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## EDITORIAL

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## Gothic Journeys: Paths, Crossings, and Intersections

### *Navigating the Betwixt and Between*

Perilous journeys have always been a central concern of the Gothic. The urgent departure of a desperate heroine, rushing barefoot across dangerous terrain in her wispy gown, has become iconic shorthand for the Gothic in both mainstream and scholarly discourse. As Susanne Becker notes, “the ‘maiden-in-flight’ has long been called *the Gothic feature*” (1999, 46). But this journey is likely not her first, because a Gothic heroine hears noises, wanders downstairs, and enters dark tunnels holding her small candle aloft. She is curious and daring, going precisely where she is warned not to go. Indeed, Gothic novels are replete with explorers who risk everything to go beyond the known world. They are at times shocked by their own audacity, but they continue. As Alonzo Monçada exclaims with fearful excitement in *Melmoth the Wanderer*:

I yet tremble at the thought of that subterranean journey [...] Had I been told such a story of another, I would have denounced him as the most reckless and desperate being on earth—yet I was the man (Maturin, 1820).

Explorers are joined by mysterious strangers who threaten the fabric of the familiar, monstrous others from beyond the grave, trapped souls making bids for freedom, and many others. Each Gothic character is on a journey of sorts; transgressing boundaries both literal and figurative, directing attention to liminal spaces through their illicit border crossings.

Likewise, academics with interest in the Gothic often venture into realms that confront boundaries, blend academic disciplines, and challenge cultural definitions of taste and value. Tasked with illuminating the populist, the extreme and the morbid, scholars on a Gothic journey can find themselves traversing a difficult landscape. Gothic conferences are particularly important in this regard, as they can bring together a diverse group of international wanderers from a variety of cultural and disciplinary backgrounds, united by a shared passion for interrogating the unknown. This issue of *Aeternum* represents discussions and ideas from one such gathering: The Gothic Association of New Zealand and Australia (GANZA) Fourth Biennial Conference, held in January 2019 in Surfer's Paradise, Australia, and themed 'Gothic Journeys: Paths, Crossings, and Intersections' in recognition of the central role journeying plays in Gothic narratives and the Gothic field more generally. The articles included herein explore the theme of Gothic journeying through a variety of contexts and figures.

The first two articles of this issue are dedicated to spectral journeys and the liminal spaces implied by haunting. In "Creatures of the Night: Investigating Nursing Ghost Stories" Margaret McAllister and Donna Lee Brien explore how nurses navigate their patients' passings through the telling of ghost stories. Engaging with mortality and fears surrounding life's final journey, these tales illustrate how the borders between life and death are framed as permeable within Gothic fictions, perhaps unexpectedly in the medicalised context of the hospital. In the second article, Erin Mercer unravels the use of haunting and spectrality in Beat literature, considering how these tropes are used to convey the experience of bohemian outsiders. Focusing on the suppression of marginalised identities in post-World War II America, Mercer illustrates how motifs of Gothic haunting were used by Beat writers to articulate the realities of life for those who did not fit idealised visions promoted by the dominant culture.

In the issue's third article, Sophia Staite examines how the line between childhood and adulthood is blurred in *Kamen Rider Kiva*, a Japanese television show that employs a variety of Gothic tropes. The notion of a straightforward journey from child to adult, with a clear distinction between, is troubled by the program's Gothic preoccupations and willingness to engage with frightening themes and content on multiple levels. In the final article, Heidi Backes highlights the pivotal

role of the *doppelgänger* in Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *The Shadow of the Wind*, exploring how this figure participates in the transgression of national and historical boundaries. Backes explores how individual characters' journeys are linked to Gothic modes of presenting the fragmented self in a way that speaks to contemporary audiences and ongoing historical traumas.

This issue is brought to its conclusion with two book reviews of new critical studies in the field. In the first, Derek Johnston reviews Lisa Mullen's *Mid-Century Gothic: The Uncanny Objects of Modernity in British Literature and Culture After the Second World War*, unpacking how Mullen's work engages with cultural texts of the post-war period and the potentially formative role of this time for the Gothic. The uncanny nature of cultural products and texts in the mid-century is examined, alongside discussion of future research potential. The second review, written by Sophia Staite, examines David Annwn Jones' *Re-Envisaging the First Age of Cinematic Horror 1896-1934: Quanta of Fear*. Staite breaks down the significance of Jones' book in terms of horror studies as a field, and how the revisions it offers will benefit students.

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## **Creatures of the Night: Investigating Nursing Ghost Stories**

### **ABSTRACT**

*Within nursing, rituals serve important cultural functions. Daily bed-making, for example, helps to convey the importance of order; and reciting the Nightingale Oath when a student graduates signifies their transition to the professional role. Nurses working at night – on the so called ‘graveyard shift’ – engage in actions that both create a sense of security and build identity. One such ritual is the sharing of ghost stories. From the ghosts that haunt the nurse-centric narratives of horror films such as *The Ward* (2010), *Sick Nurses* (2007) and *Fragile* (2005), to real life ghost stories told by nurses, these unsettling, frightening ghost stories exemplify quintessential features of the Gothic. These stories are shocking, supernatural and unexplainable – particularly when set in hospitals, because their plotlines and characters often draw upon painful or terrifying medical procedures, confinement in unhomey spaces, and hypervigilant and controlling (or, conversely, unaware and callous) nurses and doctors, whose specialized medical knowledge can be mystifying and unnerving. This investigation explores the eerie nature of these tales, rituals around their telling and modes of dissemination. Following Spooner’s (2007) suggestion that such an analysis can deepen hitherto unrecognised or unarticulated anxieties, this text also explores how professional nursing identity is shaped through the ritualized telling of ghost stories.*

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Ghost stories, Gothic storytelling, Nursing, Ritual

