is scanty, but it is not by any means clear that he was heterosexual throughout his life, despite his marriage at age 36. Hodgson's teens and twenties were passed largely among the homosocial communities of sailing ships and the gymnasium, and homosociality is often difficult to distinguish from homoeroticism in such sea-going tales as 'The Getting Even of Tommy Dodd' (1912), whose ship's boy dresses as a young lady to seduce and confound the mates who abused him, or the Captain Jat stories (1912), wherein sadomasochistic relations between captain and cabin boy are played to uneasy comic-erotic effect. *Glen Carrig*, Michael Petit argues, presents homosexuality as both promise and menace – the promise of a tender attachment developing between the rough, kind-hearted bo'sun and the young upper-class narrator and the gothicised threat of penetration by the phallic slug-men, both possibilities foreclosed by the abrupt superimposition of a heterosexual romance plot.[35]

As a very young teenager on board ship Hodgson was at first the victim of 'the brutality handed out to seamen generally and to apprentices in

particular', for his 'relatively short height and sensitive, almost beautiful face made him an irresistible target for bullying seamen'. Taking up body-building, however, enabled Hodgson to turn the tables, and 'throughout his life one of his most delightful diversions was to pound seamen to jelly at the slightest provocation' (Moskowitz, pp. 17, 18). One cannot automatically conclude that Hodgson found homoerotic pleasure in the position of either masochist or sadist, but he certainly spent his formative years inhabiting both roles, and thus, perhaps, could as readily identify with Naani as his be-muscled narrator. Such role-playing is well in evidence in his letters to Coulson Kernahan, a successful popular author who served as a kind of mentor to Hodgson at the beginning of his writing career, and to whom Hodgson wrote, with somewhat enigmatic flirtatiousness, 'Your letter came tonight. Had you been maid and I man, it had not—No! you must guess the rest. Were I with you this night I would say unto you: – "Shake!"' Further down the page Hodgson casts himself as the 'maid' and Kernahan as the more masterful male: As 'an unaccepted writer' soliciting boons from an established one, he claims, he's 'a maiden. This being granted, it is well known that such creatures are allowed to change their minds. I being a maid, claim that privilege. I have changed my – mind' (*Uncollected Hodgson*, p. 28). Whether or not Hodgson and the married Kernahan had an affair – and after reading this letter one would be rather disappointed if they hadn't – the letters indicate that Hodgson was more playful than dogmatical about sexual difference, understanding 'man' and 'maid' as positions rather than essential identities (and himself 'to have delight in both'). Hodgson could be a thorough sentimentalist, as his letters also show, and sentimentalists are usually thought to be incapable of irony, but the archness and knowingness of a 'camp' sensibility does not preclude sentimentality. *Night Land*'s scenes of masterful masculinity overwhelming pliant femininity might be read as conservative, even hysterical reactions to what seemed the dangerous fluidity of gender roles at the turn of the century; or one might argue instead that the novel's stereotypes of masculinity and femininity are taken to such outrageous extremes as to explode them.

Perhaps it would be best to conclude, simply, that the novel is ambivalent. On the one hand it demands that human identity be 'sound' and 'clean', and on the other accepts some degree of abhumanness with equanimity. A giant sitting beside a fire-hole is the product of degeneracy and miscegenation, and 'not properly a man' (p. 407). But when the narrator travels deeper into the chasm, he finds a primal world of volcanoes and seas, 'a very land of fire and water' (p. 430),

wherein the process of evolution from simple to complex forms has started anew. Here he finds the 'Humped Men', bullish thick-necked man-brutes whose eyes 'did shine like the eyes of beasts' (p. 434). Despite their hybridity the Humped Men are menacing but not disgusting. 'I bethought that even thus, maybe, was primal man . . . . I was of belief the thing was *truly a man*; but very crude and dangerous' (p. 438; my emphasis). The degenerate body is abominable; but the 'progressively' evolving body – though it signify admixture and fluctuation – is 'natural' (p. 601). The narrator will then go on to speculate, confusedly, that

> all doth be modified and shapen diverse ways by the Circumstance and the Condition, yet doth there be an inward force that doth be peculiar each unto each; though, mayhap, to be mixt and made monstrous or diverse by foul or foolish breeding – as you to have knowledge of in the bodies of those dread Monsters that did be both Man and Beast. Yet, also, I here to say that maybe all diverse breeding not to be monstrous. . . . [T]he development of Man doth lie between two points, that be not wondrous wide apart; and Man to have power that he arrive very speedy from one unto to the other, and likewise that he go back so quick, or even the more hasty.
>
> (pp. 601–2)

Human nature is essential, human nature is variant, miscegenation is abominable, miscegenation is perhaps acceptable, progressive evolution is natural, devolution is natural. The novel cannot decide, and regards the extravagant inconstancy of human identity with disapproval, horror, philosophical resignation – and pleasure. 'For on none did it ever come with weariness to look out upon all the hideous mysteries; so that old and young watched, from early years to death, the black monstrosity of the Night Land, which this our last refuge of humanity held at bay' (p. 324). Narrative energy is ever on the side of abomination, and Hodgson moves his protagonist out of the Redoubt as quickly and efficiently as possible, so that we might view the 'hideous mysteries' of the Night Land at close range for hundreds of pages. The Redoubt is the 'last refuge of humanity', the nation-state, the fortress-ego, the place of absolute safety, and from within its secure walls one may look out across the hideous terrain of modernity (which may be the same as the hideous terrain of the unconscious) and observe the chaotic unpredictability, the loathsome inventiveness, of a world ruled by randomness. Within all is integrity, stability, certainty; without all is hybridity, flux,

contingency. But those within, who wait for the end of the world, cannot tear their eyes away from the desolate yet clamorous landscape from which monsters will emerge. 'Surely some revelation is at hand;/ Surely the Second Coming is at hand.'

Notes

1. Collected with Hodgson's fourth completed novel, *The Ghost Pirates* (1909), in William Hope Hodgson, *The House on the Borderland and Other Novels* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1946). All page references for *Glen Carrig* and *Night Land* are taken from this edition, and are incorporated within the text. In general, subsequent references to endnoted texts are incorporated within the body of the essay.
2. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1990), p. 11.
3. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species and The Descent of Man* (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), p. 911. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
4. Margot Norris, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination: Darwin, Nietzsche, Kafka, Ernst, & Lawrence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 40. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
5. Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
6. Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: Penguin, 1993), p. 439.
7. Dr Seward invents a new pathological category, 'zoophagous (life-eating) maniac', to describe Dracula's disciple, the mad-house patient Renfield, but the diagnosis clearly fits Dracula as well. Each 'desires to absorb as many lives as he can, and . . . has laid himself out to achieve it in a cumulative way' (*Dracula*, p. 95).
8. Such representations and narratives are of course not new to the Gothic, but increase dramatically in number and differ markedly in kind after the rise of evolution theory.
9. Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Ark, 1983), p. 125.
10. *The Origin of Species and The Descent of Man*, p. 373.
11. *Out of the Storm: Uncollected Fantasies by William Hope Hodgson*, ed. Sam Moskowitz (West Kingston, RI: Donald M. Grant, Publisher, 1975), pp. 164, 166.
12. *Deep Waters* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House Publishers, 1967), pp. 89, 103; emphasis in text. The story was originally published in two parts in 1906 and 1907, under the titles 'From the Tideless Sea' and 'More News from the *Homebird*'.
13. In a letter to Coulson Kernahan dated 17 November 1905. 'I have invented it, and have a right to hunt in it. It is true that there have been other "weed" yarns; but there has been nothing at all before like to the weed world which I have created.' Hodgson, who at the onset of his writing career had difficulty placing his work, was complaining that a published rival had plagiarised his Sargasso fiction. See *The Uncollected William Hope*

Hodgson, Volume I: *Non-Fiction*, ed. Sam Gafford (Bristol, RI: Hobgoblin Press, 1995), p. 39.

14. See Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I', *Écrits: a Selection* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1977), p. 2. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text after quotation.
15. They are sometimes called '*devil-men*' and 'weed *devils*' (pp. 80, 81; emphasis in text). But these epithets also show their affinity to 'devil-fish', with which the weed men are compared in the quote above and elsewhere.
16. The dog-men and octopus-seal-men appear, respectively, in 'The Adventure of the Headland' (1912) and 'The Crew of the *Lancing*' (1923; originally published as 'Demons of the Sea'), both collected in *Deep Waters*; the swine-men in *House on the Borderland*; the shark-man in 'The Haunted *Pampero*' (1916), *The Haunted Pampero: Uncollected Fantasies and Mysteries*, ed. Sam Moskowitz (Hampton Falls, NH: Donald M. Grant, Publisher, 1991).
17. H. G. Wells. *The Time Machine and The War of the Worlds* (New York: Fawcett, 1968), pp. 62–3.
18. Peter Allan Dale, *In Pursuit of a Scientific Culture: Science, Art, and Society in the Victorian Age* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 229.
19. Cited in Greg Myers, 'Nineteenth-Century Popularizations of Thermodynamics and the Rhetoric of Social Prophecy', *Energy and Entropy: Science and Culture in Victorian Britain*, ed. Patrick Brantlinger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 317.
20. B. A. Morel, *A Treatise on the Degeneration, Physical, Intellectual, and Moral, of the Human Race*, trans. Edwin Wing, *The Medical Circular*, 11 (1857), p. 232.
21. Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), p. 21.
22. Morel, *Treatise*, *Medical Circular*, 10 (1857), p. 123.
23. Stephen Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 3.
24. See Harold B. Segel, *Body Ascendent: Modernism and the Physical Imperative* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), especially pp. 204–18.
25. Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 159.
26. Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 104–13; Trotter, 'Modernism and Empire: reading *The Waste Land*', *Critical Quarterly*, 28 (1986), pp. 143–53.
27. Compare Amanda Boulter's assertion that *House on the Borderland*, set in Ireland, is 'shadowed with the images of Irish colonialism'; its human-swine creatures can be read in the 'context of the bestialised, racist depictions of the Irish in the late nineteenth century'. Boulter, '*The House on the Borderland*: the Sexual Politics of Fear', in *Creepers: British Horror and Fantasy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Clive Bloom (London and Boulder, CO: Pluto Press, 1993), p. 28.
28. William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 38.
29. Cited in John Fowles's introduction to Jefferies, *After London, or Wild England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. viii.
30. H. Rider Haggard, *Three Adventure Novels of H. Rider Haggard* (New York: Dover, 1951), p. 419.

31. Brian Stableford, *Scientific Romance in Britain 1890–1950* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 99; Carter's introduction to Hodgson, *The Night Land* (London: Pan Books, 1973), vol. I, p. xii.
32. D. H. Lawrence, *The Plumed Serpent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 311.
33. Moskowitz, 'William Hope Hodgson', *Out of the Storm*, p. 20. Moskowitz's long introductory essay is the fullest Hodgson biography to date.
34. C. J. Keep, 'William Hope Hodgson', *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 153: *Late-Victorian and Edwardian British Novelists, First Series*, ed. George M. Johnson (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995), p. 121.
35. Michel Petit, 'Homosocial Desire and the Sexual Landscape: "The Way the Wind Blows" in William Hope Hodgson'. Collected with Hodgson's fourth completed novel, *The Ghost Pirates* (1909), in William Hope Hodgson, *The House on the Borderland and Other Novels* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1946). All page references for *Glen Carrig* and *Night Land* are taken from this edition, and are incorporated within the text. In general, subsequent references to endnoted texts are incorporated within the body of the essay.

9

Vampirism, Masculinity and Degeneracy: D. H. Lawrence's Modernist Gothic

Andrew Smith

To link D. H. Lawrence to a modernist *and* a Gothic discourse would appear to be an improbable task. That it is possible to do so is due to the links which Lawrence's fascination with the body has to both a Gothic language of otherness and a modernist discourse of subjectivity. This Gothic dimension to his writings can be explored through an analysis of pseudo-scientific ideas about degeneration which were popular at the time. Such ideas, admittedly, are not usually regarded as underpinning modernism, but, as we shall see, Lawrence's specific deployment of such ideas is a response to the perceived physical and mental harm posed by modernist aesthetics.

What is at issue here is a covert presence in Lawrence's writing. My specific argument is that Lawrence in *Sons and Lovers* (1913) uses a range of Gothic images which can be linked to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theories of degeneracy.[1] Lawrence's position on these theories is ambiguous. He provides a critical response to such theories whilst simultaneously following and developing their ideas. This is all implicit in the novel as a subtext which can only be discerned in its shadowy forms. It is, however, an analysis of these forms which makes possible a materialist reading that links him to these debates about degeneracy. Before developing this argument I want to first outline Judith Wilt's important reading of Lawrence, because although my analysis departs from hers, I acknowledge that the links which she makes between Lawrence and the Gothic are significant for any account which tries to explain Lawrence's use of a Gothic idiom.

It was Wilt's influential study, *Ghosts of the Gothic* (1980) which provided an important reassessment of writers not, at that time, readily

associated with the Gothic.[2] In her reading of Lawrence she identifies a demonic trinity: the Ghost, the ghoul and the vampire. It is the latter which concerns me here, and I want to both expand and move beyond Wilt's claim that:

> Vampire resurrections, 'ghostly' visitations, occur for Lawrence when the personal will to love (or to hate) pushes one's being over its body's borders, even past the borders of the kingdom of death, towards the world, or another, in the striving to merge, unify, dominate, subsume otherness with oneself, or oneself with otherness.
>
> (p. 241)

It is this model of vampirism which, implicitly, gestures towards Lawrence's wider concerns about masculinity; ones which are ultimately tied to theories of degeneracy. The idea that images of vampirism in Lawrence represent his view of a power struggle between the sexes, is a useful one because it identifies Lawrence's association of desire with a problematically manifested masculinity. The problem for masculinity is that the excesses of vampirism suggests that masculinity loses control both over itself and over a feminine Other. Vampirism, as plotted here by Wilt, removes the subject from their body, but this transcendence means that the body is left vacant for 'ghostly visitations' which now animate, and so control, it. This process is inevitable because this disembodied, definitively modernist, self asserts both its power (its inherent masculine power) and its negation (the disappearance of its body). What we find in Lawrence is the desire to recompose this masculine body through moments of self-inquiry which explore where the borders of the body lie. In this sense he is moving beyond a modernist fascination with the psyche in order to emphasise a corporeal identity which confirms that the body is the site where the 'truth' of desire and identity are to be found.

That Lawrence does this can be seen in how images of degeneracy are mediated through representations of vampirism. In making this link he appropriates a discourse more usually associated with non-modernists of the period, such as H. G. Wells, but he also applies such ideas about degeneration not only to gender but also to the relationship which desire has to the imagination and to the body.[3] What is central here is the attempt to resolve, and so explain, the mind/body dualism which Wilt has identified in his use of images of vampirism. It is this vampirism which is related to a complex construction of masculinity which, necessarily, comments on gender relations. Wilt writes that in

Lawrence: 'intergender relationships can be the most vampiric of all, resulting almost always in the subjection and finally death of one partner' (p. 269). The question, as constituted in Lawrence's sexual politics, is that, as Wilt puts it: 'Does vampirism, the blood-lust that wants merging, not sharing, come from woman?' (p. 274). Is vampirism awakened by the woman, or is it the woman, as vamp, that the man needs to battle against? Wilt tries to provide answers to these questions. Her reading of images of vampirism in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, for example, observes the fictional, almost rhetorical, status of vampirism as a handy device through which Lawrence organises his peculiarly jaded views on the relations between the sexes. Significantly, Wilt perceives Lawrence's vampirism as a solely female malady, a malady which the men are both allured to and repulsed by. However, she analyses Lawrence in terms of his philosophical vision rather than by his links to wider social, and I will argue pseudo-scientific, trends.

That Lawrence can be tied to these types of context is shown in recent work on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theories of degeneration. Daniel Pick's *Faces of Degeneration* (1989)[4] and William Greenslade's *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel* (1994)[5] provide invaluable contexts in which to plot Lawrence by returning him to a more material world than that referred to by Wilt. Greenslade is tantalising about these connections because he makes only a series of occasional glancing references to Lawrence, concerning Lawrence's celebration of primitivism. This is a positive primitivism which exists in opposition to fears of degeneration. Greenslade quotes Lawrence from 'The Novel and the Feelings' (1923): 'Yet unless we proceed to connect ourselves up with our own primeval sources, we shall degenerate' (p. 66).[6] Such a claim provides us with clear evidence of Lawrence's awareness of ideas about degeneration. Greenslade acknowledges that Lawrence is a 'notable absentee' (p. 9) from his study, and it is my aim here to restore him to a pseudo-scientific context which both Greenslade and Pick have so carefully mapped out.

David Trotter has anticipated this argument in his account of the emergence of the modernist novel.[7] Trotter identifies, for example, a variety of scenes in *Women in Love* (1921) which are focused on the issue of degeneration. He points out that early on in the novel, in a meeting between Birkin and Gerald Crich at Nottingham railway station, there is a debate over the contents of a newspaper item about degeneration and the decline of the nation. This is similar to an earlier argument made by Frank Kermode about Birkin's meditations on the death of the nation, a reading which I will return to later.[8] Trotter argues that

the novel sublimates these issues through Gerald's association with the 'national efficiency' movement which enables Gerald to turn his mines into a profitable organisation.[9] In addition, according to Trotter, Gerald 'is a conditional degenerate' who poses no inherent, genetic flaw but 'is corrupted by the degenerate environments he encounters' (p. 126). Specifically these are his encounters with the tangibly degenerate worlds of Halliday and Loerke. Trotter argues that Lawrence deliberately characterises Halliday, physiognomically, as a degenerate type who would have been familiar to readers of Nordau's *Degeneration*. It is this type of imagery which is extended to Loerke whom Trotter describes as:

> Lawrence's best shot at a degenerate. Extravagantly Jewish and homosexual, he fulfils to an almost parodic degree the requirements of stereotype. He is an evolutionary testcase, a parasite, a creature developed at once beyond and below humanity, into pure destructiveness.
>
> (p. 126)

Trotter does not, however, argue that these images are associated with a Gothic idiom; although it is an idiom which has its place in theories of degeneracy. It is Lawrence's explicit link between the discourse on degeneracy and a peculiarly Gothic discourse of desire which helps to open up Lawrence's concern with gender, nation, and the status of the writer. Before illustrating this I will sketch what exactly was at issue in accounts of degeneration and why such theories develop images of vampirism.

Degeneracy is a complex area to define. It was a theory which was widely developed in France, Italy and Britain in the nineteenth century. It had a complex relationship with theories of evolution, because it seemed to oppose Darwinian ideas of progress. However, such visions of progress were subjected to a scepticism at the end of the nineteenth century, where the emergence of political concerns about the decline of the nation are also mapped through a range of fictions. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), for example, suggest that the evolutionary trajectory could be reversed, so that modern civilisation (and its science) become associated with atavism.[10] Degeneration is thus a pessimistic response to a populist Darwinian optimism, both of which had been translated into social and political terms.[11] Pick also points out that images of degeneration are to be found in both Hegel's and Nietzsche's notion of

a society trapped in a condition of terminal decline, one which necessarily requires that society's surpassing in order for the substantiation of a new political order (Hegel) or the arrival of the superman (Nietzsche).[12] In the nineteenth century degeneracy gained a 'scientific' status as it seemed to provide a biological explanation for society's ills, one which accounted for the nation's perceived moral, physical and racial decline. In Britain the notion of degeneration was associated with social issues concerning the family and the nation, and the type of future which they might have. Significantly, such anxieties were often linked to the figure of the vampire. This is something which Pick develops at some length in his reading of *Dracula*. For Pick, *Dracula* plays upon, and confirms, contemporary anxieties concerning the decline of Britain as a nation. He writes of *Dracula*: 'The family and the nation, it seemed to many, were beleaguered by syphilitics, alcoholics, cretins, the insane, the feebleminded, prostitutes and a perceived "alien invasion" of Jews from the East who, in the view of many alarmists were "feeding off" and "poisoning" the blood of the Londoner' (p. 173). Britain was thus perceived by a range of social theorists and scientists to be under seige from a variety of sources, both externally imposed and internally generated. It is around the image of the vampire that so many of these ideas coalesce. The vampire is a sexual degenerate, he/she possesses bad blood, perhaps syphilitic blood, they are aristocratic and dandified – an image of a degenerate *flâneur*. Also, they are dangerously foreign and threaten to corrupt the body politic of Britain. It is this image of the vampire which we can read back into Lawrence in order to account for how and why his Gothic images are linked to this langauge of degeneration.