A long-standing Gothic practice within the profession of nursing is the telling and re-telling of ghost stories. This story-sharing practice is Gothic not only because the ghost is, of course, a familiar Gothic trope (Botting 2014, 116-22), but also because storytelling participants may be both “observing and experiencing terror” (Tregonning 2018, 36). Additionally, ghost stories draw upon and relay significant Gothic tropes. These include anxiety, liminality, the uncanny (where the familiar suddenly becomes unfamiliar), visitations, returns and resurrections, grotesque monsters, doubles, dreams and unstable identities (McGrath and Morrow 1993). For Briggs (2012, 176), the characteristic (and Gothic) features of a ghost story – where there is “ambivalence of tension between certainty and doubt, between the familiar and the feared, between rational occurrence and the inexplicable” – are what makes such stories so powerful, and can be posited as a reason for their endurance. Nursing ghost stories can be identified as a specific sub-category of the ghost story which, unsurprisingly, feature nurses and patients as their main characters. These stories are usually set in hospitals and other institutional spaces, and are commonly relayed by nurses to nurses, at night, during the so-called ‘graveyard’, shift. Such ritual practices are akin to the telling of tales around a fireside, as both make explicit a particular aspect of the ghost story which, as Briggs explains, “depends upon a tension between the cosy familiar world of life and the mysterious and unknowable world of death” (2012, 181). At night, these ghost stories are told and retold, but never processed in terms of being critically analysed. In this way, these ritualised storytelling traditions reproduce both the ghosts that they describe, as well as the fear that they engender. The aim of this discussion is to explore the Gothic nature of a selection of nursing ghost stories – three pieces of cinematic fiction, and ten real tales – to provide an initial categorisation, discuss the rituals around their telling and how they are currently circulated and disseminated, and consider what function the telling of ghost stories may serve for nurses.

### **Nursing and the Gothic**

The mysteries of real-life nursing and patient-care make for compelling subject matter in terms of storytelling. Some illnesses and treatments can be brutal. The specialised knowledge that nurses and doctors possess can seem unfathomable and alienating. Further, a nurse’s vigilance and repeated questioning of patients can seem intrusive, unnerving, inexplicable and even threatening. So, when the dark and muffled veil of night is layered over these tensions, anxiety about health care exponentially rises. As will be discussed, nurses are not immune from feeling this anxiety too, and engage in many rituals to contain it.

As Piatti-Farnell and Brien (2015) suggest, one of the purposes that the Gothic can serve is that of catharsis. Engaging with the Gothic permits readers, audiences and other media consumers to connect with the macabre and the horrific at a safe remove without any risk of physical danger (Hughes 2015), safe to enjoy the pleasurable frisson this provides (Royle 2003). Gothic works are reflexive, standing in for what is feared allowing consumers to virtually confront what engenders anxiety and uncertainty (Spooner 2007). Part of the pleasure of experiencing the Gothic is also that it gives the illusion of mastery over what is threatening. Accordingly, the lure of the Gothic in nursing ghost stories is simultaneously compelling and anxiety-inducing for both patients and nurses, precisely because the health care journey itself is, at times, terrifying and anxiety-inducing. In particular, the difficult and sometimes traumatic activities and issues that occur either expectedly, or unexpectedly, in the process of health care can come back to nurses (and patients) via memories and dreams. Following Piatti-Farnell (2013, 2017), such uncanny occurrences can be seen to 'haunt' both nursing itself as well as its representation in popular culture.

Nurses work in testing extremes that transgress the accepted norms of 'polite' society, having to hospitalise people who do not want to be so restrained, for example, or invade their bodies with injections, catheters, and other probes. The night shift is itself both testing and transgressive because nurses are working at a time when most other health care workers (and, indeed, most other people) are asleep (Ferri et al. 2016). Nurses also occupy what can be identified as a liminal space, as their work crosses borders between health and illness, life and death, and day and night. The contexts in which nurses regularly work can be simultaneously familiar and strange. The night shift is, for instance, familiar because most nursing staff have to regularly undertake work in this mode. It is also strange because the staffing complement is reduced, the familiar bustle of hospital routines is absent, and the subdued lighting casts long shadows making familiar spaces unsettling.

As a space for Gothic storytelling, the night shift is also a relatively unexplored space in terms of its social and cultural meanings. Despite the night shift being a common working environment for nursing staff, research about it has largely focused on its health implications (Books et al. 2017), emphasising its disruption to circadian rhythms and associated risks of cancer and diabetes (Papantoniou et al. 2017), stress (Lin et al. 2015) and disturbed sleep patterns (Beebe et al. 2017) for nurses, and negative implications for patient and nurse safety (Cho et al. 2016). The literature demonstrates that working at night has numerous negative ramifications that produce "physical discomforts such as sleep deprivation for long periods, restriction of family and social life, changes in mood and concentration level, and others which appear as factors causing wear and psychological suffering" (Silveira 2016, 3680). Nonetheless, there is a general lack of understanding in terms of health-care workers realizing "the implications and meanings of the night journey to their life and work" (Silveira 2016, 3685). A rare exception is Brown and Brooks' research into night nursing (2002), which focused on nurses' emotional experience of such



work. As a result, nurses are not well prepared to cope with the special demands and pressures of the night shift, and their anxieties find one outlet in the narrative practice of ghost storytelling.

### **Three Nursing ‘Graveyard Shift’ Films**

The night shift is a work shift beginning late at night and finishing about 6 o’clock in the morning. It upturns normal working hours, beginning around the time when most people in the surrounding society are going to bed, and finishing when most people are preparing for work. Etymologist Michael Quinion stresses its unnaturalness, writing that from the early years of the twentieth century, the phrase ‘the graveyard shift’ is an “evocative term for the night shift [...] when [...] your skin is clammy, there’s sand behind your eyeballs, and the world is creepily silent, like the graveyard” (2000, online). The use of the word ‘graveyard’ evokes the dark, quiet, loneliness of working at this time. Fear of the dark – or a fear of possible or imagined dangers or dangerous individuals concealed by that darkness – is a classic and common phobia (Marks 1969), that is regularly used in horror films. Horror stories featuring nurses are often set at night; where the light plays tricks, and where strange noises can prompt wild imaginings. The following three films explore the power of this collective trepidation by focusing on hospitals at night, reminding viewers exactly what is frightening about the night shift for nurses.

In John Carpenter’s film, *The Ward* (2010), a traumatised young female patient, Kirsten (played by Amber Heard), is further terrified by her night-time experiences in a weird and uncanny hospital. During the nights, the ward is nursed by only a ‘skeleton’ staff who are all extremely busy – too busy to care adequately for this extremely disturbed woman. The uniforms of the nurses make them inhumanly anonymous and homogenous, and unidentifiable to the patient. Some nurses are zombies and can pass undetected by simply donning a nurse’s uniform. In this film, the nurses force treatment onto patients without sufficient or expected levels of explanation or collaboration – explaining that it is ‘for their own good’. Instead of dependable carers, the nurses become deviously controlling and untrustworthy as they are pitted against the protagonist. As Carter explains,

The experience of illness often provokes feelings of vulnerability [...] patients depend on the technical knowledge and professional skills of the provider, often a previously unfamiliar individual [...] [they] depend on providers to help, to be worthy of trust, to respond morally to their suffering and vulnerabilities, and provide ethically sensitive care (2009, 393).

The anxiety engendered by the vulnerability of becoming a patient is magnified when set in the context of the night-time, where the light is dim and the shadows long – the lack of visibility and the unusual quiet amplifying the tension.

In Jaume Balaguero's *Fragile* (2005), a horror film set in a dilapidated children's hospital located on a desolate island, the central figure, nurse Amy Nicholls (played by Calista Flockhart), is herself a damaged and fragile figure who must nonetheless step up and be her patients' – a series of immobilised and vulnerable children – protector. Most of the frightening scenes in this film are set at night. During the day, nothing untoward seems to happen. But at night, the children suffer unexplainable injuries, and experience visions unseen by the adults. Objects move without human intervention, and members of staff go missing.

In the Thai slasher film *Sick Nurses* (2007), a doctor and group of nurses have been selling the organs of dead bodies on the black market. When one of the nurses, Tahwaan (played by Chol Wachananont) decides to blow the whistle on this illegal and unethical activity, she is killed, and her body dumped in a garbage bag until the body can be sold. Her spirit returns to take revenge on her murderers, doing so by preying upon their obsessions. In one night-time scene, the low available lighting casts an eerie glow revealing Tahwaan as a destructive ghost, tormenting one of the nurses who had had an abortion. In the background of this scene, an anatomy lab is featured, with bottles of body parts and fetuses stored in formaldehyde. Although a common trope within horror films, such collections are part of the reality of hospitals.

In each of these three films, nurses suffer significant trauma on the night shift. As Laredo (2018, 70) explains, trauma is the result of an overwhelming experience that compromises one's ability to cope with the emotions that arise from that experience and can lead to a split between the conscious self and the traumatised other that does not allow trauma to be accessed by the conscious self. This split creates gaps in memory that frustrate the survivor's ability to construct a coherent narrative of their trauma. Because of this, trauma can return in the form of unconscious repetition. The ghostly figures and apparitions in these films are symbolic manifestations of the trauma experienced by nurses, and patients. For Kristeva (1982), the real horror of ghosts is that which lies within, and what ghosts reveal about the inner turmoil and terror. As Woolf wrote in her essay on the Supernatural in fiction in 1918, such stories are most disturbing when they "terrify us not by the ghosts of the dead, but by those ghosts which are living within ourselves" (1966, 294).

Unlike many other medical or nursing-focussed narratives, these stories are not about healing, transformation or redemption, but about danger and chaos. Furthermore, in contrast to many other movies about nursing which show nurses in firm control of difficult situations (McAllister, Rogers and Brien 2015), the ghosts in these films are external manifestations of various anxieties. In these films, the ghosts are a malevolent, terrifying presence used to great dramatic effect in enhancing the fear experienced in, and of, the night-time.

We wanted to contrast these filmic portrayals of nursing ghost stories with those regularly told on the wards by nurses to other nurses. A survey of twenty graduate diploma nursing students in 2018 immediately yielded ten ghost stories that had been shared on hospital wards on the night shift, which we provide below, as told, but in slightly edited form.

### **Ten Australian Ghost Stories**

1. *The Chinchilla matron*

I worked at Chinchilla Hospital [in country Queensland] as part of my training and stayed in the old nurses' quarters which are joined to the hospital by a walkway. The nurses there shared with me the story of the matron who had worked there many years before. Apparently, she had been killed in a car accident. The story went that she regularly patrolled the quarters at night keeping an eye on 'her' nurses as they slept. She was known to also walk the corridors of 'her' hospital. A lot of the nurses said that they had felt her presence at one time or another. If any of the local patients asked where I was staying and I told them the quarters, they never failed to retell the same story of the matron. I never felt scared staying there, but comforted in an odd type of way.

2. *Krissy, I'm here*

One night shift, I was working in a geriatric medical ward and bent down to empty a catheter bag. As clear as day, I heard a voice that said "It's okay, Krissy, I'm here." I stood up and looked around the room, but everyone was asleep. Although there are only a few people who call me Krissy, this wasn't a scary experience as the voice was calm. I will never forget it though.

3. *The Grey nurse*

There are rumours of a ghost occupying the former oncology ward of Royal Adelaide Hospital. She is known as 'The Grey Nurse'. She wears a long grey dress and haunts lonely night shift staff. But she is evidently a friendly ghost, credited with good deeds such as clipping off a patient's intravenous drip to prevent fatal air bubbles when the drip had run out.

4. *The ghost of Adelaide Billings*

Some people believe that the Adelaide Billings Ward in the now demolished Royal Children's Hospital was haunted by the nurse after whom it was named. Matron Billings was greatly loved in her lifetime and after her death, the hospital authorities decided to honour her memory by naming the ward after her. But, it seems she was not content to be remembered in name only. According to one story, a male nurse found her busily filling a burette from a tap one night. He thought her face was vaguely familiar but did not recognise her at the time. The nurse thought no more about it until he glanced at a photo of Matron Billings hanging in the lobby, and was struck with the realisation that he had seen a ghost. On many other occasions she was observed touring the ward at night checking on her tiny patients, stroking foreheads, tucking in bedclothes and straightening pillows.