First I want to turn to London, and its representation in *Sons and Lovers*. London, in accounts of degeneration such as those by Charles Kingsley (1873),[13] or Max Nordau (1892),[14] amongst others, was perceived to be the originating site of physical decay and so was responsible for creating the circumstances from which degeneracy emerged. Urban life was regarded as having a damaging effect on the nerves and it was associated with a variety of vices which could, in racial terms, pollute the national stock. London was seen as *the* site of crisis from the 1880s onwards. Descriptions of London in writings on degeneracy make implicit use of the image of the vampire in search of new blood – rather like Dracula's wish to be lost amongst its 'teeming millions'. This view is one which conditions urban society from top to bottom: at the top there is the dangerously decadent, whereas at the bottom there are other, more vicious vices. The problem comes when opposing social

worlds collide. A report from *The Lancet* from 1885 called 'Degeneration amongst Londoners' claimed that:

> He who would find the centres of decay in a nation, still on the whole robust and active, must seek for them at the points of social tension. The proofs of pressure, starvation, and atrophy, of vice and of brutal reversion, and of their results are all to be found there.[15]

Such a view is prominent until after the First World War, and it ghosts Lawrence's account of London in *Sons and Lovers*, it becomes the place where a country-dweller, such as William Morel, could not hope to survive. In the novel, London is imaged as another world, a world which is mysterious. It is a place of danger in which, his mother feels, William will have to function as a knight errant, 'who wore *her* favour in . . . battle' (p. 101) if he is to succeed. The monsters which he has to face are not made clear, but that London is potentially dangerous is something observed by the Morels awaiting William's return for Christmas, from the station; 'There was London! It seemed the uttermost distance. They thought anything might happen if one came from London' (p. 103). Their apprehension is not unwarranted. London is already imaged as an alien culture before we see it, but significantly we tend to perceive London by the effects which it has on others. William becomes an object of curiosity for friends and relatives: 'People came in to see William, to see what difference London had made to him' (p. 105). Note that the essence of London is something which you catch, the presence of which is indicated through William's new, affected, mannerisms. William's progress up the social scale provides 'the points of social tension' mentioned in *The Lancet* of 1885. It is William's progressive embourgeoisement which appears to make him disorientated, he writes to his mother concerning his rise:

> But now there seemed to come a kind of fever into the young man's letter. He was unsettled by all the change, he did not stand firm on his own feet, but seemed to spin rather giddily on the quick current of his new life. His mother was anxious for him.
>
> (p. 115)

This delirium is not just caused by his new, elevated, social status, but by his encounter with the woman who is to become his fiancée, Lily Western. Lily represents one of the social groups vilified in writings on degeneration from the 1880s onwards, the leisured, mannered woman

who is interested in gratifying her own pleasures. William asks her to send a photograph of herself to his mother, and: 'The photo came – a handsome brunette, taken in profile, smirking slightly – and, it might be, quite naked, for on the photograph not a scrap of clothing was to be seen, only a naked bust' (p. 126). This smirking nude is not quite what Mrs Morel had in mind for her son and she asks for a less revealing photograph. This does, however, underline Lily's allure, her siren status for William and her knowing, smirking, sense of her sexual presence: all of which are to be found in accounts of the degenerate women from the period, as in Lombroso and Ferrero's *The Female Offender* (1899)[16] or Otto Weininger's influential *Sex and Character* (1903).[17] That Lily is more than this is shown in the images of dissipation which are formed around her. William complains that 'She's not serious, and she can't think' (p. 148). She lords it over the Morels, William complains of her that '. . . she's different from us. Those sort of people, like those she lives amongst, they don't seem to have the same principles' (p. 148). She appears to be from a separate race, the race of the vampire.

That Lawrence is making reference to this is, I believe, indicated through a variety of factors. First there is her name, Lily Western, which glosses Stoker's vampire, Lucy Westenra, and secondly there are the strange, but seemingly loaded, descriptions in her introduction to the Morel family. When meeting Mrs Morel, 'Miss Western held out her hand and showed her teeth in a small smile' (p. 144); in case we fail to pick up on this moment it is repeated with Mr Morel, 'She gave the same smile that showed her teeth' (p. 145). Beneath this level of appearance, her apparent affability, her smile, there is a hint of danger. This is because in vampiric, and in class terms, she fails to perceive them as being human at all, '. . . they were creatures to her for the present' (p. 146). This idea of class is subsequently developed when we discover that Lily is financially parasitic upon William, 'All his strength and money went in keeping this girl' (p. 151). It is thus not just a financial drain, but also a physical one. Such an idea, of the countryman made weak by urban living is played upon here.[18] William cannot survive because he is effectively of a different species, he comes from a different stock. The London disease, as it is manifested through Lily, gets him in the end. William starts to waste away, the young Paul Morel says to William about Lily that 'she looks like a young witch-woman' (p. 161); an observation which startles William, 'He looked at her. Her beauty seemed to hurt him' (p. 161). The vampire suggests all of this and William is hurt and ultimately destroyed by his attachment to this vampiric vision. That Lawrence provides us with a plausible reading of

this is shown in William's death, which may be from scarlet fever, but is full of vampiric import. William starts to die after strange marks are found on his neck (he exclaims to his mother, 'what a rash my collar's made under my chin!' [p. 167]). After William's death, Lily's degenerate potential is reinforced by her dissipation; Lily writes to Mrs Morel at the following Christmas about how much she had enjoyed attending a Ball: 'I had every dance – did not sit out one' (p. 176). The promiscuous vampire is put back into circulation.

That Lawrence should use such implicit images of vampirism through which to focus ideas about degeneracy is, as I touched on earlier, a common trope in the nineteenth century. What Lawrence sees in this figure is not just the usual connotations of strange sexual appetites combined with lax moral values. What he also sees is a relationship between the vampire and syphilis. It is this connection in Lawrence which I will develop before returning to the novel and exploring Paul's own relationships, ones which are, in part, conditioned by this connection.

Lawrence regarded the fear of syphilis as the greatest threat to culture. The fear of syphilis is, for Lawrence, equated with a fear of sex. Lawrence in 'Introduction to These Paintings' (1929) argues that in the past this fear had some justification. It was syphilis which could bring down dynasties; for him the Tudors and the Stuarts were destroyed by syphilis. But syphilis was not just a physical disease, it was one with mental effects. He writes:

> The English aristocracy travelled and had curious taste in loves. And pox entered the blood of the nation, particularly of the upper classes, who had more chance of infection. After it had entered the blood, it entered the consciousness, and hit the vital imaginations.[19]

Not the vital organs. This degeneracy is not home grown for Lawrence, rather it comes from America, and in keeping with accounts of the degenerate, from the East – like Dracula himself. This fear of syphilis led to a distrust of the instincts and consequently, Lawrence argues, people lack spontaneity because of a terror of where sexual spontaneity could lead. Lawrence thus ghosts his account of the imagination with the rise of syphilis. The syphilitic as the degenerate is supplanted by Lawrence with the purity which can be found in a return to a more authentic primitivism. This endorsement of primitivism, however, is not a naïve celebration of nature. It is part of an argument about the possibility of reclaiming apparently 'primitive' modes of knowledge and is thus part of a wider critique of reductive models of science and progress. It is also

a claim that the body, as distinct from the mind, understands the world in more credible ways than that to be found in more conventional mental abstractions. Lawrence asserts that we need to place our faith in an intuitive knowledge which returns us to the body and endorses its inherent integrity. He argues, for example that:

> The very statement that water is H_2O is a mental *tour de force*. With our bodies we know that water is *not* H_2O, our intuitions and instincts know it is not so. But they are bullied by the impudent mind.
>
> (p. 574)

This issue of the presence of an intuitive knowledge possessed by the body is, however, in *Sons and Lovers* conditioned by notions of gender which initially demonise women although subsequently they will be employed to celebrate masculinity. It is these links with gender which are apparent in how Lawrence uses the language of degeneracy. We find, for example, that the vampire as the carrier of syphilis is implicitly associated with Lily Western who reduces William to a burnt-out, fever-racked, terminal illness. Lawrence thus takes one side of the argument about degeneration and plots it as female – *La belle dame sans merci* who will lead the man to ruin by infecting him with her vices. The manly option is to embrace a world of physicality ruled over by the male.

For Lawrence, the ultimate danger of this celebration of the spirit over the physical is that we become ghosts; that we become truly Gothic because we cease to live within our bodies. Lawrence writes:

> Spectres we are to one another. Spectre you are to me, spectre I am to you. Shadow you are even to yourself. And by shadow I mean idea, concept, the abstracted reality, the ego. We are not solid. We don't live in the flesh.
>
> (p. 570)

Lawrence therefore takes up an anxiety about degeneration and corruption, represented in the character of Lily Western, and formulates a new manifesto which enables a return to the body. Importantly this body is not one which has been conditioned by life in London, rather it is to be found in the rural, farming communities which urban life ultimately threatens to destroy.

This is played out in the novel with the relationship between Paul Morel and Miriam, and later between Paul and Clara. Miriam is natural

enough but not primitive enough, 'Her body was not flexible and living. She walked with a swing, rather heavily, her head bowed forward, pondering' (p. 191). Too much thought and not enough body here. However, Paul having learned something from William's plight, cannot help but perceive Miriam in vampiric terms. If Lily took away the strength of the body, Miriam tries to undermine the power of the flesh by sucking the life out of the instincts. It is his mother who initially feels this anxiety, 'She is one of those who will want to suck a man's soul out till he had none of his own left' (p. 199); a conclusion which Paul also comes to. Miriam, significantly, is also a prototype New Woman who does not properly know her place: 'Miriam almost fiercely wished she were a man' (p. 192). However, a more precise version of the new woman is to be found in Clara Dawes, '. . . Mrs Dawes was separated from her husband, and had taken up Women's Rights' (p. 229). The New Woman was vilified in accounts of degeneracy, such as those of Weininger, and Lombroso and Ferrero, for her unnatural demands, although, paradoxically, it is Clara's estranged husband who possesses the features of the degenerate with his 'dissolute' eyes, and his 'sensual' mouth.

That this language of degeneracy is developed in the second half of the novel is indicated by the vampiric flourishes which become associated with Paul. Paul tells Miriam that he admires Clara for 'the very set-back of her throat' (p. 231). Miriam notices that 'He had a way of lifting his lips and showing his teeth, passionately and bitterly, when he was much moved' (p. 256). Even when he consoles his mother over her bad marriage, 'He stroked his mother's hair, and his mouth was on her throat' (p. 262). After Paul abandons Miriam and concentrates on Clara we find that, 'If she were about, he always watched her strong throat or her neck' (p. 322). When she bends over her work, 'her magnificent neck with its down and fine pencils of hair, shone white against the lavender, lustrous silk' (p. 324). After his first avowal of love to Miriam 'his mouth was kissing her throat' (p. 344). At another point he ignores what Clara is saying to him because 'he was watching her throat below the ear' (p. 375). Eventually Clara 'turned to him with a splendid movement. Her mouth was offered him, and her throat' (p. 376). As with Miriam the language is that of surrender. Later, 'He sunk his mouth on her throat, where he felt her heavy pulse beat under his lips' (p. 379). After a row with Clara 'The blood flamed up in him. He stood showing his teeth' (p. 398). On a variation, when Clara and Paul go to see a play, 'he was obsessed by the desire to kiss the tiny blue vein that nestled in the bend of her arm' (p. 404).

Paul's vampiric touches make him invulnerable to the vampiric touch himself. At one point he explains his pale complexion to Clara with 'It's only a thick skin I've got that doesn't show the blood through' (p. 318). He functions as William's revenge against women: Lawrence sanitises the vampire by regendering it as masculine and sending it to prey upon those who need social and sexual correction (the New Woman). Vampirism is now the trope through which a disease-free desire for the flesh can be articulated; it is no longer associated with syphilitic degeneration and thus offers the possibility of a return to a world in which the primitive urges are celebrated. The only thing which stands in Paul and Miriam's way is the spirituality which represents a fear of the flesh that Paul associates with Miriam. What makes the novel so complex is that it employs, implicitly, a popular vernacular of degeneracy in its account of the relationship between William and Lily, and then undermines this language with Paul and his sexual relations. Vampirism is returned to the male, and is thus used to naturalise a male heterosexual sexuality. However, the very language of degeneracy tends to blur such distinctions and this seems to explain Paul's anxious soul-searching about identity throughout the novel. This is not in itself surprising because the vampire is that figure which breaks down the conventional borders between the human and the non-human. In a revealing moment Clara, for example, begins to see Paul in Gothic terms because of this hidden presence which objectifies her:

> She grew to dread him. He was so quiet, yet so strange. She was afraid of the man who was not there with her, whom she could feel behind this make-belief lover; somebody sinister, that filled her with horror. She began to have a kind of horror of him. It was almost as if he were a criminal. He wanted her – he had her – and it made her feel as if death itself had her in its grip. She lay in horror. There was no man there loving her.
>
> (p. 470)

Paul subsequently hands Clara back to the quasi-degenerate Baxter Dawes and goes his own way. Paul's implicit Gothic status becomes something positive in the novel because he returns a wife to her husband and avoids an apparently dangerous marriage with the soul-vampire Miriam. Throughout, the literary language of vampirism constructs a covert argument about the status and function of the degenerate. It is gender which appears to be the key issue here, as indeed it is in accounts of degeneracy. The issue is complicated by Lawrence's own

response to these ideas in his celebration of a physically pure primitivism, but then this was always what accounts of degeneracy advocated, the return to the pure body – even if Clara, as seen in the above quotation, is not fully convinced by this.

However, to argue as I have is to lose sight of the fact that *Sons and Lovers* is also a family drama. What happens to William and Paul appears to occur outside of this drama because it is away from, although always ghosted by, the power of their mother. However, even this drama can be brought within the jurisdiction of scientific readings of degeneracy and significantly this can be related to the work of that other Morel, Benedict Augustin Morel, who in the 1850s was formulating his own theories about the causes of degeneration.[20] Morel's interest in plotting the way that degeneracy worked itself through the generations of the family has echoes with Lawrence's novel. As in the description which we get of Paul from Clara concerning Paul's inner Gothic character, Morel was also concerned with identifying horrifying covert realities. Pick writes of Morel that 'Whilst he earmarked the surface features of degeneracy (bodily stigmata), he also evoked a mysterious and hidden world of pathology' (p. 52). This type of bodily stigmata is to be found within the Morel family in the novel and is related to the father. The father is described as 'purely sensuous' and lacking the religious morality of his wife. He is also of foreign stock, his grandfather being a French refugee. His dark-haired, swarthy complexion almost racially separates him from Mrs Morel who is described as blonde and blue-eyed.[21] Walter is really a low-level degenerate; his alcoholism would have been of interest to a 'scientist' like Morel, but he has no grand vices. Yet the novel does indicate a concern with bodily purity which is linked to this idea of racial purity. It appears to be crucial that the children take after their mother and not their father.

The baptism of blood episode is crucial here (an episode which has links with vampirism, as something passed on through blood lines although the novel, typically, is ambivalent about such connections even as it forms them). After the birth of Paul, Mrs Morel, during a row with her husband, is struck on the head by a drawer thrown by Walter and blood drops from the wound onto Paul's head. This establishes a direct blood line between herself and Paul who, like his mother, has blond hair and blue eyes; but she still has lingering doubts about his wellbeing. Earlier she had felt:

> Her heart was heavy because of the child, almost as if it were unhealthy, or malformed. Yet it seemed quite well. But she noticed

> the peculiar knitting of the baby's brows, and the peculiar heaviness of its eyes, as if it were trying to understand something that was pain.
>
> (p. 50)

Paul has peculiarities of his own, ones which can be observed in his adult life. His adult philosophy is one which sanctions the authority of the instincts, but such a reliance upon the instincts suggests that the ego is not master in its own house. Pick writes on Morel in ways which suggest this and which return us to Clara's fear that Paul is not quite what he seems:

> Madness for Morel and many of his colleagues could not necessarily be seen or heard, but it lurked in the body, incubated by the parents and visited upon the children. It had no precise borders, but it involved a progressively intensifying tyranny of the body over the spirit or soul. Freedom of the will was increasingly lost to the body.
>
> (p. 51)

Paul polices his borders by fighting off those marauders who would weaken his spirit, such as Miriam, and returning those whom he has exhausted, Clara. The self therefore possesses a fragility because it is commanded by instinctual drives and so by a model of heredity which is potentially at the root of such commands. This in turn makes some sense of the ending which is based on Paul's repudiation of his mother and his search for a new life in Nottingham, a smaller urban setting than that which had proved so fatal to William. It is an attempt to give up genetic and cultural ties. However, what cannot be abandoned is an issue which is so central to Morel's theory of degeneracy: nation. That this issue also ghosts Lawrence's writings via his particular version of the degenerate is helpfully illuminated by Frank Kermode's essay 'D. H. Lawrence and the Apocalyptic Types'.

Earlier I touched on Kermode's suggestion that *Women in Love* develops a specific concern with degeneracy, an issue which is explored by Trotter. Kermode's reading of Lawrence makes an important contribution to this issue as it explains how the deployment of these ideas indicates a deliberate strategy by Lawrence to identify the possibilities for national renewal. Kermode argues that images of the apocalypse in Lawrence's writings are sublimated through certain character types which are used to stage a debate about the necessity of death and rebirth. The argument is that Lawrence is outlining the need for political, social

and artistic changes which are bound up with the death of decadence and the renewal of a new kind of (manly) society. In this way he is participating in the reactionary deployment of degeneracy as a philosophy which identifies and marginalises the Other. For Kermode, Lawrence is, historically speaking, writing between a period associated with decadence and a projected modernism. Lawrence, however, expresses an anxiety about how the present modernist enterprise appears to continue a decadent aesthetic by other means. Lawrence is trying to find another (putatively non-modernist) way to create change, by killing off the old in a rather more emphatic way. However, part of the problem is that, as Kermode puts it: 'Decadence and renovation, death and rebirth, in the last days, are hard to tell apart' (p. 164). One is tempted to suggest that this could also be seen as an astute synoptic assessment of *Dracula*, dealing as it does in a problematic struggle with a past that appears to be dangerously undead.

Lawrence was thus concerned both with the idea of artistic practice and with the nation (a concern central to his rebuttal of a modernist aesthetic in 'Introduction to These Paintings'). Concerning the idea of nation Kermode argues that:

> Lawrence was obsessed with apocalypse from early youth, and he remembered the chiliastic hymns of his childhood. During the war the apocalyptic coloration of his language is especially striking; sometimes it strongly recalls seventeenth-century puritanism. He considered the world to be undergoing a rapid decline which should issue in a renovation, and expected the English to have some part in this, much as Milton put the burden on God's Englishman; Lawrence, however dwelt more on the decadence, and seemed to think the English were rotting with especial rapidity in order to be ready first.
>
> (p. 156)

The suggestion is that Lawrence can be placed within a specifically English continuum which stretches back to chiliastic hymns and Milton. The necessary death of the old and the birth of the new thus becomes a national, and artistic, imperative. Indeed it becomes the case that it is the writer who is instrumental in both effecting change and chronicling the emergence of such change.

It is easy to see how this language of change, reliant as it is on images of the apocalypse, could easily fall into a Gothic idiom. If Lawrence wants to promote a model of change through images of death and

renewal then we can see how they are worked through in *Sons and Lovers*. In this novel we have witnessed Lawrence's ambivalence about degeneracy, as evidenced by his transference of vampirism from women to men. This attempt to settle on a gendered demarcation of vampirism evidences an uncertainty about where regeneration can come from. Images of vampirism may posses a vitality but they are inevitably ones which are tinged with death and sterility. The figure of the vampire, as an agent of change, necessarily inaugurates a new order, one which kills off the old 'humanity', but it replaces it not only with sterility, but also with the very decadence which Lawrence wants to battle against in the first place. These images of degeneracy in the novel are not coherently deployed, suggesting that the picture is more complex than Kermode suggests.

To summarise: Lawrence never explicitly refers to degeneracy throughout the novel; rather, reference to it can be found submerged within the text. Often these references seem to be contradictory. Lily conforms to the degenerate type, whilst the vampiric touches granted to Paul are associated with a more positive instinctual drive. Gender appears to explain this apparent inconsistency, which directs us to the way that Lawrence's philosophy of primitivism is ghosted by political considerations. This idea of ghosted presences is referred to by Wilt in her reading of Lawrence, but what such presences mean can, I feel, be explicated by reference to theories of the degenerate which also use this language of the Gothic. Degeneracy is a multi-faceted and therefore highly complex issue. It refers to nation, to race, to gender, to sexuality, to madness, to disease, amongst many other things. The presence of the debate over degeneracy in *Sons and Lovers* reflects this complexity and the problems that exist in exploring it. Greenslade finds a similar, enticing, problem in analysing literature from the period: he writes '. . . the play of a polyvalent idea such as degeneracy can help to suggest what the author is repressing and how much can be allowed to show, or let slip' (p. 4). It is through these slips in Lawrence's novel that we can see the debate about degeneracy taking place, one which he ambiguously responds to, as witnessed by Clara's perception of Paul as something monstrous. It is as though Lawrence repeats the very ambiguities to be found in accounts of degeneracy concerning the respective status and function of ideas about biological and social conditioning. Lawrence achieves this through establishing a particular strand of modernist Gothic writing, one which looks back to older representations of vampirism (the battle for the new is, after all, at the heart of *Dracula*) and one which looks forward to a return to the pure body which was

always at issue in vampire narratives. Lawrence both recycles and updates the image of the vampire in order to suggest that it, like Paul Morel, represents the dilemma of a modernist self trapped by history but struggling to create the new.

Notes

1. D. H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974). All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text.
2. Judith Wilt, *Ghosts of the Gothic: Austen, Eliot and Lawrence* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980). All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text.
3. See Kelly Hurley's *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp. 108–9 for a discussion of Wells, degeneracy and homosexuality.
4. Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: a European Disorder, c.1848–c.1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text.
5. William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text.
6. D. H. Lawrence, 'The Novel and the Feelings' (1923), in *Phoenix* (New York: Viking, 1972), ed. Edward D. McDonald, pp. 755–60.
7. David Trotter, *The English Novel in History 1895–1920* (London: Routledge, 1993). All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text.
8. Frank Kermode, 'D. H. Lawrence and the Apocalyptic Types', in *Modern Essays* (London: Collins, 1970), pp. 153–81. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text.
9. See Trotter, *The English Novel in History*, p. 126.
10. See David Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, Vol. 2 (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 1–25, where he discusses this idea in depth alongside readings of Wilde, Stoker and Machen.
11. See Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, pp. 12–17.
12. See Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, pp. 19, 226–7.
13. Charles Kingsley, 'Nausicaa in London, or the Lower Education of Women', in *Sanitary and Social Lectures and Essays* (London, 1880).
14. Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (1892), 3rd edn (New York: Appleton, 1895).
15. *The Lancet*, 1 (February 1885), p. 264, cited in Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, p. 191.
16. Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero, *The Female Offender* (New York: Appleton, 1899).
17. Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character* (1903) (London: William Heinemann, 1906).
18. See Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, p. 38, for an account of the perceived dangers of urban life.
19. D. H. Lawrence, 'Introduction to These Paintings' (1929), in *Phoenix* (New York: Viking, 1972), ed. Edward D. McDonald, pp. 551–84. All subsequent references are to this edition, and are given in the text.