5. *The empty floor*

I once worked at a hospital which had four floors. The top floor was for administration; the other floors were wards. This meant that the fourth floor was closed every afternoon at 5 o'clock when the administrative staff finished work. However, come the night shift, when working on the third floor, we could hear footsteps walking above us all night. The steps sounded like someone wearing high heeled shoes. There were also sounds of beds being pulled from one end of the floor to another. From around 5am it would be very quiet.

6. *A tug*

I was in a nursing home during a gastric outbreak and there were many staff on the night duty, more than usual. I stood in the doorway of an empty room. When someone tugged on my shirt, I turned around, but there was no-one there. But I could feel a hand tugging for a good five minutes later. When I said, "OMG. Something has been tugging on my shirt", the other staff said, "Don't say that! The lady in there died at 6 o'clock this morning!" I felt like the ghost was trying to leave her room and I was in the way.

7. *A television poltergeist*

At one nursing home where I worked, after a man passed away, the television in his room kept turning on during the evening prior to his funeral. One of the nurses went in, opened the door to the outside corridor, and said in a stern voice, "You really need to go!" After that, the TV never went on by itself.

8. *Toppling chairs*

Long before I started working in a nursing home, when they were doing some renovation at the hospital, the room used for the staff room was moved. Everything was set out as it had been previously, but apparently every time a staff member sat down, the chair would topple over. Every chair did the same. These were all otherwise stable chairs which are still in use. The very next morning, they shifted the staff room to another room. It turned out, the abandoned staff room had been the old palliative care room. Since then, it has only been used only for storage. Most of the nurses who were there at the time still won't go into that the room by themselves.

9. *The buzzer*

A young patient was well known to our mental health service but had been doing well and had not been admitted for over two years. I had a good rapport with her but had moved into a management role and was not directly caring for her. One evening, I received a call to tell me she had been found deceased in her room. She had apparently taken an overdose of medication that she had hidden from staff.

Nine months later, when I was working a night shift with two other staff, I was doing my patient rounds, when a buzzer sounded and call light activated. It was coming from a bedroom that had been converted into a teaching space. I unlocked the door, walked in with the registered nurse, and examined the nurse call button. It had been manually activated. No one was

there. I doubted myself, and thought perhaps the room had been inadvertently left unlocked. So I turned off the buzzer, locked the room and left.

At about 2.30 am, the buzzer sounded again. With another nurse, I went to investigate. Sure enough, the light was on. This time we were both sure the room had been locked. The hair on the back of my neck stood up. I simply could not understand what had happened. As I turned to make my way to turn off the light I saw a picture on the whiteboard [of a heart with my name in the middle]. I could feel the blood draining from my face.

The buzzer went off one more time that night, but we did not go anywhere near the room. It was around 6 o'clock that morning when, reflecting on the events of the night before, it dawned on me that it was the room *and* the precise bed space in which the young patient had passed away, nine months earlier.

#### 10. *Mrs Green*

Mrs Green haunted the Thoracic Unit at the old Royal North Shore Hospital. When they moved Thoracic to the new hospital I don't know whether she followed. As student nurses working the night shift, we walked the corridors in fear. Woe betide any patient who was having a transfusion – Mrs Green would cut the lines and blood would gush everywhere. There were rumours of patients who had died as a result of her handiwork, but in my time no-one suffered; perhaps because we knew to closely observe our patients.

These stories offer a fascinating insight into nursing on the night-shift. All articulate nurses' anxieties about competence, responsibility, performance, and surveillance.

Significantly, within several of these stories a ghost appears who is a wiser older woman, watching out for the wellbeing of patients and the assurance of nurses. According to Bennett and Royle, ghosts involve,

the idea of a spectre, an apparition of the dead, a revenant, the dead returned to a kind of spectral existence – an entity not alive but also not quite, not finally, dead. Ghosts disturb our sense of the separation of the living from the dead – which is why they can be so frightening, so uncanny [...] Ghosts are paradoxical since they are both fundamental to the human, fundamentally human, and a denial or disturbance of the human, the very being of the inhuman (2016, 187).

These are not the Gothic trope of female crone who often features in fictional/literary or filmic ghost stories, a figure which reveals an anxiety about the loss of youth and the decay of old age (Horner and Zlosnik, 2016). Rather, these identifiably 'maternal' ghosts are old, wise and (largely) comforting. These stories underscore the reality that such women are absent in these nurses' real lives, the ghosts operating as manifestations of this "absent presence" (Zizek 2009). That is, a competent (albeit ghostly), experienced nurse working the night shift serves to highlight the feelings of insecurity that are often experienced by the relatively

inexperienced and isolated nurses working on these shifts. That this ghostly nurse is always present, watching and waiting, suggests that such extraordinary help is needed to make the system function correctly and safely.

In this way, most of the ghosts in the nurses' stories related above often provide reassurance. In reality, such comfort is not forthcoming, due to staff shortages, a limited skill mix and fatigue, feeding anxieties within night nurses that staffing is inadequate, support may be delayed or absent, and that the needs and requirements of staff working nights are not as valued as colleagues working other shifts (Powell 2013). There is also evidence that many nurses work this shift from necessity, not choice (De Cordova et al. 2013).

The surveillance of nurses is a prominent theme within these stories. The Chinchilla matron, for example, is on constant patrol, and in "the empty floor", vacant space is used by ghostly workers performing some unstated function which mysteriously ceases when the day shift begins. Thus, these stories illuminate a Foucauldian problem – that nurses are disciplined bodies. Power, surveillance and disciplinary techniques are used to tightly control nurses, but this does not necessarily resolve their anxieties or meet the concerns that nurses have (St Ledger and Holmes 2008).

The stories also reveal that the "fear of death" persists within nurses' thoughts as it does in Australian society more generally (Wiese et al. 2015). In many cultures, and particularly within mainstream Western culture, death is a such a difficult life issue, that even talking about it has become taboo (Bowen 2018). Although it appears antithetical, nursing as a sub-culture within society struggles to discuss death openly (Lorenza et al. 2017), and consequently caring for people who are dying is a daunting task for nurses. It is known that working with patients who are dying obliges nurses to confront their own fears of death (Braun, Gordon and Uziely 2010) and, yet, paradoxically, nurses regularly do deal with death. This means that, unlike the public, they cannot easily deny end-of-life experiences, as these occur regularly in their working lives but are compelled to do this secretly through storytelling – perhaps because the same societal 'rules' about death's taboo operates even within nursing.

Nurses on night shift are often on their own, or without adequate supervision (Dawson et al. 2014). Their jobs entail high levels of anxiety, and fear for what may happen, or has happened, to their patients. This fear is normally repressed into the unconscious, thus allowing nurses to turn up for night shift and to work as if it is just another shift. The sharing of ghost stories is an outlet for this repression. These stories may also work as a form of cautionary tale telling for the uninitiated, as the moral of such stories is always, 'be aware that danger lurks here'. Consequently, the watchful apparition that features in many of these ghost stories can often be a source of comfort for nurses working in isolated conditions. Knowing that an all-seeing, maternal nurse-ghost is reassuring to nurses who lack confidence and experience

and feel anxious dealing with the responsibilities assumed on the night shift. In this way, this all-seeing, competent nurse-apparition constitutes a reassuring, mothering presence. In Freudian terms, she is the mother that the nurse wishes he/she had. There is a doubling evident here – the ghost the nurses have, and the mother they wish they had – which makes the experience even more unsettling. As Abraham reminds us, the only reason people think they see ghosts is because the dead take secrets with them when they die (p. 184). In the case of stories 1, 2, 3, 4 and 10, the matrons have taken a lifetime of expertise with them expertise that the living night-nurses lack. In the case of the ghost in the story about the buzzer, the child ghost takes the reason for her suicide to her grave, which the living nurse may feel guilty about. It is this fear, shame and guilt that haunts these ghost stories, and the nurses that tell them.

It is interesting to note that despite being trained to be logical and technically precise, nurses often hold beliefs in the supernatural and spiritual, trusting in extra-sensory perception and intuitive superstition. For example, in story 9, it seems significant that the young patient who died by suicide – a suicide which could possibly have been prevented with closer surveillance or nurse-patient trust – returns to a trusted nurse. It is not scientific reasoning at work in this story, but something more emotional; touching on issues of spiritual connection. This is interesting because nursing theorists like Cowling, Smith and Watson (2008) refer to “intuitive knowing” and “emotional work” within nursing. These theoretical approaches point to the limits of logical-rational discourse: how it fails to explain the entirety of health-care work and does not embrace the idea that there is a ‘form of knowing’ that nurses are privy to. This is why many nurses value the idea of “embodied knowing” (Milliken 2018, Nelson 2007). This is a form of knowledge that incorporates an intuitive and intimate knowledge of a patient, as well as an acknowledgment of the humble, and open, stance of unknowing. Being unknowing acknowledges that the nurse does not have all the answers to a patient’s predicament, and that to truly learn about them, the nurse needs to step into their shoes by listening, learning and feeling with the other (Wright and Brajtman 2011).

Apart from Mrs Green in story 10, the ghosts in each of the stories are not like the violent ghosts of the films discussed above or of nineteenth-century fiction, but have more in common with those of Henry James’ fiction. In 1921, Virginia Woolf wrote that:

Henry James’ ghosts have nothing in common with the violent old ghosts – the blood-stained sea captains, the white horses, the headless ladies of dark lanes and windy commons. They have their origin within us. They are present whenever the significant overflows our powers of expressing it; whenever the ordinary appears ringed by the strange (Woolf 1988, 34).

Like James’ *The Turn of the Screw*, these nursing stories are about the ungovernable, the gaps left by others, and the sense of the ghostliness of the self. Bennett & Royle

propose that: “We are all haunted: experience itself is never enough; and it is the ghostly discourse of literature which most sharply testifies to this” (2016, 187). That nurses express their fears in the relatively safe space of hushed conversations at night can be read as resorting to a kind of safety valve, but this also reveals a fragility to nursing’s identity that is otherwise difficult to identify. By day, so to speak, nurses usually convey an overall image of brisk confidence and competence. It is only when night falls, that the pretence can slip away and the real feelings of inadequacy, unpreparedness, and regret for past failures are laid bare.

As a phenomenon, the sharing of ghost stories between nurses complies with a series of unwritten cultural rules – they are told in quiet moments on the wards, as noted above, on the night shift. As such, it is interesting to consider how this practice relates to the traditional written narrative of a ghost story. Anderson argues that female writers of ghost stories often use the genre to “exorcise their resentments over societal restrictions” (2016, online), and the ghost who is all-seeing, yet unable to participate in life in a meaningful way, is metonymic for all women. This, particularly for Victorian female ghost-story writers, is thought to have been a protest about women’s social marginalisation. For both male and female nurses, resistance to marginalization takes on a more specific focus against inadequate staffing and skill-mixes on night shifts, as well as the lack of adequate supervision. Just like women in the nineteenth century, nurses feel undervalued, but are not practiced in using their voices – fearing a backlash if they do so (Traynor 2013). Thus, one form of protest comes in the form of telling and re-telling of uncanny ghost stories about nursing. Also, although aware of these systemic problems, nurses may not want to exacerbate the public’s anxiety about hospital safety, given their role in providing reassurance and cultivating trust (Rutherford 2014), so they may decide that their own concerns should be kept private and not shared publicly. Thus, the ghost story becomes a safe way for nurses to articulate and discuss anxieties they have about the night shift, without overtly admitting their personal self-doubt and fears.