20. Benedict Augustin Morel. During the 1850s Morel published the following works: *Etudes Cliniques. Traité théorique et pratique des maladies mentales*, 2 vols (Paris, 1852); *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine* (Paris, 1857); *Swedenborg: sa vie, ses écrits, et leur influence sur son siècle, ou coup d'oeil sur le délire religieux* (Rouen, 1859).
21. Walter Morel is also frequently, because of an occupational hazard, covered in coal dust which serves, symbolically, to reinforce his association with a racial Other.

10

Arctic Masks in a Castle of Ice: Gothic Vorticism and Wyndham Lewis's *Self Condemned*

Francesca Orestano

'1. Savageness. 2. Changefulness. 3. Naturalism. 4. Grotesqueness. 5. Rigidity. 6. Redundance . . . '[1]: the attention bestowed by John Ruskin on the moral elements of Gothic architecture provides a lineage of ideas which not only point backwards, to the so-called Dark Ages, but also anticipates the early twentieth-century art projects globally known as Modernisms. The aesthetic relevance of Gothic art within the social issues tackled by Ruskin's *oeuvre*, and its reception within the artistic programme of the early modernist avant-garde in England, have already been critically mapped.[2] Aware of the necessity of a moral action, in order to dispel the superficial effusions of Victorian humanitarianism, Ruskin saw in the nature of Gothic a way out of a tradition of sterile repetition, which enforced collective social slavery. While his personal utopia demanded that art should reflect and provide moral values to its age, Ruskin's perception of a decadent *fin de siècle*, rescued by a savage, rigid, grotesquely redundant art, juxtaposing past and present, history and miracle, image and *logos*, and fantastic combinations of human, animal, plant, would consequently lead towards the modernist appraisal of significant form *per se* – as Clive Bell maintained in *Art* (1913), and Roger Fry actively promoted. Both the Post-Impressionists' exhibitions organised by Fry in 1910 and 1912[3] and the new periodisation of art history he proposed in *Vision and Design* (1920) in order to rescue from the shadow of pre-Renaissance neglect Giotto and the art of the so-called 'primitives', tend to assert visual values whose formal quality, savagely unstable, is charged with a violent anti-naturalist streak. Wyndham Lewis (1884–1957), the Canadian-born painter, novelist, critic, leader of the English avant-garde, would later observe:

> In 1914 a ferment of the artistic intelligence occurred in the West of Europe . . . Expressionism, Post-impressionism, Vorticism, Cubism, Futurism were some of the characteristic nicknames bestowed upon these manifestations, where they found their intensest expression in the pictorial field. In every case the structural and philosophic rudiments of life were sought out. On all hands a return to first principles was witnessed.[4]

In 1910 Marinetti had visited England and preached Futurism: in his wake, Lewis, with Pound, Wadsworth, Etchells, Nevinson, and a few other artists, would start the Rebel Art Centre, the first secession from Fry's Omega Workshops, culminating in the 1914 Manifesto of Vorticism, *BLAST: Review of the Great English Vortex*,[5] a war-declaration against the past, a bold statement of independence from either Cubism and Futurism, from science and poetry as Imagism, from John Galsworthy and Marie Corelli in literature. Retrospectively, in 'The Vorticists,' Lewis recalls his pre-First World War revolution:

> BLAST by its name explained itself. Inside it announced itself as on fire with a new philosphy called Vorticism. The inflammatory doctrine affected equally the images which issued from its visual inspiration, and likewise the rather less evident literary sources of its ebullience.[6]

The avant-garde revolutionary programmes which, like bulletins in a war of words, shocked the years 1912–14 with belligerent statements such as 'BLAST YEARS 1837 To 1900', although historically set in the groove of social discontent already traced by Ruskin, deviously connected art and morality, ethics and aesthetics through the caustic means of violent laughter and loud eruptions of *mépris*, all meant to disrupt the unresponsive environment of a static *bourgeoisie*. If Gothic in Ruskin's sense was a creative remedy against the 'degradation of the operative into a machine' (X: 194), Wyndham Lewis, the leading figure of the English Vorticist group, proclaims instead the vital mechanic force of English art and industry by means of a strategy, whose aesthetic violence is at once wrapped in historical nihilism yet self-confident and muscular, at war with the old-fashioned late-Victorian *débris* of determinism and progress, yet antagonistically opposed to the idea of a Futurism, built upon a *tabula rasa* of the art of the past.

Lewis's aesthetic choice, consistent with a philosophical repudiation of the 'Time Cult' and the romantic subjectivism it entails, portrays

humanity as a herd of mechanical, unfeeling yet energetic creatures, thus discarding at once, both in painting and fiction, the anatomy of character and the perspective of plot. The external approach to his characters coincides, stylistically, with the juxtaposition of visual signifiers which characterises the grotesque expression of Gothic art. Thereby Ruskin's selection of the essential categories inherent in Gothic architecture, whose hard moral statement he saw visibly structured in its constructive style, reads like the epiphany – even more than the prophecy – of Wyndham Lewis's aesthetic manifesto.

Through the grotesque, the visual discontinuity experienced in stereoscopy is accounted for and represented: if historical narrative coincides with the unfolding of the authorial point of view, then Lewis's fascination with the nature of Gothic originates, like Ruskin's, as 'a radical controlling metaphor of his theory of the aesthetic . . . based upon a realisation that there is always something aberrant in so-called empirical experience',[7] maintaining nevertheless that, in art, no steps can be taken beyond those permitted by a pure philosophy of the eye. Unlike Ruskin, however, Lewis's Gothic Modernism refuses to become part of an organicist aesthetic, reaching, through the opaqueness of the object, the horizon of history, and beyond. Whereas Ruskin would passionately coax his reader into viewing the exchange of values between art and history:

> . . . go forth again to gaze upon the old cathedral front, where you have smiled so often at the fantastic ignorance of old sculptors: examine once more those ugly goblins, and formless monsters, and stern statues, anatomiless and rigid; but do not mock at them, for they are signs of the life and liberty of every workman who struck the stone; a freedom of thought, and rank in scale of being, such as no laws, no charters, no charities can secure
>
> (X: 193–4)

Lewis would choose the ugly goblins and formless monsters, twisted out of anatomy and realistic strictures, as a statement of violent vitality and intense visual fascination, mocking history as 'the tragic corpse of Life' and choosing, instead, to express with the surface politics of the external style the subversive dynamism of the present:

> The chemistry of personality (subterranean in a sort of cemetery whose decompositions are our lives) puffs up in frigid balls, soapy Snow-men, arctic Carnival masks, which we can photograph and fix.

> Upwards from the surface of existence a lurid and dramatic scum oozes and accumulates into the characters we see. The real and tenacious poisons, and sharp forces of vital vitality, do not socially transpire . . . Capriciously . . . the froth-forms of these darkly-contrived machines, twist and puff in the air, in our legitimate and liveried masquerade.[8]

This congealed violence, freezing tensions in the constricted immobility of the vortex, shapes the cluster of short stories written by Lewis between 1909 and 1911, and edited as *The Wild Body* in 1927. In his modernist play *The Enemy of the Stars* (1914), Arghol and Hanp are wrapped in a polar, arctic atmosphere, congenially Gothic because anti-Mediterranean. Even in later years, Lewis would adhere to a modernist compound made of intense naturalism and geometrical abstraction. His aesthetic formula: 'The root of the comic is to be sought in the sensations resulting from the observations of a *thing* behaving like a person',[9] engulfs, at once, tragedy and the comic elements of farce and cabaret. The novel *Tarr* (1918) thematises chaos and filth. His heathen clowns, athletes, animals, belong to the stage of the Bakhtinian Carnival, and are made to obey a dramatic syntax of congregated discontinuties: 'the flesh makes its insurrection and refuses the inscription of reason'.[10] The grotesque character of the patchwork monster created by Victor Frankenstein resulted from the same 'montage' and provides, potentially, the same range of effects, unleashed by a depth-of-field economy of narrative.

There is no sentimental cult of the primitive in Lewis, no psychological effort to dig out of the past emotions or feelings reviving the idealised romantic nostalgia for a natural state. Lewis's own version of Modernism, openly clashing against the literary policy chosen by Joyce and Lawrence, and yet curiously kindred in some points with the demise of representation achieved by Virginia Woolf in *Jacob's Room* (1922), where narrative structures are reduced to the skeleton of individual and collective death, definitely demands a 'crossing of the boundary of realism . . . in the direction of the grotesque'.[11] In these years, the fictional product known as 'the Gothic novel' undergoes the same modernist critique awaiting history, mimesis, and the whole category of the subject: to look for the Gothic, one should search the static, cyclical world in which all dynamic process seems permanently arrested[12] and where its nature resurfaces, but crystallised in the visual encoding of its elements, the grotesque: 'His fictional characters – the rigid, armored heroes, the mechanical dolls, the masked players . . . are figures out of

Lewis's paintings and drawings . . . They suggest levels of human or sub-human existence in a mechanical, grotesque, or amorphous state.'[13] Despite the mechanical outlook of his characters and figures, Lewis's concept of the machine age does not stem from the enthusiastic modern-olatry and propulsive 'macchinolatria' of Italian Futurism.[14] His human machines are genetically closer to the fantastic monsters carved in stone, crowding the walls of Gothic cathedrals, with their anti-historical statement full of wonder and anecdote. These visual chimeras become, in Lewis's drawings and writings, icon and discourse, satires, weapons to be waged against the entire art-world and its tradition. In his campaign against the past, and against the *Zeitgeist*, whose problematic presence has led Fredric Jameson into a cogent critical deconstruction of the author's fascist creed of aggression and its philosophical implications, Wyndham Lewis, paying homage to Nietzsche's W*eltanschauung*, becomes himself a kind of 'oppositional mind' and the self-styled 'Enemy'[15] of a historical, and ontological, warfare condition.

In these years of teeming Modernisms,[16] the Vorticist leader, painter/writer, with the aesthetics inscribed in the essay 'Our Wild Body' (1910) introduces a gallery of modern types, who bear 'the severely grotesque, primitivistic deformations of his first experiments in painting'.[17] These characters, tramps, buffoons, clowns, innkeepers and mechanical puppets, conceived as organisms deprived of all psychology, interiority, hearth or mind, and merely endowed with the biological force of primitive life forms, are strictly seen and portrayed through external description. Thus objectified as faces, bodies, gestures, grimaces, they hurl their geometric bodies, anatomiless and rigid, into mechanical action, meant to produce the dark, caustic laughter of satire. Therefore 'Description of Lewis's characters within the categorical area of the grotesque has become a critical commonplace.'[18] By modifying the legacy of the Dickensian grotesque, once part of an ironic mode of communication, Lewis adopts satire as the chosen mode of his 'external approach' to reality. In the realm of fiction, Lewis's pictorial commitment to the value of visibility finds due enhancement in his conception of satire as external style, a style which is in turn granted correct expression by the presence of the grotesque element, in its essential visual quality. The construction of identity skims the character's outward idosyncrasies, focusing on the visible hard surface of the human being. This 'externalised' policy of description and style is, for Lewis, a choice which will last well beyond the years of the Vorticist avant-garde: still waging his war against contemporary fellow-writers, Lawrence, Joyce, James, Woolf, he will maintain in *Satire and Fiction* (1930) that:

> In contrast to the jelly-fish that floats in the centre of the subterranean stream of the 'dark' Unconscious, I much prefer, for my part, the shield of the tortoise, or the rigid stylistic articulations of the grasshopper . . . The ossature is my favourite part of a living animal organism, not its intestines.[19]

The 'necessary fruit of the revolutionary tremors felt by the whole of Europe' ripens therefore in this Gothic precipitate of grotesque visuality and cool rational horror, belonging to an extensive concept of satire as fiction. The modernist canon of impersonality, whether in painting or writing, requires the sacrifice of subjectivity and point of view, and thus directly feeds the ideologically subversive elements of a 'landscape of chimeras'. To quote again the archetypal Marquis de Sade, 'one enters the realms of the most frightful truthlessness',[20] where the anti-representational bias of the avant-garde finds its programmatic, revolutionary deformations, dislocations, pastiche and estrangement. Lewis, a steadfast votary of Swift and Hogarth, agrees that 'The sentient world is gross. It is ugly dross, as well, contorted throughout its length and breadth by the foolish grimaces into which the vulgar soul of the flesh churns it up, in yahoo laughter.'[21] For Lewis, satire suits both the visual and written text, his wild bodies as well as his Tyros,[22] created in the 1920s and recast in numerous characters in the years to come.

Satire then coincides with the Enemy's attitude towards history: at once 'remarkably historicist' and 'disposed to apocalyptic crisis-centered views of history',[23] Lewis's view of history as catastrophe evolves from a timely cultural appreciation of upheavals and cataclysms which 'leave great areas of the past in ruins . . . and stimulate frenzied rebuilding'. His aesthetic appreciation of the destructive forces at work invites a parallel with Vasari's 1568 account of the ruin caused by Goths and Vandals, beckoning reconstruction in Gothic style.[24] The artistic, ideological invention of modernity is painfully achieved, at the cost of undoing the myth of the Renaissance. Yet, the generation of artists who stir the tremors of the modernist revolution and practise 'cultural seismology', are the same of whom Lewis can maintain, in the turning of a decade: 'we are the first men of a Future that has not materialised!'

Already in his first post-war biography, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937) the 'men of 1914' are posthumously described as 'so hopelessly *avant-garde*! So almost madly up-and-coming!' (*BB*: 254). The author of BLAST, former *enfant terrible* of the Omega Workshops, after a short war experience on the French front, comes back to an empty London, a survivor who falls 'into anonimity' (*BB*: 46). After the novel *Tarr* (1918),

Lewis recasts his cultural personality into a new role: 'Then I buried myself. I disinterred myself in 1926 . . . but as a philosopher and critic' (*BB*: 5).

His resurrection coincides with the ambitious *Time and Western Man* (1927) in which Lewis finds his target in the time philosophy heralded by Henri Bergson, and supported by Oswald Spengler and A. N. Whitehead. In this light T. S. Eliot becomes a historical dabbler, ready to make a flimsy compromise based on Christian humanism, while Lewis, declaring the impossibility of transcending the limits of the human condition, contemplates with disdain the contemporary relapse of the intellectuals on 'the good old firm of "Jesus, Blake, Keats and Marx"'.[25] His siding with *Hitler* (1931) is part of an intellectual option fed by Nietzsche's enthusiasm for power, and the outcome of Lewis's obsession with a Communist threat, felt as the impending danger of a levelling civilisation: but there is no way of erasing his infamous choice on the eve of another conflict, especially when the timely critique of *The Hitler Cult* (1939) appears as a belated retraction of his former political sympathies.

The art-figure of the 'Enemy' acquires depth and full relevance when set against the American scene, and its cultural role in the twentieth century. When a Second World War draws near, Lewis removes himself from Europe, with his wife, becoming a 'war-transient' for a while in the United States, and then in Canada, where he is going to reside until the end of the war. In previous years the new world had been the object of critical analysis in *Paleface, The Philosophy of the Melting Pot* (1929), with its sustained polemical feeling for a primitivistic hypothesis which Lewis believed was darkly infecting Europe, with the spreading fashion for the *art nègre*, jazz music and the romanticised cult of the savage, subscribed to in D. H. Lawrence's *Mornings in Mexico* (1927). The American artist – Hemingway, Faulkner, T. S. Eliot and James – reappears in *Men Without Art* (1934) where the aesthetic option conceded to the American scene barely amounts to its capacity for an art of 'demented expressionism': 'Undeniably the "American Scene" is of the utmost barrenness, physically and socially. It is planted in the midst of a relative wilderness, beneath a surprisingly hard and penetrating light'.[26] On the eve of his hasty departure for Canada, in 1939, Lewis is forced by events which it is no longer possible to control, neither personally nor collectively.

Formerly his version of Gothic was eminently a visual affair, the grotesque vocation of his modernist agenda, based on the architecture of external style, as well as his commitment to satire. His choice was to

reduce the tremors of history into a formalised simultaneous frieze, to compound in the compressed force of the vortex the riotous dance of life-threatening forces and the ugly, geometrical progression and military parade of endless warfare. *Time and Western Man* (1927) marked, in Jameson's account, a decisive repudiation of all theories of history, of the Time-Cult, with a historically new sense of temporality, founded on the philosophy of the eye. But *Men Without Art* (1934) provides more than a modernist visual rendering of juxtaposed categories: the essay entitled 'The Artist and the New Gothic' opens up on to a Gothic scenario of contemporary facts, trivial and terrible, and examines a number of unescapable contingencies of political nature which converge in the artist's envisaging 'a more daring arabesque', in which the explained reasons for the occurrence of another war are traced. There are circumstances artists and critics are forced to take into account: the hideous historical framework of petty yet frightful facts has to be kept in constant view. Even the philosophical eye can be cheated by the trick of relative distances. Lewis now maintains that 'all of a contemporary nature that we may decide to discuss must be circumscribed and locked . . . ' (*MWA*: 199): in the hideous framework of the historical perspective, which demands point of view, and the necessity of a political choice: 'But that *everyone* does in truth very imperfectly grasp, or quite underrate, the nature of the world danger that is at hand, is quite certain: and so, much of the critic's historical airs are genuine enough' (*MWA*: 200). On the eve of another world war the modernist paradox of history, as a formal, artistically bold subduing of facts and faces, yields to the fascinated gaze of the spectator overwhelmed by uncontrollable events. Lewis's conception of history undergoes the transformation which Goya expressed as *Desastres de la Guerra*:

> I have mixed up, hoping to make a pattern that may stick in your mind, books and bombs, Bonus Marchers and Booksellers, 'Hooded terrors' and 'Crime Clubs', Magazines of Kiss-stuff stories and Magazines of small-arms and Lewis guns . . . I shall not mind . . . if I have succeeded in leaving upon your retina a stain of blood . . . or if I have caused you to associate a little more than before the Crime-yarn with your own entrails . . .
>
> (*MWA*: 204)

The Gothic novel is back. Circumscribed and locked up in safety in a remote hotel room in Canada, the historian protagonist of

Self Condemned, albeit far from Europe, will never be able to think, or write, without hearing the tremors and bombs falling over England. Of necessity he will have to surrender his former *Ubermensch* self, and become, artistically speaking, a living dead. With a critical perception at once acute and poetical, Hugh Kenner stated that 'his troubles were an historical paradigm'.[27]

If the adjective 'hectic' applies at once to the Dionysian rhythm of modernity and to the hurricane of events that are going to culminate in the Second World War – '(how the term "hectic" is historic – what a tale told by an idiot it tells!)' (*MWA*: 202) – its catalytic use in 'The Artist and the New Gothic' announces the appraisal of history as chain of unavoidable consequences.

The novel *Self Condemned* (1954),[28] where Lewis in thin autobiographical disguise describes the Canadian exile of an English intellectual during the war, derives from the historicised treatment of the grotesque and its Gothic quality. Set against a background of geographical and social estrangement (the 'uncanny' or *unheimlich* seeming the category proper to Canadian space as well as to satire[29]), the chronological development follows the events between 1939 and 1944, but is contrasted by a circular pattern of closure, based on the pervasive acknowledgement, philosophical and historical, of the permanence of the condition announced by the title. The novel depicts the Second World War as experienced during his Canadian exile by an intellectual historian, who resigns teaching history in England to resume, eventually, a chair and the very same task formerly rejected.

Ideological depth is provided by the *mise-en-abîme* of the historical theme: the profession of the protagonist, a Professor of History when in England, named René – whose rebirth in the new world is ironically contemplated – introduces the critique (both as discussion and critical reception) of his controversial study, *The Secret History of World War Two*, which is meant to explain why René Harding finds the teaching of history theoretically and almost ontologically impossible. Drily René explains his point before leaving his country to go away 'into a wilderness, among so very solid a mass of strangers. And never to come back. Never to come back':

> You must understand what has happened to me! It is destiny. Through looking too hard at the material I was working on, I saw the maggots in it, I saw the rottenness, the fatal flaws; had to stop earning my living in that way. . . . I have no particular reason to go to Canada. I must go somewhere out of sight of what is going to

> happen because I know so well the reasons which make it impossible for it not to occur. How disgusting, how maddening, and how foully comic all the reality of death and destruction will be; I just cannot stick around here and watch that going on. Canada is as good, or as bad a place as any other. The problem is, to get out of the world I have always known, which is as good as to say out of the world. So Canada is to be my grave.
>
> (*SC*: 137–8)

In 1939–40 *America, I Presume* (with its central character, the military marionette Major Corcoran) depicted a universe of grotesque quality oscillating between comedy and the uncanny. The episode in which Corcoran visited a Canadian educational institution, at the bidding of its Warden, Brandleboyes, was meant (by one educated in a public school) as a tasty morsel of social satire, from the Dickensian innuendo to the very approach to the Hall: 'My taxi approached a towering Gothic pile. There were never any Goths in Canada, but there are a goodly number of Gothic buildings. This spurious antiquity is quite harmless – or *usually* that is so'.[30] The American scene caught by Corcoran in Brunswick Hall is a classless universe inhabited by young athletes, a 'nocturnal, subterranean, steam-heated Golden Age' (*AIP*: 243): it still features, in Lewis's eye, as artistically un-aesthetic, a wilderness peopled by maudlin romantic pioneers or the ominous clumsy egg of 'Democracity' exhibited at the New York World's Fair of 1940 (*AIP*: 288). These are, however, the elements which provide the easy release of comic effect through their archetypically 'unheimlich' quality.[31] This quality is intentionally heightened in *Self Condemned*: the wilderness of Canada, Toronto, the district of Momaco, the Hotel Blundell, the Room, all appear as a trick of Chinese boxes, endlessly caging the protagonist and his wife, Hester, in almost total social estrangement and unabated loneliness.