### **Going Public**

The long-established practice of nurses telling ghost stories has recently undergone a significant change. In line with many other areas of life which were previously private or closely held secrets between small numbers of individuals known to each other, nursing ghost stories and storytelling practices have become much more public in recent years. Books of these stories have been published (see, for example, Betters 2014). Garcez’s *Ghost Stories of the Medical Profession* (2013), purporting to be the “first collection [...] of actual ghost sightings and paranormal experiences by members of the medical profession” (Author’s note, n.p.), includes many nurses. Collected via personal interviews, Garcez notes the link between medical trauma and ghosts: “health care facilities were often places of intense emotional trauma and [...] death. Who better to have experienced the paranormal [...] than these [...] medical professionals” (Author’s note, n.p.). These health care facilities were all



operating services, rather than derelict facilities, or those decommissioned and restyled into other uses, such as schools or apartments. Nurses' stories also feature in collections of historic ghost sightings, as in MacDonald's folklore collection, *Ghost Stories from the Pacific Northwest* (1995), which includes the story of nurses' repeated sightings of a helpful ghost of a young man who died in the burns unit of Vancouver General Hospital (146-147) (see also, Macklin and Chanowitz 1990; Macklin 1994; Poxon 2014). Collections with a contemporary focus include Garcez's *New Mexico Ghost Stories* (2012), which includes 59 stories contributed by "a cross section of folk" (Preface, n.p.), including a number by nurses. Ghost stories also feature in collections of stories by, and about, nurses (see, Eweama 2009; Montell 2015). These stories align in content and theme with the ten stories discussed above: watchful or disturbing nurse apparitions, the ghosts of previous patients, and strange paranormal experiences.

Nursing ghost stories also feature prominently in ghost tours of abandoned hospitals all over the world, and the themes of pain, suffering and death feature prominently in these stories. As such, these 'haunted hospital' tours join other such manifestations of so called 'dark tourism' – tourist experiences arranged around suffering and death – alongside tours of cemeteries, abandoned gaols, and places associated with murder, war, genocide and atrocities such as Belfast, Auschwitz and Chernobyl (see, Sharpley and Stone 2009; White and Frew 2013). Publicity for tours of the former Royal Adelaide Hospital in South Australia, for instance, states:

We all love nurses [...] even when they have passed over to the other side [...] It seems not all of our caring nurses want to leave their job, their patients or their hospital. And it would seem that the Former Royal Adelaide Hospital is no different [...] Whilst the FRAH was operational, this nurse [the Grey Nurse] was witnessed around the buildings by numerous staff, patients, security and visitors alike. Not only was she seen, but it was reported that the Grey Nurse also helped out in the wards by occasionally dealing with patients before the real-life nurses could get to them [...] Even now the hospital is closed, the Grey Nurse has still been seen around the various departments by sceptical workers (Adelaide Haunted Horizons 2019).

The ghost tours of Sydney's Quarantine Station on the North Head of Sydney Harbour similarly include visits to the nurses' quarters in the old hospital precinct, which one prominent travel reviewer named as "one of the spookiest spots" (Woods 2017) due to the stories about the ghosts of nurses who still lurk there. The webpage advertising these tours features images of ghostly nurses in the historic rooms (Q Station 2017).

This narrative practice has also travelled into the nebulous space of the internet, where these previously private musings are more widely accessible than in print. Piatti-Farnell (2018) has discussed the cultural significance of ghost stories being disseminated online. In terms of online nursing ghost stories, the whispering

on the wards has transmuted into collections of narratives on nurse-focused blogs (see, Smith 2018) and experiences shared on social media. Despite this newer form of distribution and circulation, many of these stories share themes with those distributed in print or from nurse-to-nurse on the night shift. But this global dissemination means that these once private, 'nurse-only' conversations are now in the public realm. Ghost stories about the hospitals and asylums where nurses once worked – and now presumably haunt – are also available to be viewed online. A webpage dedicated to the Beechworth Hospital in Australia, for example, contains photographs from this now abandoned asylum as well as horrific historical and stock images of psychiatric patients and barbaric treatments. Featured is a story of a ghostly nurse – Matron Sharpe – who apparently worked her entire career in the hospital and was much admired. According to the site, her apparition been seen by many people “floating down the corridors of the hospital and ... she’s also seen to run up to people as they come through the door as if to greet them” (Creepy Ghost Stories n.d.). The effect of this increased visibility is an area for future enquiry and study, outside the scope of this discussion. However, what can be said is that this contemporary circulation of dark storytelling about health care is bringing a range of previously unspeakable or taboo aspects of nursing into public view, and opening them up to scrutiny.

## **Conclusion**

Nurses sometimes work on the periphery of knowing and being. They know some of what doctors know, but not all, and they may be privy to information that cannot be shared. Being on this edge is precarious and risky. Sometimes, too, the issues that nurses must encounter is beyond their psychological capacity (Beck 2011). This includes witnessing suffering, brutality, death, the abjectness of illness and disease. Some nurses also work within soulless, neo-liberal institutions directed by irrational and contradictory policies. Coping with these stressors can lead to repression and other ways to cover up the pain. But as Freud (1957) [1915] famously suggested, this repression constantly returns in the form of nightmares, unrest, vigilance, and expectations of further suffering. Yet nurses are nonetheless expected to persevere – both by their peers as well as broader society (Tubbert 2016). Thus, despite fear, isolation, and working outside the boundaries of knowledge, nurses continue to perform their caring duties.

While very little empirical knowledge is available on the embodied ways of being, thinking and acting that lie at the heart of nursing traditions of ghost storytelling, exploring this practice is an important way to illuminate just one aspect of the intricate practices of nursing and how this impacts upon nursing identity. Today, there is an increasing acknowledgement within nursing of the value of the unique and subjective in health care. It is what underpins policies of person-centred care, collaborative consumer involvement and shared decision-making (Morgan and Yoder 2012). Yet, as health care is currently constituted, science and technology are privileged over religion and spirituality. In contemporary academic and research

fields, science also takes precedence (in terms of perceived importance, funding, and respect) over the arts and storytelling. Where science is about order and control, stories – and storytelling – embrace originality, possibility, and subjectivity (Nash 2005). This reflects the prominent theme of conflict between science and the supernatural in classic Gothic writings, such as those of Mary Shelley and Charles Brockden Brown. In their own ways, Shelley and Brown each represent and manipulate the edges of reason and irrationality, nature and magic, and scepticism and credulity (Ellis, 2000, 123) that contemporary nursing ghost stories mobilise.