The Gothic scenario suited to Professor Harding was already staged in London, in 'the tower-like design of the building' (*SC*: 6), where the 'immured Hardings', René and Essie, are caught during a furious thunderstorm. His 'stiltedly primitive face', 'archaically masculine', is reminiscent of 'the long French faces upon the west facade at Chartres' (*SC*: 6). With his 'gothic headpiece' (*SC*: 172) we are not far from 'The Nature of Gothic'. Yet these visible signs, facial, external, matched by other vivid grotesque details, such as the charlady's behaviour as 'an excitable marionette' (*SC*: 8), blend with a frame of threatening messages of a different order, announced by *The Times*, by

the *Daily Express* ('DUCE SAYS PEACE. "Nothing to Justify a War"' [*SC*: 7]), by the news of 'the progress of Herr Hitler's tremendous air-armament' (*SC*: 42), by Harding's complex excuses for his decision to resign his post, voiced to his mother and relatives. His non-intellectual wife has to bow to his ultimatums: 'There is going to be another of those crazy and extremely wicked wars . . . It is history itself I am displeased with . . . ' (*SC*: 37), and to the sexual rhetoric of persuasion he systematically employs with her. Harding's resignation is examined, discussed, justified: so as to introduce the historian's philosophy, his political creed, in ways which will appear at least ludicrous in the light of oncoming events.

On 15 May 1939, on the last boat from Europe, 'the radio announced the Declaration of War' (*SC*: 157): René, engaged in reading *Middlemarch*, suddenly resents its 'lifeless realism': 'The historical illusion, the scenes depicted . . . should not be handed down as a living document . . .' (*SC*: 156). With this, he throws *Middlemarch* overboard. The gesture is part of a radical change Professor Harding undergoes during his transatlantic journey. Not unlike his Gothic predecessors caught in the disease of their transformation, 'At Quebec he stepped ashore a quite different man', ready to face the inevitable ostracism following his act of repudiation, strengthening himself against all possible compromise, facing a grim alternative: 'Either the life he was now to enter was an empty interlude, an apprenticeship to death: or it was . . . a period of readjustment, preceding the acceptance of a much simpler type of existence for Hester and himself' (*SC*: 162). In either case, during the voyage out, Harding has learned 'the lesson of final and absolute exile'. The arrival of the couple in Momaco – Toronto – and their accommodation at the Hotel Blundell, in a twenty-five feet by twelve-foot room, 'stank of exile and penury and confinement' (*SC*: 170). Their lives are changed into a suspended existence, in which constriction of space, rarefaction of time, crystallisation of character are part of their experience, the tangible grotesque of a situation framed by distant historical events.

> The degeneration of the . . . Hotel Blundell was but a microcosmic degeneration repeated upon a larger and larger scale, until you reached the enormous instability of the dissolving System, controlling the various States. All this one day, at a touch you would think, no more, would come rushing down in universal collapse. – Indeed, that was what the war meant. It was a collapse, a huge cellular degeneration of society. It was crazy, as this house was crazy . . . As

> the State, the City, the Household waded in a morass of Debt and Mortgage, the Room was charged with despair and decay.
>
> (*SC*: 190)

The confinement of the first pioneers in the literary wilderness, which Lewis unflatteringly described in *Men Without Art* as the lot of the American artist, is experienced by the friendless Hardings as 'an inhuman void' (*SC*: 170). The social isolation which in *America, I Presume* (1939) culminated in slapstick and muscular fight, once conferring modern dynamism to the visible tensions of the wild bodies, is revived in the episode of the savage fight and beating Harding undergoes in the hotel Beverage Room (*SC*: 224–35). Another opportunity for modernist treatment occurs when the cockroaches plaguing the hotel are fumigated with a gas gun by a Mrs McAffie, who, wearing a sinister-looking mask and hood, enjoys the duty of the horrid fight and pest destruction. But the possible reverberations of the modernist heritage are inevitably toned down: the sketchy, weird inmates of the hotel are war-transients, like the Hardings; the ugly city where they reside equally bears the signs of historical events affecting its economy, and has 'swollen like a great tick with the young blood of farming areas, as the war factories mushroomed up' (*SC*: 178). In their room, the prisoners can hear 'the stupidly plodding feet of Time' (*SC*: 188). If history is the narrative *par excellence* where time is organised and carefully periodised, its Gothic subversion thrives in a fiction of chronological indeterminacy and idiosyncratic treatment of time. In *Self Condemned* the Hardings' departure from Europe in May 1939, the Declaration of War, D-Day in June 1944 and the Professor's resuming a chair of history at the local university, are all carefully dated events: but as part of a strategy which, by confirming the destiny already clear from the very beginning, fictionalises history into Gothic narrative. The prisoner's room is circular.

In addition to an impressive management of time and history, the hotel has Gothic features both in its architecture (an Anglo-Saxon doorway opens into a 'grim Edwardian interior' and an incoherent 'jumble of styles' with a stained-glass window, admitting 'some dirty blue and green light' [*SC*: 192–3]) and in its inmates. The manageress, Mrs McAffie, is a tall, skinny, rouged 'flying wraith' (*SC*: 203); a respectable-looking Mr Martin will subsequently become known as an arsonist and murderer, tried and executed; a Mrs Plant, the supposed hotel-owner, is 'a great, broken, lolloping, half-blind queen' (*SC*: 190); a janitor resembles 'a gigantic squirrel . . . madly expressive' (*SC*: 264); Mr Furber, a rich

book collector, is owlish, goatish, bovine. Birds and squirrels keep them under close control, peeping in the rooms from the frozen trees in the courtyard. The piercing screams of a woman are regularly heard, 'it being the husband's nightly habit to half murder her' (*SC*: 230). Life in the hotel Blundell is indeed a cinema performance, 'a violent performance' teeming with the kick of entertainment without 'any kind of sobriety or restraint' (*SC*: 209), but it does not awaken in the Hardings the expected reaction of amusement. Both Hester and René 'had for long known that Momaco was the never-never land, was the living-death, the genuine blank-of-blanks out of which no speck of pleasantness or civilized life could come' (*SC*: 214). René is slowly driven by 'the barren abstraction of the Room' into periods of semi-consciousness, where polar obsessions of lethargic darkness, mixed with the awareness of European events, unsettle the balance of his supposed sanity:

> And History: with that, René's central tragedy was reached. History, such as is worth recording, is about the passion of men to stop sane. Most History so-called is the bloody catalogue of their backslidings. Such was René's unalterable position.
>
> (*SC*: 212)

When formerly a brilliant Professor of History in England, Harding had analysed and forecast events in a controversial hotly debated work – *The Secret History of World War II*. Lewis is thus enabled to introduce a pastiche critique of the views once expounded by Harding, and, at once, to achieve a distance from History which is the necessary foothold of all Gothic constructions. Only through the character of a historian, could Lewis manage to portray the horror of a universal catastrophe, and at once the fact that 'its dark necessity, its innateness' (*SC*: 245) were theoretically assessed in advance and cooly recognised as inevitable. No traditional writing of history could yet have foreseen 'The murder of all these millions of simple inoffensive people all over the world . . . the enormous, irretrievable ruin . . . the certain slavery . . . ' (*SC*: 244). Yet Harding, after his flight from England and three years of voluntary seclusion, developed 'an appetite for this negation of life, and a sort of love for this frightful Room' (*SC*: 245). History, the writing of history, teaching it and suffering its consequences: the Room contains it all.

In the Room Lewis places the central event of the novel: after a customary war-bulletin, reporting 'the slow unfolding of World Ruin' and followed by other programmes, 'consistently light-hearted' (*SC*: 278)

the sudden news of a fire in the hotel startles the Hardings out of their shell, and their microcosm, giving them 'a foretaste of the destruction of the world'. While Hester manages to escape, the historian lingers behind to contemplate the ruin:

> The noise, the glare, the clouds of smoke, the roaring and crackling of the flames . . . he could not help being amazed at the spectral monster which had been there for so long, and what it was turning into. It was a flaming specter, a fiery iceberg. Its sides, where there were no flames, were now a solid mass of ice. The water of the hoses had turned to ice as it ran down the walls, and had created an icy armour, many feet in thickness. This enormous cocoon of ice did not descend vertically, but swept outwards for perhaps fifty yards . . . The flames rising into the sky seemed somehow cold and conventional, as if it had been their duty to go on aspiring, but they were doing it because they must, not because they had any lust of destruction. These were the flames that still reached up above the skyline of the facade. But a new generation of fiery monsters, a half-hour younger, appeared behind them, a darker red and full of muscular leaps, charged with the authentic will to devour and to consume. And there were dense volumes of black smoke too, where fresh areas were being brought into the holocaust.
>
> (*SC*: 290)

Directly, René thinks of war. There is no mistaking the centrality of this event and its description, a textual icon reverberating on the whole narrative with full visual strength. The destructive office of the flames reminds the historian of the efficient extermination which is taking place in Europe, and of the explanations, theories and pretexts which he had once provided, to justify it. The fire in the hotel and the castle of ice which eventually terminates its transformation unify the theme of history in terms, visual and verbal, which unmistakably belong to the realm, and language, of the Gothic[32]:

> It was a magnificent sight; a block of ice towering over everything in the immediate neighbourhood. It was of course a hollow iceberg . . . It was now an enormous cave, full of mighty icicles as much as thirty feet long, and as thick as a tree, suspended from the skeleton of a roof. Below, one looked down into an icy labyrinth: here and there vistas leading the eye on to other caverns: and tunnels ending in mirrors, it seemed . . . This hollow berg was an unearthly creation,

> dangerous to enter because so unstable . . . It was a sinister, upside down forest of ice, rooted in the air; a piece of sub-polar absurdity . . .
> (*SC*: 296–7)

The destruction of the hotel starts a new phase in the exile of the Hardings, that which sees Hester's increasing despair at the news from Europe, matched by René's obstinacy in finding new job opportunities. The great question, 'Was London or Momaco the better place for René Harding in the year 1944?' (*SC*: 310) is meant to indicate that there is no return, to London, no turning back of the clock: the historian has planned his own destiny, 'hysterically, fanatically, almost insanely'. This is why, when René gets involved with the academic *milieu*, where he is hailed again as a follower of Nietszche and, like Joyce, Lloyd Wright, the Abstractists and the Bolshevists, as the author of modernity, who has tried to overstep the past in his violent 'wish to supermanize the writing of history' (*SC*: 315) – this is why his wife, at the news that he will accept the offer of a chair in Momaco, commits suicide.

Hester has never been taken into the picture by René, except for her physical beauty. His plans and projects have always centred around himself, his dislikes, his ambitions, his obsessions. The reborn historian does not admit his wife into 'the mysteries of his new theory of History' (*SC*: 347): he plans a book 'of a soaring and heroic dimension' in which he will try 'to find anything of value intact and undiluted in the vortex of slush and nonsense: to discover any foothold . . . in the phenomenal chaos, for the ambitious mind . . . ' (*SC*: 351). Hester, who is no intellectual, is compared to 'a big sad-eyed bitch, who has had a rotten time and reacts hysterically to kindness. She is like an animal . . . ' (*SC*: 349):

> 'You see the picture the wrong way up, Ess, in a most funny, pathetic light . . . '
> 'You have an uncommon capacity for self-deception, my dear René . . . '
> (*SC*: 364)

Hester throws herself under a truck, forcing René to interrupt an academic dinner to visit the Police Headquarters and find her scattered remains 'arranged upon something like a fishmonger's display slab':

> They were arranged in the most paradoxical way. Like a *graffito* the essentials were picked out. He recognised the low-bottomed silhouette of a female figure, the clothes shapeless and black with blood.

> Slightly to one side there was a pair of legs in horrible detachment, like a pair of legs for a doll upon a factory table, before they have been stuck on to the body. At the top, was the long forward-straining, as it were yearning neck. Topmost was the bloodstained head of Hester, lying on its side. The poor hair was full of mud, which flattened it upon the skull. Her eye protruded: it was strange it should still have the strength to go peering on in the darkness.
>
> (*SC*: 371)

The historian tries to seize the head of his wife and carry it away with him. The last chapters bring to conclusion what had been there from the very beginning. In hospital Hester appears to René, aestheticised by death into an assemblage of fragments, juxtaposed bodily parts, a *graffito* woman for a modernist artist. But the Gothic intervenes to dispel all formal, artistic temptations in a characteristic way:

> In trembling horror he grasped the decapitated head, and pressed her dead face against his. And then the lifeless lips moved and grew warm. With amazement, and soon with delight, he felt the warming lips glueing themselves against his. His entire body responded, for she was no longer merely a head. Love had brought her to life again. He imagined, in a sort of delirium, this miracle . . . Attempting always to conjure this horror, he implored Hester to keep together – to be her old self.
>
> (*SC*: 376)

The severed fragments of a beautiful body unite to remind René of the woman he has killed. Leaving the hospital to convalesce in the Jesuit convent of the Sacred Heart, Harding tries, via conversion, to free himself from 'the spiritist degeneration which had ensued upon the suicide of Hester' and to weaken 'the grasp of the dead woman' (*SC*: 389). It is in this phase that he starts reasoning about her suicide, convincing himself that it was 'an act of insane coercion' dictated by her wish to return to Europe, and deftly executed by his wife as a 'masterpiece of illusionism': the decapitated head, René thinks, survived intact 'to pull the heartstrings', to awaken pity and tenderness, to be encountered in dreams of 'ludicrous sentimental intensity' (*SC*: 394). Finally he disposes of Hester:

> Was any pity due from him to this mutilated corpse? How pitiable almost any corpse is! But this was an aggressive corpse – it was death

> militant. This dead body was there with a purpose. It was designed to upset his applecart, violently to interfere with his life. It was a japanese-like suicide, a form of vengeance.
>
> (*SC*: 395)

Having turned his back against England and his family, his work, his wife, René is able to turn away from the corpse and the suicide. Having accepted a chair of history, he relapses into his former occupation; but the man has turned into a machine, his personality an empty shell. And he realises it, being conscious of the dead parts, disintegrated by a habit of furious analysis which has 'injured irreparably his creative will' (*SC*: 401). Inside, he confesses to a friend during a bout of vomiting, he feels his body 'in a torturer's press, the bones . . . squeezed through the skin; my mind as well, it is in a malignant vice' (*SC*: 404). Outside, the external surface shows that 'The presence of all this molten material within did not affect the impenetrability of the shell, nor did it interfere with the insect-like activity with which he proceeded with the concreting of his position of academic success . . . the Faculty had no idea that it was the glacial shell of a man who had come to live among them . . . ' (*SC*: 407).

The elements which eventually compose the personality of Professor Harding, while obeying Lewis's aesthetics of satire and external style, do now also admit that 'Dark Within' which was formerly excluded from his fictional purposes. In this novel, it has been noticed, 'unconscious material rises dangerously close to the surface . . . *Self Condemned* is surely the closest he ever came to self-knowledge.'[33] Harding's deliberate exile, an inwardly-turned neutralisation of his innate tendency to aggression, can be read in fictional terms as the dilemma meted out to the satirist, who, in the act of castigating society, must perforce include himself among the sinners. The same destiny, I think, awaits the historian who meant to superhumanise history. This explains why this novel, for Jameson 'surely the most desolate of all his works', manages to be 'a good deal more forbidding and alienating than the most thoroughgoing ethical reevaluation and condemnation of an earlier self'.[34] Alternating between a cold hostility of judgement and a communion of pathos with the protagonist, the hard without and the dark within, the narrative emphasises that the historian's ultimate rebirth 'consummated as he is physically flung up and down like the victim of a shell-blast, is a chillingly malignant event. His is a re-birth, but a "sepulchral" one'.[35]

T. S. Eliot defined *Self Condemned* as 'a book of almost unbearable spiritual agony'.[36] Intentionally, Wyndham Lewis made use of Gothic

motifs, colour, landscape, material. Within the claustrophobic setting of the hotel room, transformed into a castle of ice where a labyrinth of mirrors spells the circularity of self-destruction, satire and external style contend with the idea of historical objectivity, phenomenology is assailed by nostalgia, the aesthetic warfare of modernism clashes against the war reports, modernity is crushed by its history of exterminations and holocaust. The Gothic provides the only language fit to contain, retrospectively, the will to destruction and the painful perception of the ruin.

Notes

1. John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (1853), in E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (eds), *The Complete Works of John Ruskin* (Library Edition), 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903–12), Vol. 10, p. 184, ff. All subsequent references are taken from this edition, and are given in the text. On Gothic architecture see John Unrau, 'Ruskin, the Workman and the Savageness of Gothic', in Robert Hewison (ed.), *New Approaches to Ruskin* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 33–50.
2. See the collection of essays in the forthcoming volume edited by Maria Antonietta Cerutti, *Ruskin and the Twentieth Century*, and on Ruskin's visual politics, the Picturesque, and modernist aesthetics my 'Picturesque Landscape vs. Modern Space: an Agony, in Three Fits', pp. 70–97. A twin volume exploring the same area is also forthcoming: Giovanni Cianci and Peter Nicholls (eds), *Ruskin and Modernism* (London: Macmillan).
3. Peter Stansky, *On or About December 1910. Early Bloomsbury and Its Intimate World* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 95, 212.
4. Wyndham Lewis, 'Towards an Art-less Society', *Blasting and Bombardiering. An Autobiography 1914–1926* (1937) (London: Calder and Boyars, 1967), p. 256. All subsequent references are taken from this edition, and are given in the text.
5. *BLAST*, 1 and 2 (1914–1915) (rpr. Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981); also see Alan Windsor 'Wyndham Lewis's "Blast and Bless"', in *Wyndham Lewis, Letteratura/Pittura*, ed. Giovanni Cianci (Palermo: Sellerio, 1982), pp. 86–110, and the relevant essays by Ian Duncan, 'Towards a Modernist Poetic, Wyndham Lewis's Early Fiction', pp. 67–85; Michael Durman and Alan Munton, 'Wyndham Lewis and the Nature of Vorticism', pp. 111–18; also G. Cianci, 'A Man at War: Lewis's Vital Geometries', pp. 11–24, in Paul Edwards (ed.), *Volcanic Heaven. Essays on Wyndham Lewis's Painting and Writing* (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1996).
6. 'The Vorticists' appeared in *Vogue*, No. 6, 1956, and is now included in Wyndham Lewis, *Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change: Essays on Art, Literature and Society 1914–1956*, ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1989), pp. 378–83. Lewis chronicles the Vorticist antebellum years in his first autobiography, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937); the Second World War, his self-exile in Canada, and his return to the ruins of post-war London are described in *Rude Assignment: a Narrative of My Career Up-to Date* (1950).

7. Lindsay Smith, *Victorian Photography, Painting and Poetry: the Enigma of Visibility in Ruskin, Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 203. Also see ch. 2 'Gaps On "The Mind's Shelves": Ruskin's Theory of the Grotesque', pp. 53–92.
8. 'Inferior Religions', in *The Little Review*, Sept. 1917, pp. 3–8.
9. Wyndham Lewis, 'The Meaning of the Wild Body', in *The Wild Body, A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927), pp. 243–50.
10. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 337.
11. Walter Michael, 'Irony in a War Picture', in *Volcanic Heaven. Essays on Wyndham Lewis's Painting & Writing*, pp. 135–47.
12. Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, pp. 316–17.
13. Thomas Kush, *Wyndham Lewis's Pictorial Integer* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981), p. 6.
14. Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms. A Literary Guide* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 174.
15. Hence Geoffrey Wagner, *Wyndham Lewis: a Portrait of the Artist as Enemy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957). The study by Frederic Jameson, *Fables of Aggression. Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979) offers excellent critical starting points, to assess the relevance of Gothic art to Lewis's theory of painting and fiction.
16. The idea of 'Modernisms', explored by Peter Nicholls in his *Modernisms. A Literary Guide*, appeared as 'A Geography of Modernism' in Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (eds), *Modernism, 1890–1930* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976) pp. 95–190; and in G. Cianci (ed.), *Modernismo/Modernism* (Milan: Principato, 1991).
17. Cianci, 'A Man at War: Lewis's Vital Geometries', p. 17.
18. Duncan, 'Towards a Modernist Poetic: Wyndham Lewis's Early Fiction', pp. 71–2.
19. Wyndham Lewis, *Satire and Fiction* (London: The Arthur Press, 1930), p. 47. In this pamphlet Lewis defensively maintains his 'external style' to be the aptest strategy not only for satire, but for fiction in general, as applied in his controversial anti-Bloomsbury novel *The Apes of God* (1930). See 'The Satirist and the Physical World', *The Spectator*, Vol. 153, No. 5537 (10 August 1934), p. 196; in W. Lewis, *Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change. Essays on Art, Literature and Society, 1914–1956*, ed. Paul Edwards, pp. 207–10, where the anthropomorphic and externalist character of satire, the restricted realism, the common sense philosophy of its spirit are revived by quoting from Horace Walpole's *Letters* a passage of satire disguised as savage cannibalism.
20. Marquis de Sade, 'Idée sur les romans' (1800) in Victor Sage (ed.), *The Gothic Novel. A Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 48–9.
21. Wyndham Lewis, *The Complete Wild Body*, ed. Bernard Lafourcade (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1982).
22. Wyndham Lewis, *The Tyro. A Review of the Arts of Painting, Sculpture and Design* (London, 1921–2). The 'tyro-characters' are the subjects of a series of drawings shown in the exhibition 'Tyros and Portraits', London, Leicester Galleries, April 1921.

23. Bradbury and McFarlane, *Modernism*, p. 20.
24. The parallel is used by Liliane Weissberg, 'Gothic Spaces: the Political Aesthetics of Toni Morrison's Beloved', in Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith, (eds), *Modern Gothic. A Reader* (Manchester: Manchester Uuniversity Press, 1996), pp. 104–20, at p. 104, where 'the invention of modernity as medieval destruction' establishes the space of modern Gothic via architecture and John Evelyn's regret for the classical structures demolished by 'the Goths or Vandals, who introduced their own licentious style now called modern or gothic'. Actually Evelyn's 1702 statement is a quote from Giorgio *Vasari Vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori et scultori italiani da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri* (1568), 3rd edn, 3 vols, in which Vasari (ch. 18.3) describes an art of ornaments and proportions 'mostruosi e barbari', where all is 'confusione e disordine': 'This manner was found by the Goths, who, when the ancient buildings were destroyed and the architects killed in wars . . . filled Italy with these accursed buildings . . . ': even the Blasts reoccur.
25. Letter published in the *Times Literary Supplement* in December 1934, cited by John Paul Russo, 'A Savage Ambiguity: Wyndham Lewis on the Theory of Impersonality and Sincerity', in *Wyndham Lewis, Letteratura/Pittura*, pp. 175–91 at p. 190. J. P. Russo also observes that 'The author of twenty-three books between 1920 and 1940, the controversialist, the moralist, the enemy needs an adversary': 'There came a time when there were no more controversies, and Lewis called it being "self-condemned" ': ibid., pp. 191, 175.
26. Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art* (1934), ed. with Afterword and Notes by Seamus Cooney (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Black Sparrow Press, 1987), p. 124.
27. Hugh Kenner, 'The Last European', in George Woodcock (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1971), pp. 12–20.
28. Wyndham Lewis, *Self Condemned* (London: Methuen, 1954). All subsequent references are taken from this edition, and are given in the text.
29. The unknown country, defamiliarisation, satire, in the Gothic tradition are discussed by Beate Neumeier in 'Postmodern Gothic: Desire and Reality in Angela Carter's Writing', in Sage and Lloyd Smith, *Modern Gothic. A Reader*, pp. 141–51; the Canadian setting in Susanne Becker, 'Postmodern Feminine Horror Fiction', ibid., pp. 71–80.
30. Wyndham Lewis, *America, I Presume* (New York: Haskell House, 1972), p. 231.
31. Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919) in Sage, *The Gothic Novel. A Casebook*, pp. 76–87, at p. 84: ' . . . or when one wanders about in a dark strange room, looking for the door or the electric switch . . . '.
32. 'Evidently the Gothic is not merely a literary convention or a set of motifs: it is a language, often an anti-historicising language, which provides writers with the critical means of transferring an idea of the otherness of the past into the present.' See 'Introduction' by Sage and Lloyd Smith, *Modern Gothic. A Reader*, pp. 1–5.
33. Jameson, *Fables of Aggression*, p. 145.
34. Jameson, *Fables of Aggression*, pp. 138–9. In such cases 'satire squares its own circle with a portrait of . . . "the satirist satirized." With this . . . a dialectically new form is generated, driven by an internal contradiction . . . ': the contradiction of a Gothic novel about a historian, and the writing of history.

35. C. J. Fox and Robert Edward Murray, 'The War Fiction' in Edwards, *Volcanic Heaven*, pp. 65–85, at p. 72. In *Rotting Hill* (1951), a collection of post-war stories, a character announces: 'We have been forcibly, violently re-born'; this is also the point of *America and Cosmic Man* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1948). For Lewis, p. 155, 'the destiny of America is . . . to be the great, big, promiscuous grave into which tumble, and there disintegrate, all that was formerly race, class, nationhood.' And the man of the future, 'cosmic not only in the flesh, but also in the spirit' will be 'a perfectly eclectic, non-national, internationally-minded creature . . . with no more geographical or cultural roots than a chameleon', ibid., p. 182.
36. Meyers, *The Enemy*, p. 312; on the years spent by the Lewises in the United States and Canada see his chapters on 'Toronto, 1940–1942', pp. 261–74, and 'Windsor and St Louis, 1943–1945', pp. 275–85.

11

Metropolis and the Modernist Gothic

Nigel Morris

Metropolis, a serious, full-length, utopian feature, is arguably the first science fiction film.[1] While this genre problematises current reality and therefore belongs to modernity, it insists, against scientific reason, on the danger of the new. Seeking menace within the familiar, and educing dread in exploration of the unfamiliar, science fiction shares Gothic obsessions with the uncanny. Both invert perceptions, create ambivalence, and transgress binary oppositions by acknowledging the repressed negative within every positive.

Gothic as negative modernity expresses alienation engendered by theories and systems that undermine humanist and commonsense perception, as witnessed by the rise of Darwinism, Marxism, technology, psychoanalysis and relativity. Small wonder mad scientists feature prominently. Twentieth-century Gothic puts less emphasis on setting rational knowledge against spirituality (although residues of that tendency inform *Metropolis*), but posits individualism and community as threatened by regulation. At stake are psychic integrity and confidence in agency and purpose. The modernist Gothic attempts mastery by projecting new fears on to familiar forms.

Metropolis, like many Gothic texts, enters into discourses around leadership, moderation and fear of the mob. Released less than a decade after the Russian revolution and a war in which millions died under officers qualified by class privilege, it condenses social extremes in the image of the robot, who agitates the masses *and* takes orders from the dictator, both of which are monstrous. Oppression and destruction, hope and liberation, are channelled in *Metropolis* through the bifurcated heroine, which focuses anxieties about woman, technology and revolutionary politics.

Metropolis exploits familiar images of 'the raging mob as hysterical' – women, fearing their children lost, start the witchburning – 'engulfing floods' and 'the figure of the red whore at the barricades'.[2] Gothic abhors uncontrolled nature, feminised conventionally against male rationality, even though rampant technology precipitates this crisis. As well as the female other, workers represent animality: Frederick Winslow Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911) infamously maintained that heavy, repetitive metal handling could be more efficiently done by trained gorillas.[3] The immediate source of unrest, Rotwang's laboratory, recalls the windowless workplace in an obscure locality in which Dr Jekyll releases civilisation's debased double, the beast contained by generations of breeding and socialisation.

There are a series of complex images in the film which challenge notions of stability. The repressed returns ubiquitously: religion – official (the Gothic cathedral) and unofficial (Maria's gatherings) – within technocracy; brute labour far below luxurious pleasure gardens; workers' dwellings underground, in direct inverse to the skyscrapers; potential revolution in the rebellion, symbolised by the flood; Rotwang's anachronistic house, squeezed between elevated roadways; spontaneity, superstition and violence, in burning the false Maria; and related repressions, displacements and condensations in the drama between Freder, his father, Rotwang and Maria.

Maria and Freder are both imprisoned by Rotwang, who is following Fredersen's orders. Though neither rape nor murder occurs, Gothic convention imbues with sexual menace Rotwang's pursuit of Maria. He carries her onto the cathedral roof and fights Freder because he dementedly believes her to be his lost love. Rape and murder symbolically threaten Freder's Oedipal challenge: apart from joining the workers, he desires a maternal woman. Stephen Jenkins observes that Freder asks 'Who was that?', not 'Who were they?', on seeing Maria, and that her association with children, who Maria asserts are his 'brothers', makes her a mother figure; class conflict is thus subordinate to desire for Maria, as difference disrupts Freder's Imaginary relations in the Eternal Gardens.[4] Ownership of Maria's image is subsequently asserted by the older men, even in versions that obfuscate that she is Freder's mother's double.

The narrative may incorporate *'tales within tales'* and *'changes of narrators'* which Kosofsky Sedgwick identifies with the Gothic form.[5] The Tower of Babel story and revelation of Fredersen and Rotwang's connection via Hel are straightforward embedded narratives. In a different sense, *Metropolis* 'contains' other tales such as a religious allegory and

a family romance; while the latter informs most classical narratives, in Gothic the psychoanalytic structure is often strikingly apparent.[6] The allegory is simple, with Joh's name suggesting Jehovah, while Maria is John the Baptist, the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene;[7] this drama, played out against Paradise, Hell, Babel and Babylon, idealises Freder's family romance: it justifies his assumption of the role of peacemaker after crucifixion on the dial, bearing the people's suffering and the guilt of privilege, when he cries in agony to his Father. Changes of narrator occur as shifts between the dominant discourse (omniscient narration), Maria's parable (arguably focalised through Freder's visualisation as a listener), Maria's control of the enunciation when an eyeline match answers a worker's question about the identity of the Mediator (she glances at Freder, off-screen), and Freder's own, possibly unreliable, subjectivity.

In the character of Rotwang we find typical images which combine *'Faust- and Wandering Jew-like figures'* that Kosofsky Sedgwick associates with the Gothic. The pentangle on his medieval house ('built by a master wizard') and above the robot is both a sign of necromancy and one point short of a Star of David. As Peter Dolgenos observes, representations of Jews recurrently employed medieval imagery and language and associated them with esoteric knowledge.[8] An earlier German Expressionist film, *The Golem* (1920), confirms the currency of these features: in a medieval town, a rabbi, versed in science and magic, creates a humanoid monster, and both are associated with pentagrams and hexagrams. Rotwang's part in betraying workers into direct action at the behest of the industrialist relates his apparent Jewishness to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories widespread in 1920s Modernism. The Jew, as outcast, relates negatively to ideology, so that his opposite is social cohesion.[9] Hence for the Nazis, the Jew, like Rotwang, was Bolshevik *and* industrialist, impotent (Rotwang's artificial hand signifies castration) *and* seducer (he pursues Maria). The only central character to die, Rotwang is scapegoated so Fredersen can be reconciled with Freder and the people.

Doubles appear everywhere: Maria and Hel; the two Marias; splitting of the Father between Fredersen and Rotwang; the animation of the robot and, in Freder's imagination, the Death statue; Fredersen's tower and the cathedral; and – less obvious but important – Freder's projection of subversive desires on to the robot. If the robot leads the rebellion, Freder does not have to, and can inherit his Father's place in the unchanged Symbolic order.[10] If the robot is a whore, idealisation of the virgin Maria ultimately remains intact. If the robot signifies

castration – Rotwang lost a hand making it, it incites hostility towards the patriarch, and as Freder swoons it is juxtaposed with Death wielding a scythe – its power, paradoxically, is associated with its creator. This permits double fulfilment of Freder's fantasy in killing Rotwang *and* controlling his 'castrated' real father while winning the woman, his mother's image, apparently seen in his father's arms. Andreas Huyssen points out that the loss of control, rising pressure, and deadly explosion in the machine room, occurring after Freder first sees Maria, externalise sexual desire, correlating fear of sex with uncontrolled technology; the Moloch machine is a *vagina dentata*, and it is Maria's sexuality that Rotwang drains off into the robot so it can be destroyed, leaving her compliant, the workers subdued, and Freder's power intact.[11] The Gothic double frequently embodies only part of the original, manifesting abjected or repressed components rather than cloning an identical duplicate.[12]

Additionally, standardisation, typified in industry, imposes normality. Gothic cracks the surface to reveal forces it contains. Fred Botting interprets Fredersen's cynical use of the robot as signifying ideological manipulation required to maintain capitalism during the uncertainties of the 1920s.[13] The perfunctory ending, the facile mediation of 'the heart' between 'the hands' and 'the head' which leaves the structure intact and its problems unresolved, conforms to another Gothic value, identified by Botting: 'virtuous sentimentalism'[14]; in other words, (re)repression. However, we also need to consider the film as Modernist as well as Gothic.

Modernists across the arts embraced cinema; many adopted cinematic techniques in their own medium or became involved with film.[15] To the avant garde, film's popularity and energy struck a blow against bourgeois decorum. HD in 1930 defined cinema as 'mechanical efficiency, modernity and curiosity allied with pure creative impulse' to 'shock weary sensibilities', using the new word 'modernism' to describe the result.[16]

Relationships between film and Modernism nevertheless remain convoluted. Huyssen considers conscious exclusion of mass culture the single defining quality of Modernism.[17] But film is expensive, largely determined by commercial pressures that discourage free experimentation. Cinematic Modernism as alternative practice arrives only after film achieves maturity, decades behind established arts, not always self-consciously part of a movement.

Whatever 'shock of the new' film administered, audiences adapted: comedies such as *The Countryman's First Sight of the Animated Pictures* (1901) and *Uncle Josh at the Moving Pictures* (1901), ridiculed, on behalf

of less credulous spectators, the bumpkin's attempts to expose reality 'behind' the screen. *Uncle Josh*, like the theatricality of Georges Méliès's fantasies – and later Expressionism, exemplified by *Metropolis* – demonstrates too that film routinely flaunted textuality and was a long way yet from the realism that Modernism in other arts contested.

Some Modernists dismissed cinema as promoting debased values, severed from tradition. This was not entirely snobbery: early filmmaking had little conception of expression, communication or, least of all, art. The freshness of studies by the Lumière brothers, the first public exhibitors in 1895, lies in close observation of the familiar, combined with care to demonstrate the fidelity of the system as a scientific device. Méliès's fantasies charm by their ingenuity, imagination and unbounded enthusiasm for magical illusion. Many films, however, existed merely to encourage equipment sales: directed by whoever was not in front of the camera, they became a commodity, sold by the foot.

These conditions nevertheless fostered ways of seeing that spread quickly.[18] Yet film was not entirely new. Optical toys, automata, waxworks, lantern shows, camera obscuras, simulators, panoramas, dioramas, folk museums and panoramic novels had all sought to reproduce reality. Film, the culmination of converging projects, was as much a part of as a response to modernity.

Life itself became a show. Raymond Williams, who considered film 'the definitive Modernist mode', argued it 'secretes the city in its very *form* long before it has ever announced itself to us as an explicit theme (*Metropolis* and its successors) – and, indeed, even if it does not address it specifically.'[19] Actual crowd scenes and cityscapes inspired *Metropolis*, which fused a documentary style with Méliès's fantastic mise-en-scène. Lang incorporated similar effects – cars, trains, aircraft and scenes of transmogrification – but pushed the spectacle further than anything previously attempted. He also drew on 'city mystery' serials such as *Fantômas* (1913–14). Ian Christie's description of these applies easily to *Metropolis*:

> They operated in a heightened world of abrupt contrasts (anything can lie on the other side of a door), total illusion (nothing is what it seems), and instant transport and communication (the video phone was an early serial gadget). In these breathless tales, process takes precedence over plot; sensation over morality and paranoia over reality.[20]

The machine rooms inflect another early popular genre, the industrial documentary. In Lang's alienated world the life-consuming machines

produce nothing. Operatives wrestle giant clocks, a metaphorical struggle against time. Gauges, ordinarily measuring rather than controlling devices, have reversed their indexical relationship to production within the satirised logic of Taylorism (a system that attracted both Henry Ford and Lenin[21]): the schedule becomes an end in itself.

Such an attitude towards time is distinctly modern, related to hourly payment and piecework, but also intimately connected with cinema. Méliès first separated screen time from real time, by introducing editing. This permitted different ordering of events, according to narrative demands. Other manipulations also became common. Shortage of new films caused early exhibitors to appeal to jaded tastes by projecting backwards or varying the speed, desperate to squeeze more profit from existing stock. Scientific films, immensely popular, included time-lapse recordings of plants growing. Duration was demonstrably relative and subjective, even though standardised by time zones introduced to coordinate train schedules and telegraphy. Meanwhile Bergson, Freud, Proust and Einstein were exploring relations between space and time, past and present.

Time, which the new century symbolised, was a major fascination. Trains featured prominently in films. Chases were immensely popular. While cinema expressed admiration for railroad efficiency, the destruction, absurdism and anti-authoritarianism of slapstick, a carnivalesque confrontation with mechanisation that typically involved machinelike human behaviour, manifested a certain unease. However, it is in the avant-garde that we find a new mode of representation being formed.

In the 1920s avant-garde film became a discernible movement; non-commercial, typically non-narrative, it rendered inner vision rather than objective reality, and embodied strands developing elsewhere in the arts, from abstract geometry (De Stijl, Bauhaus) to Surrealism. Some of these bore directly on *Metropolis*, particularly the nightmare imagery of technology in Expressionism and the more optimistic engagement with modernity in Constructivism. Many artists experimented with synaesthetic correspondences, treating film as music through attempts to discover visual equivalents to sound; revealingly, Buñuel called *Metropolis* a 'symphony of movement' and 'poetry to our eyes'[22] and Lotte Eisner averred: 'sound has been *visualised* with such intensity that we seem to hear the pistons' throb and the shrill sound of the factory siren'.[23]

Particularly important was Léger's *Ballet mécanique* (1924), which in turn drew on films by Richter and Eggeling, and the commercial director Gance, who with the poet Cendrars made *La Roue* (1922). This

contains Gance's face superimposed on blurred railway tracks, locomotives hurtling towards camera, spinning wheels, and reciprocating connecting rods: simultaneously external vision and psychological expression. The compositions of wheels and rods – machinery as aesthetics – strikingly resemble Léger's paintings. Pound, though he damned *La Roue* as 'the usual drivelling idiocy', conceded these sequences were 'essentially cinematographic', not derivative from existing arts as he considered *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919) to be. L'Herbier's *L'Inhumaine* (1924), which features Satie, Joyce, Picasso, Man Ray and several Surrealists, opens on a Léger construction of rotating wheel and rods. *Metropolis* pays homage to this recurrent Modernist image when three workers, choreographed into angular stylised movement, pass like a single machine component before the dial. *L'Inhumaine* includes novelties such as radio and television, together with a somewhat Gothic-influenced 'revivifying machine', in a laboratory comprising equipment designed by Léger after his paintings, but influenced by the set of Capek's robot play *RUR* (1920) which also impacted upon *Metropolis*.

Léger's *Ballet mécanique* divorces time, determined by rhythm and duration, from narrative. Representation drains away: an extended shot of a woman on a swing becomes a rhythmic pattern. Rhythm within shots complements rhythm imposed through editing: a shot of a washerwoman climbing steps recurs continually, like a loop. Objects are anthropomorphised, humans mechanised: a common Modernist conceit. This formalist, yet pertinently metaphorical, mode of seeing, evident also in Cubism, Futurism, Surrealism and, emphatically, Dada, where it focuses a critical attack on dehumanising capitalism, recurs in experimental 1920s cinema.[24] Manifestation of the Weimar *Neue Sachlichkeit* ('New Objectivity'), it motivates geometrical crowd movements in *Metropolis*; these derive from staging techniques in German Expressionist theatre not, as Kracauer alleged, proto-Nazi tendencies on Lang's part.[25] Indeed, Kracauer himself in the 1920s, while he deplored 'machinelike' aspects of modernity, became enchanted by the 'fusion of people and things' in popular entertainment and effused about the Tiller Girls (a British dance troupe he mistook for Americans). Like the *Metropolis* robot, they displayed 'delightful Taylorism of the arms and legs, mechanized charm'; they epitomised 'Technology whose grace is seductive. . . . A representation of American virtues, a flirt by the stopwatch.'[26] The same aesthetic led equally to Busby Berkeley musicals in 1930s Hollywood as to the Third Reich. Less optimistically, the diagonal forms of Lang's crowds and individual postures, and Cubistic distortions of sets, owe much to Expressionist cityscapes and street

scenes such as those painted by Grosz (especially *Explosion* [1917]), and Meidner, who designed *Die Strasse* (1923); the menace, fear and derangement in these suggest continuity with Gothic. Léger also used prismatic lenses, adopted in *Metropolis* in the opening expressionistic machine images and to convey Freder's breakdown. These fragmentations derive from Vorticism, via Léger's friendship with Pound, of whom a 'vortoscope' photograph had been exhibited (1916).

The mise-en-scène is finally what impresses in *Metropolis*, for its breathtaking spectacle and mythic resonances. Combs, echoing Buñuel, insists these qualities rest 'on such a tritely insignificant moral . . . that the film's visuals acquire a splendid, abstract poetry of their own'[27]: Modernism by default.

In Weimar Germany, films provoked theorisation about the centrality of spatial experience before the concept became doctrinal in the Modern Movement. Sets also are synecdochic of the fictional world, inscribe culture and history, contribute to narrative, indicate character, and so on. This inextricability of form and function satisfies a modernist dogma; and moreover, without practical restrictions on construction, film architecture could aspire to the purity of other modernist arts, material embodiment of affect.