Briggs (2012, 176) finds that ghost stories have multiple meanings, but one element they share is the challenge they offer to the rational order. Yashinsky (2006) similarly suggests that ghost stories in health are a way to acknowledge spirituality and mystery in the clinical world, offering a challenge to an over reliance on the techno-scientific aspects of health care. When nurses journey into the unknown and the uncanny with their night shift rituals of shared ghost storytelling, this behaviour can be read in multiple ways. As well as expressions of specific and characteristic anxieties about power and responsibility, they can also be manifestations of protest against the marginalisation of spirituality and unique patient experiences in health care. In essence, this storytelling preserves the importance of mystery and intuition that is important in nursing, providing a way for a long-silenced part of healthcare to be articulated and heard. This practice of nursing ghost storytelling, which we believe can be characterised as Gothic, may thus be much more than a personal safety valve or moment of frisson-filled pleasure. It may be a way to build confidence in the less confident, and also to inform future improvements to health care. This applies not only to nurses' demands for better, safer staffing ratios and shift supervision. It may also support calls to respect and conserve nursing's abandoned and often disintegrating architectural heritage and, in so doing, preserving the important and revealing stories of the nurses who worked in these institutions, and the patients and others they cared for.

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## **“He was afraid of my insistence on ‘Ghosts’”: Haunting, Spectrality, and Jack Kerouac**

### **ABSTRACT**

*Beat literature is most commonly associated with an apolitical, confessional mode of writing that emerged from 1950s American countercultures. It is thus surprising how frequently Beat literature utilises tropes of haunting and spectrality, since this suggests some element of the conventional and popular Gothic at play within what is commonly understood to be experimental literary fiction. Beat writers, however, do not suggest anything supernatural in their engagement with the figure of the ghost; rather, they engage with a rationalist secular tradition of ghosts harbouring psychological importance. By using ghostly imagery to express the tormented mind of a bohemian outsider living in a disaffected present, Beat writers engage in cultural critique, reifying the marginalised identities, buried trauma, and historical erasures that the post-World War II American context of conformity, suburbia and affluence sought to avoid.*

**Keywords:** Ghosts, haunting, spectrality, the uncanny, Beat literature

Beat literature is most commonly associated with an apolitical, confessional mode of writing that emerged from a 1950's American counter-culture. It is thus surprising how frequently Beat literature utilises tropes of haunting and spectrality since this suggests some element of the conventional and popular Gothic at play in what is commonly understood to be experimental literary fiction. Nevertheless, "spectral janitors" and "phantom porters" float throughout William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* (Burroughs 2015, 5); Jack Kerouac's "superstitious" protagonist in *Maggie Cassidy* lies "awake for hours listening for the creak of the ghosts of New York in the house" (Kerouac 1993, 165); and Allen Ginsberg wrote "Kaddish" as an address to his dead mother. In utilising tropes of ghostliness, Beat writers deviate from the Classic Gothic tradition established by Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), which constructs ghosts as supernatural entities whose ongoing presence reifies the buried secrets of the past. Instead, Beat writers engage in a rationalist, secular tradition of ghosts as figures harbouring psychological importance. This is not to suggest that Beat writers would necessarily cite the Gothic as a chief influence, but rather that the confessional mode of Beat literature has essentially the same aim as Gothic fiction: to bring to light what is buried. For a writer such as Kerouac, whose notion of "spontaneous prose" involved the "undisturbed flow from the mind of personal secret idea-words" (Kerouac 2008, 57), literature is a form of personal confession. As a mode, confessional literature expresses the hitherto unexpressed, and just like the Gothic, it brings to light what was previously hidden and taboo. Beat literature's concern with developing a mode of writing that was personal and unconstrained by tradition thus simultaneously developed a mode ideal for a Gothicised return of the repressed. While much criticism of Beat writing insists it is primarily personal and apolitical, its ghostly figures facilitate cultural critique, as well as personal expression. By utilising motifs of haunting and spectrality, Beat literature represents the tortured psyches of those alienated from mainstream American life, and works to reify the marginalised identities, buried trauma, and historical erasures that American cultural pressures of conformity, suburbia and affluence sought to avoid after the Second World War

Beat writers emerged from a cultural context that Margot A. Henriksen describes as consisting of "two cultural personalities in conflict"; mostly visible was the surface serenity and security of the mainstream American mind, while underneath lurked an "unstable and paranoid underground American psyche in a state of panic" (Henriksen 1997, 85). Martin Halliwell describes this notion of "surface serenity" through his description of post-war America as an era that "gave rise to Elvis, high-school romances, Tupperware, the Peanuts comic strip, Hollywood blondes, [and] 3-D cinema" (Halliwell 2007, 3). Beneath this lurks a darker version of American life locatable in high rates of tranquilizer use, increasing

juvenile crime, blacklists and HUAC subpoenas. The unstable, paranoid side of post-war America remained underground largely due to the very repressive nature of the era. This repression played out in various ways; culturally as middleclass citizens moved into identical suburban dwellings and resumed traditional pre-war gender roles, and politically with the “orgy of repression” (Fried 1997, 4) associated with Senator McCarthy, and his speech at Wheeling, Virginia on February 9, 1950, in which he claimed to have the names of over two hundred Communists in the US State Department. According to Eric Goldman, the anti-Communist paranoia which defines the period between 1947 and 1954, which reached a hysterical peak during the years of the Korean War, resulted in “a tendency to denounce anything associated with the different or disturbing as part of a Communist conspiracy” (Goldman 1961, 122).