In *Metropolis* the cathedral is never shown in its entirety, indicating modernity's marginalisation of heritage. This ideal, of course, has historical precedent. Botting quotes the eighteenth-century essayist Blair on the Gothic cathedral as a source of the sublime which 'raises ideas of grandeur in our minds, by its size, its height, its awful obscurity, its strength, its antiquity, and its durability'.[28] It is noteworthy, then, that Freder's vision of the robot – which, Eisner observes, enthrones her on the Beast of the Apocalypse – was to have incorporated further medieval images of forces she has unleashed. All that existing prints retain are the animation of Death and the Deadly Sins, a punch-up, a duel and a suicide over the false Maria, the fury of the workers, and revellers taking to the streets. In earlier versions (whether actually filmed is unclear) demons were released and Death and the Sins entered the city. Gothic and Modernism interacted, as rioters torched cars, damaging the suspended freeways; when these were welded, the glare attracted gargoyles from the cathedral. This would, Eisner suggests, have resulted in a very different mystical tone, making the issue rather more than an unresolved industrial dispute, against which the ending might have appeared less false.[29]

Lang's bizarre juxtapositions are not mere idiosyncrasy. Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* was advertised in 1924 by covering Berlin's biggest cinema

to depict skyscrapers, though these did not feature prominently within the film. The intention, Dietrich Neumann explains, was not futuristic but to represent impassive modernity as frenetic.[30] High-rise buildings were controversial in German city planning, debated in terms of urban versus country living, industrialisation versus agrarianism, and – significantly – Americanism versus medievalism. Freder's vision of the machine halls echoes Spengler's warning: '[T]he giant city sucks the country dry, insatiably and incessantly demanding and devouring fresh streams of men till it wearies and dies.'[31]

When Wells insisted Lang's vertical social stratification was 'a third of a century out of date' because market forces would situate factories and low-cost housing in suburbs, he misunderstood that *Metropolis* was not literally prophesying urban development but staging current fears.[32] Architects, planners and politicians generally considered high-rise desirable. New York fascinated as a symbol of modernity, in toys, advertisements and American comedies such as Harold Lloyd in *Safety Last* (*Ausgerechnet Wolkenkratzer* ['Especially Skyscrapers'] 1923).[33] However, at stake was a society humiliated in 1918, subjected to enormous reparations and spiralling inflation, that experienced fifteen governments in as many years. These pressures incited vehement nationalism. Tall buildings focused anti-American conservativism – extended also to cultural symbols such as jazz, boxing, revues, radio and cinema.[34] Columnists expatiated on how skyscrapers blocked light and ventilation and glorified vulgarity. The normally liberal Kracauer called them 'towering monsters, owing their existence to the unlimited greed of beastly capitalism, assembled in the most chaotic and senseless fashion, clad in a luxurious false architecture, which is far from appropriate for its profane purpose'.[35]

Even so, Kracauer and others argued Germany *should* have skyscrapers to portray progress, provided they differed sufficiently from the American model. Regulated planning should ensure social responsibility preceded profit. A widely favoured scheme predicated numerous cities, each with one huge building equivalent to a cathedral. In fact, early designs for *Metropolis* presented an attractive city, with flowing traffic, segregated pedestrians, glass buildings in the van der Rohe style and comfortable houses around the cathedral, which formed the central focus: 'a bastion', Neumann writes, against 'modernity and the decadence of foreign cultures'. Lang crossed it out, noting: 'Away with the church; Tower of Babel instead.'[36] Hence the shifts between the central tower and cathedral as the main loci of action in the upper city. Discussing his previous film, *The Nibelungen* (1924), Lang praised construction of

> the German cathedral and the German forest on the studio grounds. . . . Not in the American style. . . . [T]he spirit that pervades the Nibelungen sets has more of the breath of universality than has ever arisen from the grounds of Los Angeles, since it stems from the original essence of a great nation. . . . [37]

This also partly explains why the skyscraper, seat of ruthless capitalism (and an ironic copy of Kohtz's *Project for federal office building for Berlin* [1920]), is 'The New Tower of Babel', set against Maria's utopian vision of the original Tower before slavery tarnished it – particularly as the latter is related both to German tradition, being based on a 1563 Breugel painting (another central building surrounded by a city), and to the new spirit of declaration by resembling proposals such as Poelzig's *Festspielhaus* for Berlin (1927) and *Project for a trade fair tower* (1920) by Haimovici, Tschammer and Caroli. There was strong desire for a 'monumental symbolic gesture' to assert 'unvanquished German will [. . .] offering reconciliation with the lost spirituality of the Middle Ages'.[38]

If, as Botting says, the machines possess 'the terrifying sublimity of Gothic architecture', it is an architecture shot through with ambiguity.[39] A decadent mode, Gothic here epitomises what is mourned – tradition forgotten and corrupted – and reasserts itself even while embodying monstrous qualities of what it intends to oppose. Lang's brutally modernist buildings in close up oppose the 'luxurious false architecture' rejected by Kracauer, who presumably recalled Gothic detailing on New York edifices such as the Woolworth Building; in longer shots they form buttresses and arches, terraces and pillars, as individual blocks, reduced to excrescences stepped back in regular patterns, seem to diminish into ornamentation: soaring, grooved, elegantly symmetrical, audacious as any cathedral.

The significance of the art direction could hardly have escaped original German audiences. The base of the workers' gong imitates Gropius's Expressionist *Monument in the Weimar Cemetery* (1920–2), dedicated, against right-wing criticism, to miners shot during a 1921 strike. As if to reinforce this, buildings shown when Freder demands that his father recognise the workers recall Lissitzky's Soviet Constructivist *Rendering for architectural structure* (1924). Purpose, ownership, and location of architecture are central questions to *Metropolis*, even if the evasive dénouement occurs on the cathedral steps. The city as body politic – of which the uncontrolled robot is a microcosm (the skyscrapers representing the mind, the machine halls the hands, the catacombs the heart) – suggests desire for social integration more deep-rooted than

the facile ending allows. The cinematic presentation of the problem is as astute as the solution is unacceptable.

Lang claimed that New York manifested a hard-edged modernist impressionism which inspired his representation of the city in *Metropolis*: 'I saw a street lit as if in full daylight by neon lights, and topping them oversized luminous advertisements, moving, turning, flashing on and off, spiraling . . . something which was completely new', then dissolves into Gothic, 'and nearly fairy-tale-like for a European in those days' in which:

> The buildings seemed to be a vertical veil, shimmering, almost weightless, a luxurious cloth hung from the dark sky to dazzle, distract, and hypnotize. At night the city did not give the impression of being alive; it lived as illusions lived. I knew then that I had to make a film about all of these sensations.[40]

In fact this was not '*completely* new'. The initial precision and the sensations enumerated afterwards fetishise the image. This 'veiled' city supplants an imagined metropolis, New York-ness in advance. The experience in comparison is not 'alive' but an 'illusion' to be pursued by Lang making the film. Also enacted here is the cinema spectator's simultaneous distance from and immersion in spectacle, as Lang transforms the scene mentally into a projected image. A 'shimmering', 'weightless' 'veil', 'fairy-tale-like' 'illusions', a 'cloth' hung – like a screen – in darkness, 'to dazzle, distract, and hypnotize', condense cinematic and Gothic imagery, displacing the actual city on to another scene.

Tension between disbelief and response heightens when special effects serve as attractions, for these require verisimilitude in order to astonish. Spectatorship resembles Gothic mechanisms: as Punter recalls, ghost stories 'propose two alternate members of the audience, the second being by definition someone' – Uncle Josh? – 'more credulous and thus more scared than oneself'.[41] *Metropolis* foregrounds this split by cutting from Maria's vision of the Tower of Babel to a shot of it surrounded by its planners, exposing it – like all the buildings – as a diminutive model.

Cinema arrived with connotations ideal for Gothic concerns.[42] The medium (an apposite pun) itself comprises translucent apparitions, animated doubles of real people and locations, summoned in darkness from a different time and place by dimly understood processes. To the Lumières' reviewers a supernatural implication transcended all others:

'death will cease to be absolute'; 'it will be possible to see our nearest alive again long after they have gone'.[43] In *Metropolis*, Fredersen's television, signifying modernity, incorporates the Gothic notion of ghostly messages – in particular, human images – travelling through air or wires. Its panoptical implications, moreover, evoke primitive fears concerning theft of identity. Clearly this relates to Rotwang's duplication of Maria on to his robot and consequent jeopardising of her reputation and integrity.

Lang, describing Manhattan cinematically, attributes affective powers to the allure. It 'dazzles', 'distracts' and 'hypnotizes': the spectator is vulnerable, just as workers and revellers alike in *Metropolis* are influenced by the robot. It is commonplace in film theory that the camera's gaze is implicitly male, and cinema from the start has eroticised the female body for spectators' voyeuristic gratification.[44] So, too, the female in classical narratives functions as enigma, lure and reward, and is the contested object of desire. Furthermore, modernist condemnations of popular culture in the 1920s repeatedly associated mass forms with women, and in *Metropolis* it is the appearance of hysterical working-class women that finally edges matters beyond control.[45] I want to argue in conclusion that the robot, as a meretricious, soulless, harmful, *female* attraction, articulates a self-reflexive discourse around German cinema, much as the city embodies architectural debates mobilising questions of national identity and destiny.

Metropolis was made at Babelsberg, headquarters of UFA. Bigger than anything in Hollywood, the studio was itself virtually a city. It seems hardly coincidental that its name echoes in the references to the Tower of Babel, symbol of the desire for universal communication. (Lang in 1924 called the film 'the Esperanto of the entire world'.[46]) Consolidated originally to counter anti-German wartime propaganda, UFA was entrusted specifically to challenge American dominance of the industry in peace. One reason Lang went to New York was a fact-finding mission. Meanwhile, German cinema underwent perceived Americanisation. Kracauer reported a conference of designers, industrialists, educators and politicians who debated 'the fact of Americanism, which seems to advance like a natural force'.[47] Europe's costliest, most ambitious picture, *Metropolis* was not intended to reap profits but to assert German film-making, recover costs, and establish an American market.[48]

In 1925 UFA joined Paramount and MGM to form a distributor for American films in Germany, in return for a huge loan partly to cushion runaway inflation. Ironically, *Metropolis* exacerbated UFA's financial problems, and its United States release came shortly before the *The Jazz*

Singer (1927) ushered in sound – introducing a confusion of tongues that halted every national industry's aspiration towards the heaven of worldwide cinematic communion.

There is a case for seeing Maria, the visionary of her people's destiny, as representing authentic German cinema, like the *ingénue* in mountain films: *her* look, guiding the children towards truth, attracts Freder; she is not eroticised by his gaze. In contrast, the robot – associated with mass production, used cynically to dupe the people, arguably a creation of Jewish ambition – offers false emotions and cheap sensations, leads the people astray as she prostitutes herself, and in other words incarnates paranoid hostility towards Hollywood. The New Tower of Babel, centre of capitalism, indicates one possible future for German cinema. The helmet of the untransformed robot, after all, resembles the art deco top of the Chrysler Building.

David J. Levin argues that *The Nibelungen* 'formulates an implicit statement of where film should be going as well as an allegorical account of whose hands it is in'.[49] Like its Wagnerian predecessor, it locates the hero's vulnerability in his narrative function, not, as in the original myth, a physical weakness. In both versions Siegfried, embodiment of Aryan destiny, allows his representation to be controlled by another. His fate warns against ceding national determination. Levin stresses the legend's longevity and centrality in defining what is – and, crucially, is *not* – German.

Wagner situated this conflict in a romantic view of a pure, natural, national language, corrupted by modernity. In Lang's variant, replete with self-reflexive devices, Siegfried is murdered for becoming a passive looker rather than active possessor of the gaze, and for allowing his narrative to be appropriated by foreign vision. The film allegorises the perceived threat to German cinema, as expression of national genius, from the easy pleasures of American culture. Levin demonstrates too how Hollywood becomes compounded with Jewishness as Germany's defining other.

Metropolis focuses similar concerns on Maria. Earlier science fiction writers, Villiers in *The Future Eve* (1891) and Verne in *The Carpathian Castle* (1892), wrote about technological manufacture of an idealised woman by a man intent on perfection. This masculine fantasy, Huyssen suggests, seeks, by controlling woman's creation, to destroy otherness: to fulfil the ultimate technological aim of mastering nature.[50] Cinema, unique among arts in having an indexical relationship to nature, appears to eliminate the culture/nature split. In Villiers's version the android (his term) is created by none other than Edison, the pioneer of

cinematography, who was known as 'the wizard of Menlo Park'.[51] This conflation of beauty, artificiality, cinema and magic is absolutely pertinent to Rotwang's creation, as is the connection with Yankee ingenuity and enterprise.

Maria is a blonde, glowing Aryan, protector and saviour of children and comfort and guide to the workers. Associated with womb-like caverns – *Metropolis* means '*mother*-state' – amidst catacombs containing skeletons, and with Christianity, she personifies life and continuity, thereby linking pan-Germanist virtues to Gothic. Gothic, in a modernist variant, was the distinguishing mode of 1920s German cinema, which adopted Expressionism for both cultural and commercial reasons.

As Elsaesser suggests, making the false Maria the *femme fatale* turns her into an object of male desire, centred on Freder's narcissism, a fetish to disavow his lack.[52] But, as already mentioned, cinema routinely uses woman this way to elicit visual pleasure. Her representation is typically, as Laura Mulvey puts it, 'an illusion cut to the measure of desire'.[53] Maria, the organiser and orator – clearly competent and charismatic – has no say in how Freder and the camera idealise her, then position her as maiden in distress. Nor can she control how her image is appropriated, eroticised, by the robot's striptease, both product of, and satisfaction of, the gaze: possibly Freder's hallucination, this is nevertheless offered for the film audience's pleasure.

The woman's image is stolen and commodified, reinforcing patriarchy. *Metropolis* appears uncomfortable about this, as revellers stare lasciviously at the robot Maria in a sequence that 'undresses' her explicitly in light that renders her cloak transparent – the showman's *risqué* promise of X-ray films – and culminates in grotesquely superimposed close-up eyes. The gaze is defamiliarised, made monstrous, its diegetic status unclear. Are these men staring at 'Maria' in a cross-cut sequence or in Freder's imagination? (Rotwang's 'testing' of the robot, ostensible cause of Freder's jealousy, is narratively redundant as Freder's jealousy proves *he* has fallen for the illusion.) The gaze becomes disembodied, decentred, before guilt and shame are projected on to the woman as vamp.

Why should the film evince such self-conscious difficulty with a standard treatment of sexual difference? As Jenkins points out, Maria as a force to be both seen and contained motivates the shot, through Rotwang's skylight, of her screaming, and her encasement in glass during the transformation. This scene then echoes her earlier entrapment in Rotwang's torchbeam, as she and the robot are encircled in light.[54]

I would emphasise that capturing her moving image and *projecting* it on to the robot entails an electrochemical process effected through light – literally, cinematography.[55]

Von Harbou had stressed in relation to *The Nibelungen* the susceptibility of exhausted workers to the pace and stimulation of American films in comparison to the weightiness of German culture: 'after a long day of frazzling work, the *Volk* in its entirety . . . cannot muster the spiritual fortitude to take up a thick book and read it with its own tired eyes.'[56] *Metropolis* offered stimulation for those eyes, while the theft of Maria's image and its abuse in leading the people astray create a *mise-en-abîme*, expressing justified fears about Babelsberg's imminent usurpation by Hollywood Babylon.

An alternative reading remains. UFA was joint-financed by government and powerful private trusts, and charged, according to one account, with making escapist films to 'distract attention . . . and in various ways cast doubt on the prospects for revolution'.[57] White-collar workers, living with astronomical inflation and facing unemployment, were effectively in the same trap as labourers; however they denied their status, choosing instead 'to recycle the remnants of bourgeois culture' in 'metropolitan "barracks of pleasure" (entertainment malls . . . picture palaces, etc.)'.[58] Yoshiwara, rather than a pleasure dome for the privileged could be seen as a diversion for self-deluding middle classes while the true power remains at the top. Given the negativity of the film's view of manufacturing and the unsatisfactory closure, Lang's target could have been not Hollywood but the hijacking of entertainment by interests closer to home.

'Gothic writers work – consciously or unconsciously – on the fringe of the acceptable,' Punter states, 'for it is on this borderland that fear resides.'[59] *Metropolis* embraces not the limits of one alternative world, but two – the Gothic of the monarchist past and the Modernism of the republican technocratic future – leaving fear where it had always been, not displaced elsewhere but where they overlap: the present. Gothic, being liminal, a stage for contradictions, cannot achieve unity. Hence the futility of Freder becoming mediator. The price paid for forcing unity is the tragedy of German history.

Notes

1. Kim Newman in *Empire* (UK), special supplement on science fiction, February 1998, p 4. Space travel and time acceleration fantasies had been presented, but as comic shorts; examples include *Journey Across the Impossible* (1904), *The ? Motorist* (*sic*, 1906), *The Aerial Submarine* (1910), *How to Make Time Fly* (1906) and *Onésime the Clockmaker* (1912).

2. Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986) p. 52.
3. The point is made by L. J. Jordanova, 'Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*: Science, Machines and Gender', *Issues in Radical Science*, 17 (June 1985), pp. 5–21, at p. 11.
4. Stephen Jenkins, 'Lang: Fear and Desire', in Stephen Jenkins (ed.), *Fritz Lang: the Image and the Look* (London: British Film Institute, 1981), pp. 38–124 at pp. 82–3.
5. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Arno, 1980), pp. 9–10.
6. Lenora Ledwon, '*Twin Peaks* and the Television Gothic', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 21/4 (Winter, 1993), pp. 260–70.
7. Paul M. Jensen, *The Cinema of Fritz Lang* (New York and London: A. S. Barnes and Co. and A. Zwemmes, 1969), p. 66.
8. Peter Dolgenos, 'The Star on C. A. Rotwang's Door: Turning Kracauer on Its Head', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 25/2 (Summer, 1997), pp. 68–75 at p. 71.
9. See Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1989), p. 125; also David J. Levin, *Richard Wagner, Fritz Lang, and the Nibelungen: the Dramaturgy of Disavowal* (Princeton, New Jersey and Chichester, West Sussex: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 85–95.
10. 'Freder Fredersen is a helpless stammer repeating the name of the father', observes Coates, while 'Its echo of the nomenclature of Norse saga' seals the patriarchal continuity that will follow the son's successful challenge: Paul Coates, *The Gorgon's Gaze: German Cinema, Expressionism, and the Image of Horror* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 48. Note how the conventional relationship between the names is reversed, making successful castration of the father a foregone conclusion.
11. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, pp. 79–81.
12. Ledwon, '*Twin Peaks* and the Television Gothic', pp. 260–70.
13. Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 166.
14. Ibid., p. 6.
15. Examples include Joyce, Picasso, Pound, Schoenberg, Richardson, Dos Passos, Dadaists and Surrealists generally, and even Lawrence who, despite giving voice to many attacks on mass media, appears to have been a keen moviegoer whose prose was increasingly influenced by film; see Nigel Morris, 'Lawrence's Response to Film', in Paul Poplawski (ed.), *D. H. Lawrence: a Reference Companion* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), pp. 591–603.
16. James Ronald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus (eds), *Close up 1927–33: Cinema and modernism* (London: Cassell, 1998). pp. 224, 228, 229.
17. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, p. viii.
18. The transforming power of the camera is indicated by Benjamin in a passage strikingly reminiscent of Lady Chatterley's perception of Tevershall as 'ugly, ugly, ugly', which also includes one of many attacks on the falsity of cinema (D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990] p. 158): 'In and of themselves, these offices, furnished rooms, bars, city streets, railway stations, and factories are ugly, incomprehensible, hopelessly sad. Or rather: they were so and seemed so, until film

came along': Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', quoted in original translation by John McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 45.

19. The words quoted are by Fred Inglis, who wrote the posthumous 'Introduction'; Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 11.
20. Ian Christie, *The Last Machine: Early Cinema and the Birth of the Modern World* (London: BFI/BBC Education, 1994), p. 61.
21. Thomas Elsaesser, 'Innocence Restored', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 51/611 (December 1984), pp. 365–6 at p. 366.
22. Luis Buñuel in *Gazeta literaria de madrid* (1927); reprinted in Leo Braudy and Morris Dickstein, *Great Film Directors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 591.
23. Lotte Eisner, *Fritz Lang*, ed. David Robinson (London: Secker and Warburg, 1976), p. 83. For a more detailed account of this context, see my entry, 'Film and Modernism', in Paul Poplawski (ed.), *An Encyclopedia of Literary Modernism 1895–1939* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000).
24. Compare Eisenstein's Cossacks on the steps in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) or the rhythm and energy of 'city symphonies' such as *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927) and *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929).
25. Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: a Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947). However, Lang 'is in no way expressing a Marxist exaltation of the proletariat. If this were so, the hero of *Metropolis* would be a worker': Nancy Schwartz, 'Metropolis', *Velvet Light Trap*, 4 (Spring, 1972), pp. 18–22 at p. 19. Nevertheless, he worked with Brecht in the 1940s and was later investigated by McCarthy. Given that the most regimented arrangements show the crowds as exhausted prisoners or sacrifices to the Moloch machine, it is perverse to see them as a celebration of discipline.
26. Quoted by Miram Bratu Hansen, 'America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on Cinema and Modernity', in Leo Charney and Venessa R. Schwartz (eds), *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 362–402, at p. 371.
27. Richard Combs, 'Retrospective': A review of versions of *Metropolis* by the East German Film Archive and Munich Film Museum, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 43/507 (April 1976), p. 91.
28. Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 6th edn, 3 vols (London: Strachan and Cadell, 1796), p. 59, quoted in Botting, *Gothic*, p. 39.
29. Eisner, *Fritz Lang*, pp. 86–7.
30. Dietrich Neumann, 'Before and after *Metropolis*: Film and Architecture in Search of the Modern City', in Dietrich Neumann, ed, *Film Architecture: Set Designs from Metropolis to Blade Runner* (Munich and New York: Prestel, 1996), pp. 33–8, at p. 33.
31. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1926), p. 102 (drafted 1918); quoted in Neumann, *Film Architecture*, p. 34.
32. H. G. Wells, 'Mr Wells Reviews a Current Film', *New York Times Magazine*, 17 April 1927, p. 4.

33. Neumann, *Film Architecture*, p. 35.
34. See Hansen, 'America, Paris, the Alps'. This unease was not confined to Germany of course: Eliot, Lawrence and Leavis were among many British intellectuals who expressed widespread concerns about the Americanisation of working-class culture.
35. Siegfried Kracauer, 'Turmhäuser', *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 2 March 1921, p. 1; quoted in Neumann, *Film Architecture*, p. 35.
36. Neumann, *Film Architecture*, p. 96.
37. Quoted in Levin, *Richard Wagner, Fritz Lang, and the Nibelungen*, p. 96.
38. Neumann, *Film Architectrue*, p. 36
39. Botting, *Gothic*, p. 166.
40. Quoted by Patrick McGilligon, *Fritz Lang: the Nature of the Beast* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p. 104.
41. David Punter, *The Literature of Terror, Volume 2: The Modern Gothic* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), p. 203.
42. See Christie, *The Last Machine*, pp. 111–12.
43. Quoted in Christie, *The Last Machine*, p. 111.
44. See especially Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16/3 (Autumn, 1975), pp. 6–18.
45. The *Daily Mirror*, an illustrated newspaper launched in 1903 for British women, provoked the comment that 'women habitually think in pictures . . . when men think pictorially, they unsex themselves': quoted by Christie, *The Last Machine*, p. 137. Lawrence was deeply disturbed by female spectatorship, not least in 'Film Passion' (1926), which expresses disgust at the response to Valentino's death. Hitler claimed, '[T]he mob is a woman' and 'the vast majority of people are so feminine': quoted in Roger Dadoun, '*Metropolis*: Mother-City – "Mittler" – Hitler', *Camera Obscura*, 15 (Fall, 1986), pp. 136–63 at p. 159. For a detailed discussion of related issues, see 'Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other', Chapter 3 of Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, pp. 44–62.
46. Quoted in Levin, *Richard Wagner, Fritz Lang, and the Nibelungen*, p. 132; D.W. Griffith also considered cinema 'the universal language that had been predicted in the Bible', according to Lillian Gish, quoted by Christie, *The Last Machine*, p. 129.
47. In *Frankfurter Zeitung*, July 1924; quoted by Hansen, 'America, Paris, the Alps', pp. 367–8.
48. McGilligan, *Fritz Lang: the Nature of the Beast*, p. 110.
49. Levin, *Richard Wagner, Fritz Lang, and the Nibelungen*, p. 98.
50. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, p. 71.
51. Christie, *The Last Machine*, p. 66.
52. Thomas Elsaesser, Review of *Metropolis* (Giorgio Moroder version), *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 51/611 (December 1984), p. 364.
53. Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p. 17.
54. Jenkins, 'Lang: Fear and Desire', p. 85.
55. A later shot of the false Maria's shadow – a projection – running up a metal ladder resembles a strip of film frames. Compromise or destruction of the object of the gaze is a staple of Gothic literature (*Melmoth the Wanderer* [1820], 'The Oval Portrait' [1845], *The Picture of Dorian Gray* [1890]) and of an associated genre, the horror film (*Psycho*, *Peeping Tom* [both 1960] and

numerous imitators) in which it serves as a metaphor for the camera's sadistic gaze at the woman. The way Rotwang's flashlight 'captures' Maria in his look is a striking precursor of *Peeping Tom.*

56. Quoted in Levin, *Richard Wagner, Fritz Lang, and the Nibelungen*, p. 130.
57. Dadoun, '*Metropolis*', p. 140. Dadoun, though he does not cite a source for this assertion, lists the backers as including Krupp Steel, I. G. Farben (chemicals), AEG (elecrical equipment) and Deutsche Bank.
58. Hansen, 'America, Paris, the Alps' (quoting Kracauer), p. 379.
59. Punter, *The Literature of Terror, Volume 2: The Modern Gothic*, p. 189.

12

Hollywood Gothic/Gothic Hollywood: the Example of Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*

Julian Wolfreys

> Keep it out of focus – I want to win the foreign picture award.
>
> Billy Wilder to his cinematographer

> Cinema, like all other forms of writing, leaves something behind, something involving material effects that cannot be hidden.
>
> Peter Brunette and David Wills

Sunset Boulevard (dir. Billy Wilder, 1950) concerns the life – and death – of Joe Gillis, a struggling Hollywood screenwriter. It also focuses on the death-in-life of Norma Desmond, a once famous actress of the silent screen, and now parody of her previous incarnations, as she lives amongst her memories, delusions, and the remnants of a ghostly Hollywood past. Gillis, attempting to save his car from being repossessed, turns into the driveway of Desmond's run-down Sunset Boulevard Mansion. At first, for some inexplicable reason, he is mistaken for an undertaker, the corpse in question being that of the actress's dead chimpanzee. However, on learning Gillis's real profession, Norma invites the writer to stay, to look over an unwieldy melodramatic script retelling the story of Salomé, on which Norma Desmond has been working. Agreeing, Gillis finds himself also agreeing to stay at the house, ostensibly for convenience sake, but, in reality, to avoid the debt collectors. Once there, he finds it increasingly difficult to free himself from the claustrophobic situation into which he has been dragged. Eventually, following a love affair between the has-been actress and never-was writer, an evasive encounter between Norma and director Cecil B. De Mille, a series of melodramatic arguments, and a failed

suicide attempt on the actress's part, Joe attempts to leave, only to be shot by the demented Desmond. The film opens, after the credits, with the image of Gillis's corpse floating in the mansion's swimming pool. An invisible and ghostly narrator, the dead Joe Gillis, returns to provide the incorporeal voice-over, in order to set the record straight, and to tell the true narrative of events, before the media distort reality.

This essay addresses the interanimation between modernism and the Gothic in Hollywood narrative film. In particular, my purpose here is to explore Hollywood's sporadic engagement with modernism, and its more sustained interest in Gothic narrative, through the example of Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*. In considering questions of the Gothic in relation to this movie, we will begin, albeit briefly, by acknowledging the direct or indirect influence of German expressionist film-making on the construction of mainstream cinema in Hollywood. At the most obvious level, this influence is accounted for by the fact that a number of film writers, directors, cinematographers and other technicians had left Germany, and, particularly, Berlin, for Hollywood in the 1920s and 1930s. Billy Wilder was, himself, an émigré film-maker, born in Vienna in 1906, who worked as a writer amongst the various luminaries of the UFA studios in Berlin, such as Wiene, Lang and Pabst, and who subsequently turned to film-making from screenwriting in Paris, before moving to the USA in 1934, at a moment when Gothic narratives were enjoying particular commercial success in Hollywood. By the time Wilder emigrated, Carl Laemmle Jr. had produced, and James Whale directed, some of the key films of the Hollywood horror genre: *Frankenstein* was released in 1931, while *The Bride of Frankenstein* was released in 1935, the year after Wilder's arrival in Hollywood. Laemmle had also produced for Universal Studios *The Mummy* (1932), with Whale's star, Boris Karloff, and *Dracula*, with Bela Lugosi (1931). Thus the genre was well established. At the same time, however, it is necessary to stress the genre's own self-complicating, excessive and modernist aspects.

David Skal, who has written one of the most interesting studies of early Hollywood horror movies, in particular the variations on the *Dracula* narrative, in his *Hollywood Gothic: the Tangled Web of 'Dracula' from Novel to Stage to Screen*,[1] offers an interesting commentary on the necessity of treating the study of *Dracula*'s various manifestations from an interdisciplinary standpoint: 'A completely straightforward academic history would simply not do the subject matter justice; the *Dracula* legend rudely refuses to observe conventional parameters of discussion and touches upon areas as disparate as Romantic literature and modern

marketing research, Victorian sexual mores and the politics of the Hollywood studio system.'[2] While this remark is directed solely at one narrative, it is, we would argue, applicable to *Sunset Boulevard* if not the entire Hollywood horror genre of the 1930s and 1940s with regard to the disparate discursive cross-contaminations of the kind which Wilder's 1950 film foregrounds in interestingly fragmented and self-reflexive fashion. At the same time as taking into account such matters of influence in passing, I will examine the persistent rem(a)inder, the indelible trace which recalls and projects itself as a spectro-cinematic Other in Wilder's movie of the silent screen, its power to signify, to confound determinate signification, and, thereby, to haunt.

What is of especial interest in the acknowledgement of influences and cinematic precursors here is, instead of the more direct, simple question of intertextuality, a somewhat more 'spectral' influence in Hollywood film narrative. The concern is with the haunting of narrative cinema by ghostly manifestations from Hollywood's past and Hollywood's European Other, which ghostly and uncanny effect has less to do with the obvious Gothic contextualisation of the film, than it has to do with the work of cinema itself as a spectral medium *par excellence*. This haunting effect is inscribed at various levels in Wilder's film, whether the question is one of diegesis, the film's various 'styles' or intermixing of genres, the subsequent fragmentation which such cross-contamination effects, or the spectral determination to direct the reception of *Sunset Boulevard*'s narrative through the technological manipulation of certain of its images which mark the film as an exemplary modernist – and Gothic – text. Indeed, bearing in mind the Gothic and uncanny dimensions of the film, what is described as 'interanimation' earlier in this essay might better be described, with regard to Wilder's film, as 'revivification', a filmic return of the dead to a flickering simulacrum of life, if not of living on, in a disruptively uncanny fashion which addresses how, in the words of Bernard Dick, all 'movie-making is necromancy; it is literally bringing the dead to life'.[3] The effects of such spectral tracing disrupt any straightforward temporality in the film, whether one considers those *revenants* who return from cinema's past, a past projected by *Sunset Boulevard* on to itself, or whether one considers the technological-spectral *revenance* of the voice-over, a ghostly manifestation everywhere in the time of the film, yet coming from the film's future, and never present as such.[4] The voice projects from the place of an invisible gaze, and the gaze is that of the spectre, watching us watching. There is thus a certain haunting vigilance in this film, where acts of memory – memories of and from

the past, and the future memory of the film's present, slipping into narrated past from the dead voice of the screenwriter – conjoin, only to disjoin the times of projection and the times of narration.

That *Sunset Boulevard* offers a Gothic narrative is well-known. This is one of the acknowledged and established textual frameworks by which the film is haunted, which it is happy to acknowledge, and which has subsequently been commented on by critics, even though the film is not simply definable as gothic. In effect, the Gothic is not a single genre in this film. Rather, it is divided within itself into several manifestations, so that, in effect, the film traces, and is mediated by, multiple Gothic modes, drawn from literature, German Expressionism, the silent screen, and Hollywood's adaptations of the Gothic novel, to identify only the most obvious. The identity of the Gothic divides itself from and in itself, thereby haunting the very nature of the 'Gothic' through internal returns, transgressions, and the traces, arrivals or projections from Gothic's others. It is thus reasonable to suggest that the film cannot be read as though the Gothic were unproblematically translated in any unified fashion by *Sunset Boulevard*, but, instead, that the film text fragments even as it is fragmented by a range of ghostly writings.

The most succinct assessment of the film's Gothic condition comes from Richard Corliss:

> *Sunset Boulevard* is the definitive Hollywood horror movie. Practically everything . . . is ghoulish. The film is narrated by a corpse that is waiting to be fished out of a swimming pool. Most of it takes place in an old dark house that opens its doors only to the walking dead. The first time our doomed hero . . . enters the house, he is mistaken for an undertaker. Soon after, another corpse is buried – that of a pet monkey, in a white coffin. Outside the house is the swimming pool, at first filled only with rats, and 'the ghost of a tennis court'. The only musical sound in the house is that of the wind, wheezing through the broken pipes of a huge old organ.[5]

This passage is cited by S. S. Prawer in his comprehensive study of Hollywood's indebtedness to German Expressionist horror films such as *Nosferatu* and the uncanny power of early Hollywood horror movies. One narrative aspect of Wilder's text being haunted by its European other is readable in the film's projection of a sense of fatality possessing its characters. Steve Seidman has discussed the influence of Berlin's UFA studio on Wilder in the German studio's use of expressive, dramatic lighting, constant camera movement, the narrative interest

in the workings of the psyche, and the related use of framing and lighting techniques to articulate the 'inner life' of characters, and the exploration of the 'darker aspects of human nature'.[6] In this, Wilder manifests an indebtedness to the work of Murnau, whose own filmic techniques have been acknowledged by Alexandre Astruc as inscribing fatality within 'the most harmless elements of the frame', a condition foregrounded most obviously throughout Wilder's film in the character of Joe Gillis. However, in almost every aspect of *Sunset Boulevard* there is a similarly haunting uncanniness, perceivable as what Astruc (again speaking of Murnau) describes as a 'diffuse presence of an irremediable *something* that will gnaw at and corrupt every image' (emphasis added).[7] This 'diffuse presence' is, we would argue, the effect of the spectral.

Corliss's evaluative narrative précis is also supported in its contentions concerning the Gothic frameworks by the film's non-narrative elements: its use of gloom and shade, stark lighting contrasts and chiaroscuro effects for example, already mentioned. Wilder also works with constant camera movement, counterpointed by moments of stillness, which disorient the viewer in a manner reminiscent of the film's European predecessors. There is also employed the occasionally skewed, emotive camera angle, and the estranging register of any one of a number of protagonists' facial responses, lingeringly filmed.

The camera pauses on expressions as the visible codes of emotional response, particularly those of Gloria Swanson, who plays faded silent star Norma Desmond, but it also hovers around the facial articulations, as instances of a silent, yet expressive visual 'writing', of failed screenwriter Joe Gillis (William Holden), and failed director/husband Max von Mayerling (Erich von Stroheim), along with other minor characters, such as the forgotten silent movie star played by Buster Keaton. As Ed Sikov puts it, 'Wilder chooses shots to express emotions'.[8] In this, the play of German Expressionist cinema and the Hollywood's silent era is put to work, even as it can be read as returning from the past to disturb the film's present (a Gothic motif itself on which *Sunset Boulevard* relies). Simultaneously, the shooting and framing of momentarily still faces turn the characters into viewers, doubling the gaze of the audience, and thereby returning to us in an uncanny fashion our own spectatorial role. Such 'cinematographic enunciation'[9] is readable in the example of *Sunset Boulevard* as being haunted from within by an invisible, ghostly gaze, while, in turn, the audience is written as haunted in its response to the images which inscribe our emotional response to the narrative. We recognise the gaze as spectral inasmuch as we

comprehend how the gaze always comes from somewhere else, how someone or something, that 'diffuse presence', is always watching from some other place or, to complicate this, somewhere *other* than the place from where one watches another watching.

The phrase, 'cinematographic enunciation', refers to 'an appropriation of the expressive possibilities of the cinema . . . enunciation involves a conversion of a language into a discourse . . . Enunciation in fact constitutes the base upon which the persons, places, and times of a text are articulated.'[10] In the case of Wilder's film, however, what occurs repeatedly is the play with and concomitant dissolution of fixed places and times. This occurs not only within the film in its acknowledgement of multiple cinematic and narrative frameworks (which are strategically alluded to only so as to effect their erasure and thereby make apparent the implicitly spectral nature of such referentiality), but also, as in the exemplary instance of the gaze between the world of the film and the world of the audience. The audience finds itself projected as the other of the film into the faces of various characters, while, it is implied, the audience is itself a spectral phenomenon, haunting the ghostly characters on the screen. If *Sunset Boulevard* is a film concerned with Hollywood, it is also a movie haunted by the fear of the loss of the audience (the obsession, we might say, which haunts Norma Desmond; her 'fan mail' is, after all, ghost-written by her servant and ex-husband/ex-director, Max von Mayerling).

As already remarked, through the ways in which facial expression is shot, the film acknowledges not only European cinema in its narrative concerns and its technological devices, it also enunciates its being haunted by the faces and techniques of the silent screen, as Hollywood's ghostly past catches up with, and disturbs from within, Hollywood's moribund present. These projections of otherness destabilise any concrete reality or its unequivocal representation. The film opens for us a sense of uncanny ghostliness by reminding its viewers that there is always a 'relation to a past that, never behind us, is hounding and calling up to us', as Avital Ronell suggests in her consideration of haunting.[11] Such hauntedness 'allows for visitations without making itself at home . . . a relation has been opened to another text which manifests itself without presence yet with infinite nearness'.[12] So *Sunset Boulevard* is opened, and opens itself to our reading, by the constant, multiple projections of alterity which countersign the film with various traces of easily acknowledged frameworks, while neither settling, nor allowing the viewer to settle, into a cosy domesticated familiarity with such traces. To borrow from Ronell again, the film, in its sleepwalking

irreality, is seen as constantly 'taking dictation from a text of the Other'.[13]

There are other aspects of the film which can be read as being traced by the shades of Hollywood's own Gothic past, particularly in its striking use of the dilapidated, uncanny architectural mass of Desmond's house. The German and Transylvanian castles of films such as *Frankenstein*, *The Bride of Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, while translated into the 'rotten sumptuousness and sumptuous rot'[14] of a Sunset Boulevard mansion, haunt this house, making it all the more uncanny as we recognise that its shadows are their shadows, its 'atmosphere' perhaps the most pervasive enunciation of haunting that Wilder's film manifests. As one critic has remarked, the house 'is more ghostly than derelict'.[15] As is well known, the house and the uncanny are always intimately connected, at least since Freud. In the case of *Sunset Boulevard*, Norma Desmond's mansion is both Gothic and uncanny, visually and atmospherically. It is Gothic in appearance, with its broken shutters, weed-strewn tennis court, unkempt vines, and, internally, with over-decorated, even exotic rooms. On pausing to look at the house, Joe Gillis appropriately remarks that the house recalls nothing so much as Dickens's Miss Havisham 'in her rotting wedding dress'. Typically for a screenwriter, Gillis conflates Gothic house with equally Gothic character, as figures for time simultaneously transfixed and anachronistically disrupted and, therefore, unnerving, in the summary process reducing *Great Expectations* to a treatment.[16] There is also, in this comparison, an anticipation of Norma Desmond herself, who, like Miss Havisham, has been left behind, haunted by her other selves, which, in her gestures, her poses, the position of her hands as part of 'an exaggeration of the coded gesticulation of the silent cinema',[17] project through Desmond to disturb Gillis, to disturb the less stylised acting methods of 1950s Hollywood, and, finally, to disturb the viewer in disrupting filmic unity. But to return to the house: house and identity are one. And, as if to emphasise further the Gothic nature of Norma Desmond's house, and to bring back to us the Gothic trace yet again, Gillis describes the house as 'that grim Sunset Castle'. (It is perhaps not too fanciful, given the fact that the majority of the film's scenes are shot after dark and in the house, to suggest that 'sunset' is itself indicative of a moment of temporal transition from rational reality to the time of the Gothic, even as the name is also suggestive of the twilight of cinema.)

However, it is not only a matter of Gothic resemblance and atmosphere with regard to the house. What makes it also uncanny is the spectral persistence of the past within the house. Everything in the house,

including its inhabitants, are anachronistic, so that the sense is one of constant visitation from somewhere else. It is impossible for the viewer to settle into a domestic, stable relationship with the house because everything about it forestalls homeliness while emphasising an uncanny sense of being ill at ease. Furthermore, the past haunts the house's narrative present through the countless photographs of Norma Desmond's younger self. If cinema's greatest illusion is the animation of the dead through the technological device of moving successive still images so as to create the false impression of living, this film draws our attention to the mortification implicit in the photographic text. Moreover, the use of still photographs within the film presents the viewer with an uncanny and disjunctive oscillation within the field of the film's representations, and for two reasons. On the one hand, what the viewer is looking at are not photographs of Norma Desmond, even though this is what we are asked to accept them as. What we are looking at are endless rows of pictures of Gloria Swanson. The real and fictive silent screen and era haunt both temporally and diegetically, for these photographs return from outside the film, as projections of other Hollywoods. On the other hand, the viewer is, arguably, disturbed by the presence of still photography, fixed, 'dead' images, within the apparent animation that is cinema. In this use of the photographs there is readable a ghostly echo of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, both Wilde's novel, and the 1945 film version. What troubles about the photographs most radically, however, is not the idea that the photographs might unequivocally refer to some simple, prior presence. Instead, they play on this possibility of locating the knowable and, in doing so, double the spectrality of representation, its constant haunted status as rem(a)inder. As Geoffrey Batchen comments on still photography, it 'is consistently positioned by its commentators within some sort of play between activity and passivity, presence and absence, time and space, fixity and transiency, observer and observed, real and representation, original and imitation, original and difference'.[18] It is precisely such play which is spectral, because it maintains a play between life and death (thereby collapsing the absolute distinction between terms), as an expression of spectral *maintenance*, to paraphrase Derrida.[19]

The photographs are not the only manifestation of ghostly oscillation with regard to Norma Desmond. Particularly unsettling is the scene where Desmond has Max run one of her silent films for Gillis. Of course, this is a Gloria Swanson movie which both they and we are witnessing, as Wilder cuts between the projection within the projection and the backlit image of Desmond and Gillis as audience. The movement

between shots suggests, to borrow a phrase of Derrida's on spectrality, something 'furtive and untimely',[20] a projection of manifestation of the haunting effect which unsettles time. The time of the narrative is clearly disturbed, but so too is the time of film itself, as one Hollywood is brought to the limit of its expression in being made to confront another. At the height of this uncanny scene, Desmond arises from the couch. Caught in the projected light of the film projector, Desmond silently turns and gestures, in a manner haunted by and recalling her other self, just seen on the screen within the screen. Momentarily, Wilder's film is disrupted internally in an anachronistic overwriting of its own codes, which come together violently while, equally violently resisting resolution into a unified readable image. Instead, film opens itself in an instance of figural and projected alterity, a ghostly aporia, which disrupts, and thus speaks to, the condition of cinema itself. Clearly the house, its contents, its inhabitants and their actions, resonate in the most spectral fashion and, in its and the film's exploration of the condition of Hollywood, projects, albeit ironically, what Robert Stam describes as 'Hollywood's collective dread of obsolescence onto the antiquated style embodied in Wilder's vampiric personage [Norma Desmond]'.[21]

Everywhere, then, within the narrative and its images the Gothic appears, as critics have conceded. Indeed, it positively flaunts its necro- and spectropoetic elements in a manner that is simultaneously ghastly and comic. To recall Richard Corliss, the tennis court is only a ghost of itself, in Joe Gillis's own words, while, on the first night of Gillis's stay in the mansion, he and the audience witness the chimpanzee's burial in the grounds, Max von Mayerling carrying the coffin in a scene of absurd solemnity and solemn absurdity. And then there is the organ. Not only does the wind blow through its pipes, breathing artificial life into its corpse, as Corliss asserts, von Mayerling has occasion to play the organ in one of the film's frequent grand guignol moments. This image is reminiscent of *The Phantom of the Opera*, but the question is, which one? Lon Chaney's 1925 film, or the more recent, 1943 production, with Claude Rains? Arguably, as Hollywood returns within its own constructions, both films are caught in this undecidable moment, disturbing this singularly Gothic instance.

Bernard Dick has suggested that *Sunset Boulevard* is 'a film about the living dead'.[22] As Corliss's précis points out, the opening image is of a corpse floating in the swimming pool. This scene is, itself, discomforting for the viewer, for the camera is placed in the pool, underneath the floating body, the eyes of which remain open, while the body's

disembodied voice begins the narrative, forever displaced from the now lifeless corpse. And, as Ed Sikov sums it up, '[t]he effect is spectacularly macabre. A dimly recognizable body floats slowly across the screen as cops look down and flashbulbs fire. The audience is unnerved not only by the ghastliness of the corpse but also by the position we are asked to assume.'[23] This is not, however, the original opening sequence. Another was shot, but subsequently cut before general release, as it generated negative responses in the preview audiences in the Midwest. This missing scene, familiar amongst Wilder's critics but not generally well known otherwise, was shot in the Los Angeles County Morgue.[24] The shot begins with a body being wheeled in on a gurney, covered with the obligatory white sheet. Past rows of other corpses, the camera follows the body until camera movement, body and gurney come to rest. A voice asks the corpse how it came to be there, in response to which the dead Joe Gillis sits up, and begins to narrate the tale of his life – and his death.

The trace of death and intimations of the Gothic are everywhere, as we can see. A studio executive tells Joe Gillis that one of his scripts is 'as dead as a door nail'. On his arrival at Norma Desmond's mansion, the scriptwriter Gillis is mistaken as an undertaker, as Corliss mentions, and is shown into an exotic room in which lies a dead chimpanzee in state, where Desmond makes clear the specifications for the animal's coffin.[25] In a later discussion of cinema, Norma Desmond says to Gillis that films are 'dead, they're finished', while of scriptwriters she makes the following comment: 'You've made a rope of words and strangled the business.' Moreover, there is, she acknowledges, 'a microphone to catch the last gargle, and technicolor to photograph the red, swollen tongue'. This remark rebounds on Desmond, however. Later visiting De Mille at the Paramount Studio, the actress is disturbed by the 'dead' technology of sound cinema in a scene notable for its silence, when a boom microphone hovers, comically and disturbingly, around Norma's head, as if inviting her to speak. Instead, with a fierce stare and a gesture worthy of the silent screen she swats away the boom. However, the comic aside, if cinema is the art of the living dead, an act of necromancy, it is also a murderous art, indulging grimly, if we accept Desmond's summary, in a gradual process of self-slaughter, where the entire industry reflexively engages in the voyeuristic act of making the ultimate snuff film.

As such a remark makes plain, if *Sunset Boulevard* is about the inescapable confrontation with a haunting past, it is also a film concerned with the industry's disturbance of the sites of its production.

This is readable in the slippage that is at work in the title of the film as that title slides into the name of the street from which the film takes its name, and which is employed, equally economically, as a metonymic or synecdochic figure for Hollywood; or, rather, for both Hollywoods, that *of* and *in* the film, and that which is the site of *Sunset Boulevard*'s production. Wilder's title projects indirectly a certain Hollywood. The play between title and place which disrupts the opening of the film provides an exemplary instance of the film's being haunted within itself. The disfiguration or disjunction named in the street name/film title is also manifestation of disturbing screenwriting as an act of ghosting, serving to project simultaneously the apparition of a particularly Gothic manifestation of Hollywood presented through the film's narrative, while presenting itself as an exemplary and typical slice of Hollywood Gothic. The film begins with its title, as do most films. At the same time, it also starts with the street name, painted on the curb, an architectural boundary which intimates that, spectrally at least, all boundaries are there, only to be dissolved and crossed. The film begins, clearly, with both street name and film title, with the one as the other, each in the place of the other, and both serving to disturb the other's 'proper' function, whether as film title or street name. Whatever we are looking at, our epistemological certainties are momentarily disturbed via a filmed act of writing, or, to put this another way, an act of projection, the projection of writing, which oscillates – between, on the one hand, narrative, and, on the other, topographical reality – in the momentary stillness of the shot, before the camera begins to pull away, before taking in the street itself. Bernard Dick points out that the film begins in the gutter, and that this is a fitting opening visual metaphor from which we can read the film's take on Hollywood.[26]

The disjunction and redoubling effected by the border transference of the title alerts the viewer to the film's modernist self-awareness. At the same time, the disjunctive play between textual forms and the film's numerous others belongs to a more general play of representation, through which, as Derrida argues, 'the point of origin becomes ungraspable'.[27] If *Sunset Boulevard* is a haunted text or, at least, if it manifests so many aspects of haunting, the uncanny, and the spectral, this is because it makes itself available as only the sum of the movement of its traces, none of which is given precedence over any of the others. All is projection and return without centre, presence or origin. To borrow from Derrida again, there is 'an infinite reference' between images, there 'is no longer a simple origin. For what is reflected is split *in itself* and not only as an addition to itself or its image. The reflection, the

image, the double, splits what it doubles.'[28] This can also be seen if we recall the play in the film between the still photographs or film projection in Norma Desmond's house and the film itself, or if we acknowledge to what extent the film is readable as being, in some manner, always about the production of film in general, and not simply about the example of itself. *Sunset Boulevard* is archly reflexive in a manner which unfolds the condition of all cinema – which is, that film is always already caught up in projections of alterity, even when it seeks to suppress its others in order to create the illusion of supposedly simple representation.

As one final narrative example of the disjunction *and* doubling by which the film is both articulated and fragmented, let us take the last scene of *Sunset Boulevard*. After the police and the press have arrived (for the second time – nothing in this film takes place once, such a scenario is impossible), following the shooting of Joe Gillis, still and movie cameras are set up at the foot of Miss Desmond's staircase. Appearing to break the frame, von Mayerling/von Stroheim assumes a directorial position between the cameras, to direct his leading lady's entrance/exit, thereby disturbing once more the boundaries between filmed and filming Hollywood. The lights go up, the cameras roll, and in that by now well known scene, Norma Desmond moves in exaggerated, silent-screen fashion, down the staircase. The edit switches to a view through a camera, towards which the actress glides, until her face fills the screen, until she *becomes* the screen, an encapsulating image *and* its projection. Everything about these final moments is excessive. Her face the final image we see, it haunts all the more insistently for the ways in which the scene has doubled every aspect of itself, while Norma Desmond/Gloria Swanson returns our collective gaze in a filmic suggestion of infinite reflection and reference, to recall Derrida. Even the question of the scenic descent redoubles and thus divides. For Norma Desmond's descent is zeugmatic, haunted within itself; it is a descent into complete madness and down the stairs, and this, in turn, is both humorous and a moment of grand guignol, as Ed Sikov suggests.[29] It is, furthermore, yet another example of the ways in which the gestures of the silent screen haunt Wilder's film, even while the staircase is, it might be remarked in passing, possibly reminiscent of that used at Castle Dracula in the 1931 film of Bram Stoker's novel.

How we read this scene remains undecidable. It haunts through the very undecidability of its traces, which, while partly comprehensible as the projected remains of other cinematic modes, remain to be read. In this, it is exemplary, a singular moment. And yet, simultaneously – and

this is a sign of, on the one hand, its undecidability and, on the other, the figural redoubling in which it partakes so excessively – the stair scene is, in its spectro-rhetorical mode, typical of every other moment in the film, from the disjointing instance of the title as the inaugurating instance of the film's disturbance of itself. Such projections of Hollywood's others are everywhere in *Sunset Boulevard*, as they are everywhere in the house of Norma Desmond; and yet, they are nowhere as such, merely the apparitions caught in the flickering of lights and the recesses of penumbra. There are discernible the effects of ghost-writing at work within and across the film, to such an extent that the film's haunted quality dismantles what Laura Oswald describes, echoing Derrida, as the 'logic of the single image'.[30] While, as Oswald puts it, films conventionally 'produce messages by means of codes governing the organization of point of view, continuity, and rhetorical associations between elements of film discourse',[31] as suggested above, *Sunset Boulevard* makes apparent its uncanny and haunted condition through its ghostly play of various cinematic modes of production, and its spectral dalliance with differing codes and rhetorical associations, so as to unsettle the viewer even as it haunts its own projected space from within. This, we would conclude, is even the case with the film's gothic frames of reference. For not only are there several Gothic modes with which the film toys, but the Gothic as that which serves to shape the narrative is also challenged. In this there is readable the haunting work of modernism.

If the emphasis in matters of genre has thus far been on the Gothic, it is also important, as we begin to draw to the conclusion of our discussion, that we do not forget that *Sunset Boulevard* doubles and haunts itself with a contemporary genre – *film noir*. An excessive film, *Sunset Boulevard* 'brought the American *film noir* to its paroxysm'.[32] From that voice-over, which speaks of nothing so much as the death of the author, to the sirens of police cars; from the Los Angeles setting with its palm trees and unreal rain storms (recall any Raymond Chandler screen adaptation), to the parody of the *film noir* plot,[33] where the 'crime' becomes the failure of Joe Gillis to keep up his car payments, and, so, is subsequently pursued: there is much about *Sunset Boulevard* which invites us to read its indebtedness to *noir*, including the camera work and lighting (which we have already attributed to Gothic filmic technique *and* European expressionist cinema). The interanimation of *noir* and Gothic is indicative of a certain modernist aesthetic, where no single narrative mode dominates but, instead, various modes of articulation compete for our attention.[34]

As Neil Larsen suggests, drawing on the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, '[i]n the constant joining, severing, and rejoining of "elements" there subsists . . . not merely the untruth of representation and "fixity" but the possibility of an alternative form of praxis . . . Modernism itself might thus be grasped as a profound movement of "disarticulation".'[35] That disarticulation is at work everywhere in and through *Sunset Boulevard* has already been seen. To the extent that mainstream Hollywood cinema has always already put to work and thereby subsumed modernist aesthetic experimentation into 'practical' and 'applied' manifestations such as reiterable techniques for the purposes of the apparent unity of representation, we would argue that that which is modernist about a film such as Wilder's is already spectral inasmuch as it returns disruptively from within all attempts at representation on the part of the movie. That the film is readable as spectral acknowledges the extent to which the film foregrounds its joining, disjointing, mixing and disarticulation of genres, all of which in turn destabilises the form of representation on which recognisable genres rely. And it is in the *noir* technique of voice-over that the disarticulation of modernist aesthetic and/as haunting projects itself.

There is clearly a dialectic and disjunction in *Sunset Boulevard* between a cinema reliant on sound and an other cinema of silent, yet expressive images. It is therefore part of the highly entertaining ironic displacement which this film effects that not only is the voice-over a cinematic technique which, while being part of filmic representation, nonetheless remains resolutely hidden, off-screen and yet of the film, at its margins, so to speak, as we have already indicated. As if to double the irony and to widen the disjunctive aporia of *Sunset Boulevard* even further, the voice is that of a dead man. As Joan Copjec puts it of *noir*, 'the noncorporealized voice . . . issues from a space other than that of the screen, an unrepresented, [and, we would argue, unrepresentable] undetermined space'.[36] Furthermore, and in the context of *film noir*, 'speech . . . is the death of the thing . . . and nothing has seemed more obvious in the criticism of film noir than this association of death with speech, for the voice-over is regularly attached to a dead narrator'.[37] Inasmuch as the voice is that of a dead man, a man whose 'living' had been in the trade of dead words and writing, the voice is also not simply an origin, nor does it come from any identifiable place, as Copjec implies. Its articulation is undeniably the manifestation of the ghost, a form of spectral and technological *revenance*, endlessly iterable – and, therefore, a form of writing rather than voice – through the medium of cinema, and thus always already separated from the subject.

Understanding this, we comprehend how, in film in general, but in *Sunset Boulevard* in particular, 'image and sound introduce a rupture at the heart of enunciation that mobilises both of them simultaneously; or more precisely, they reveal within enunciation a breach'.[38] In *film noir*, the breach becomes even more pronounced, in the voice's arrival as the projection of the other, in that, to cite Copjec once more, the 'noir hero's voice-over narration simply diverges from the *truth* of the image'.[39] The spectral voice maintains the hauntedness by returning to reinscribe all the effects of disjointing and doubling by which the film disturbs and is disturbed, by which it is remarked as profoundly uncanny, and by which we, as viewers are both fascinated and made uneasy.

Slavoj Zizek asks a similar question of *film noir*, and thus provides us with a possible understanding of *Sunset Boulevard*, if we read Gillis's voice not as the enunciation of some absent unified subject, but as, on the one hand, the trace of a writing, and on the other, the articulation of the gaze, in other words. Of *film noir* Žižek asks:

> What, precisely, is so fascinating about this genre? It is clear that we no longer identify with it . . . what fascinates us is precisely a certain gaze, the gaze of the 'other,' of the hypothetical, mythic spectator of the '40s who was supposedly able to identify immediately with the universe of *film noir*. What we really see, when we watch a *film noir*, is the gaze of the other . . . For that reason, our relation to a *film noir* is always divided, split between fascination and ironic distance: ironic distance towards its diegetic reality, fascination with the gaze.[40]

If this is the case, then *Sunset Boulevard* occupies a distinctly eccentric, and yet central place, not only in the genre of *noir*, but also, significantly, in a number of other locations also. It disturbs the Gothic and our relation to that, while it disturbs our relationship as viewers of Hollywood in ways in which even those analyses which acknowledge the film's self-awareness do not fully comprehend. As already argued, it displaces itself in and from itself. It disrupts and yet addresses directly the very question of film as modernist – and haunted – text. The question of the gaze which Zizek brings before us is doubled and opened by this film, and our possibility of watching, or even reading it. For, if there is both fascination *and* ironic distance for us, as modern viewers of a 50-year-old film, that condition is always already replicated in the relation of the characters in the film towards silent cinema,

whether European or North American. This is the case whether we are speaking of the younger generation of characters, represented by Joe Gillis, or by the older generation, who are both fascinated with, and yet distanced from themselves, as they were, as their own others, who appeared in, or who made, silent movies. And this is taken further. For not only is there the doubling and chiasmatic opening between 'us' and the film, between the film's characters and an earlier, mute Hollywood or German Expressionist cinema, which haunts the film, and the street, of Sunset Boulevard/*Sunset Boulevard*, there is also that equally chiasmatic, if not abyssal opening figured in the double remove between ourselves and silent film. Yet ironically, it is Gillis's voice-over, in his alterity from himself (invisible dead narrator, narrating his live, yet dead narrated other self), which recalls such opening in returning, narration without location and always at a remove from the articulation of the image, a constant rem(a)inder of the haunted nature of cinema.

Notes

1. David Skal, *Hollywood Gothic: the Tangled Web of 'Dracula' from Novel to Stage to Screen* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1990).
2. Ibid., p. 7.
3. Bernard Dick, *Billy Wilder* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), p. 150.
4. A film may be spectral – indeed, following the work on spectrality by Jacques Derrida, it is our contention that the technological condition of cinematic projection is always a form of haunting – but not necessarily Gothic. In such a case, the film can become all the more uncanny, for resisting playing to the more obvious Gothicisation of those narratives which concern ghosts. Hollywood remains enthralled by the ghostly and the Gothic, as well as the ghostly that is not conventionally Gothic, as a number of films released over the summer and autumn of 1999 make clear. *Blair Witch Project*, *Stigmata* and *The Haunting* are the three most obvious examples (of course, *Blair Witch Project* is an 'independent' film, rather than a big budget, big studio production), and there is, as I write, yet to be released, Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow*; but more interesting than these has been *The Sixth Sense*, *American Beauty*, and *Bringing Out the Dead*. The first toys with the Gothic elements of the Hollywood horror genre, though, interestingly, it ultimately rejects this in favour of another kind of story telling, involving a principal character who is dead throughout the film, and thus, in a sense, returns to haunt the movie from the very first. *American Beauty* is narrated, like *Sunset Boulevard*, by a dead narrator. Scorsese's *Bringing Out the Dead* employs a sporadic voice-over, the purpose of which is never established, and remains all the more haunting for the disjunction this creates in the film, while the film addresses the interrelated questions of memory and mourning or, as Nicholas Cage's paramedic character (whose voice is also that of the voice-over), bearing witness to the dead. In a certain fashion, this expresses one aspect of the function of cinema – to bear witness, to recall and to allow for the projection of the Other, the *revenant*.

5. Richard Corliss, *Talking Pictures: Screenwriters in the American Cinema* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), pp. 147–8, cit. S. S. Prawer, *Caligari's Children: the Film as Tale of Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 44–5.
6. Steve Seidman, *The Film Career of Billy Wilder* (Pleasantville, NY: Redgrave, 1977), p. 4. More recently, and, as yet, untranslated, is Andreas Hutter and Klaus Kamolz's *Billy Wilder: Eine europäische Karriere* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1998) which provides a significant reappraisal of Wilder's Europeanness, his work as a writer in Berlin and, subsequently, as a film-maker in Paris, as well as the influence on his work of the film circles in Berlin and, in Chapter 4 (pp. 147–212), the elements of style learnt from UFA productions discernible in Wilder's films.
7. Astruc's remarks on Murnau are cited by Brian Henderson in *A Critique of Film Theory* (New York: Dutton, 1980), p. 51.
8. Ed Sikov, *On Sunset Boulevard: the Life and Times of Billy Wilder* (New York: Hyperion, 1998), p. 299.
9. Francesco Casetti, *Inside the Gaze: the Fiction Film and Its Spectator* (1996) intro. Christian Metz, trans. Nell Andrew with Charles O'Brien, preface to English edition Dudley Andrew (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 18.
10. Casetti, *Inside the Gaze* p. 18.
11. Avital Ronell, *Dictations: On Haunted Writing* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986, 1993), p. xviii.
12. Ibid., pp. xviii–xix.
13. Ibid., p. xix.
14. Dick, *Wilder*, p. 156.
15. Sikov, *On Sunset Boulevard*, p. 291.
16. Arguably, as a screen writer, Gillis has in mind not Dickens's novel but David Lean's highly Gothic film of *Great Expectations*. Released in 1946, the film won two Oscars, for photography and art direction, and was nominated for three others: best picture, script, and director. Clearly, if not Gillis, then Wilder himself would have been familiar with Lean's movie. The movies certainly employ photography and lighting similarly, particularly in the presentation of Miss Havisham's house on the one hand, and Norma Desmond's on the other.
17. Robert Stam, *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, 1992), p. 89. Stam's essay suggestively and convincingly reads *Sunset Boulevard* as an exploration of the various crises felt by Hollywood, including the threat of television, in the 1950s (pp. 85–8).
18. Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: the Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), p. 179.
19. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (1993), trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. xviii.
20. Derrida, *Specters*, p. xx.
21. Stam, *Reflexivity in Film*, p. 88.
22. Dick, *Wilder*, p. 156.
23. Sikov, *On Sunset Boulevard*, p. 299.

24. For a commentary on the missing open scene, see Axel Madsen, *Billy Wilder* (London: Secker and Warburg/British Film Institute, 1968), pp. 82–3. Madsen, in an interesting, if incidental, comment, points out that *Sunset Boulevard* was reviewed in the first issue of *Cahiers du Cinéma* (85).
25. See Bernard Dick on this scene, *Wilder*, pp. 153–4.
26. Ibid., p. 152.
27. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1967), trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 36.
28. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 36.
29. Sikov, *On Sunset Boulevard*, p. 298.
30. Laura R. Oswald, 'Cinema-Graphia: Eisenstein, Derrida, and the Sign of the Cinema', in Peter Brunette and David Wills (eds), *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts: Art, Media, Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 248–63 at p. 252.
31. Oswald, 'Cine-Graphia', p. 251.
32. Madsen, *Billy Wilder*, p. 85.
33. That Wilder enjoys the elements of pastiche and parody is attested to by his comic rendering of the Gangster film in *Some Like it Hot*, which also mixes genres to the extent that it draws briefly on musicals, and is knowingly self-referential via Tony Curtis's impersonation of Cary Grant.
34. On this, see Neil Larsen, *Modernism and Hegemony: a Materialist Critique of Aesthetic Agency*, foreword Jaime Concha (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. xxvi–xxxiii.
35. Larsen, *Modernism*, p. xxix.
36. Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), p. 184.
37. Copjec, *Read My Desire*, p. 183.
38. Marie-Claire Ropars, *La Texte divisé*, cit. and trans. Peter Brunette and David Wills, *Screen/Play: Derrida and Film Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 63.
39. Copjec, *Read My Desire*, p. 186.
40. Slavoj Zizek, *Looking Awry: an Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), p. 112.

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