The mistrust of what was different or upsetting resulted in a “climate of repression” that “did not originate with or depend on the ravings of a single demagogue” (Pells 1985, 262) but was spread throughout almost every aspect of American life. The repressive forces which propelled McCarthy’s name into the popular imagination were the result of actions undertaken not just by Senator McCarthy himself, but by various government committees, private organisations, and special interest groups which both pre-dated and outlasted his short reign. Although the American Civil Liberties Union announced in 1945 “the almost complete absence of repression” during World War II, the authors of *The Home-Front War* point out that repression during the war years simply took “subtler and more unexpected forms” (O’Brian and Parson 1995, 16). Liberal fear of subversion saw right-wing publications attacked; Henry Luce (publisher of *Time* and *Life*) was denied credentials to visit China as a war correspondent; and in 1942 Japanese Americans living on the West Coast were rounded up and shifted to internment camps. Following the war, the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 outlawed picketing, sympathy strikes and boycotts; William F. Buckley’s *God and Man at Yale* (1951) argued that Ivy League alumni should have control over university syllabi in order to restrict academic freedom; and in 1954 J. Robert Oppenheimer lost his security clearance as a result of questioning the wisdom of developing the Hydrogen-Bomb and his association with members of the Communist Party. Blacklisting became a very real threat with life-shattering repercussions, not just for Hollywood professionals whose high profile made them the most visible victims, but also for countless technicians working behind the scenes, government employees, teachers, and academics. Marcus Klein traced the effects of the repressive nature of this era on literature, observing that the social progress of the post-war hero entailed moving “from a position of alienation toward accommodation”, by which he meant “an impossible reconciliation, a learning to live with, and at the same time a learning to deny, what has been plainly there: the happy middling community of these years, the suffocating suburbs, the new wealth, the fat gods, the supermarket, the corporate conscience, and also one’s own conscience” (Klein 1964, 33).

The repressive nature of the post-war period suggests something of the uncanny experience that Freud suggests involves a particular fear that arises “either when repressed childhood complexes are revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs that have been surmounted appear to be once again confirmed” (Freud 2003, 155). The recognition of the return of the repressed involves anxiety, which explains a tendency for post-war commentators to utilise the language of the uncanny when discussing their cultural environment. For Saul Bellow, the era was controlled by “invisible powers” (Bellow 1969, 161), while Philip Roth described the struggle between “the benign national myth of itself that a great power prefers to perpetuate, and the relentlessly insidious, very nearly demonic reality” (Roth 1985, 90) that refuses to be banished. The uncanny qualities of post-war America found sustained exploration in a 1952 editorial of the *Cleveland Press*:

What is wrong with us? It is in the air we breathe. The things we do. The things we say. Our books. Our papers. Our theatre. Our movies. Our radio and television. The way we behave. The interests we have. The values we fix. We have everything. We abound with all the things that make us comfortable. We are, on average, rich beyond the dreams of kings of old. Yet something is not there that should be – something we once had. Are we our own worst enemies? Should we fear what is happening among us more than what is happening elsewhere? No one seems to know what to do to meet it. But everybody worries (Goldman 1961, 218).

The recognition of something “not there that should be” and the worrying sense that what is present is somehow wrong suggests something of the uncanniness of American culture in the immediate post-war period.

The uncanniness of American culture sees Beat writers reaching for the trope that best expresses something both absent and present, familiar yet strange: the ghost. The use to which ghosts are put in literature are varied. Many literary ghosts appear in order to assist in the revelation of a crime, to denounce a wrong-doer, or to demand vengeance or justice. For example, in William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1603), the ghost of Hamlet’s father returns from the dead in order to uphold principles of justice and to expose secrets and lies. In cases such as this, the ghost is a supernatural entity that continues to exist beyond death. Fred Botting observes that the most popular expectations from a Gothic text include “Spectres, monsters, demons, corpses, [and] skeletons” (Botting, 1995, 2) thus highlighting expectations of the supernatural. This is reinforced by the fact that the first Gothic novel - Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* - is populated by ghosts, and the first piece of literary theory on the Gothic by Ann Radcliffe is titled “On the Supernatural in Poetry” (1826). Yet ghosts can also be associated with a rationalist secular tradition that figures them in terms of the psychological rather than the supernatural. This rationalist pursuit of ghosts is discussed by Terry Castle, who suggests that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries perceived ghosts to be the haunting effect of “the hallucination-producing imagination” (Castle 1995, 175). For example, Charlotte

Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) represents the ghostly figure residing in the wallpaper of the title as a projection of the narrator's crumbling psyche. This is also the case in Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), which leaves the reader in some doubt as to whether the ghosts that the governess observes are real, or whether she is actually descending into insanity. The Beats develop this rationalist secular tradition by essentially internalising the figure of the ghost. Rather than characters believing that they are witness to ghostly manifestations that are actually projections of madness, Beat fiction positions its characters as ghostly figures themselves. The spectres that haunt Beat writing are not actually ghosts; rather, they are *like* ghosts because they haunt the margins of mainstream American life.

Although Jason Haslam is correct to suggest that Beat texts in general, and Kerouac's work in particular, have "long been a space of cultural and political contestation" (Haslam 2009, 444), with arguments being made for their social critique and their conservatism; ghostly tropes point to an engagement with, and response to, a repressive, conformist environment. Furthermore, the way that Beat writing tends to waiver between radical revolt and the conservation of traditional values aligns it with the Gothic mode, which simultaneously reinforces and pushes the limits of middle-class existence. As David Punter observes, "the Gothic can at once and at the same time be categorized as middle-class and anti-middle-class literature" (Punter 1996, 203). It is worth noting that the leading figures of Beat writing - Burroughs, Ginsberg and Kerouac - were all from comfortable homes, with Kerouac in particular holding the traditional values of his Catholic upbringing. Nonetheless their use of ghostly figures points to something obscured, buried, haunting and secret in American life. The Beat development of the trope of the Romantic artist haunted by manifestations from a "mad" imagination is not simply a response to a conformist "square" environment; by representing alternative lifestyles, poverty, broken homes, drug use and sex outside of marriage, Beat writers represent buried realities that the dominant culture sought to repress.

If the popular American imaginary of the 1950s was centred around the middle-class suburban nuclear family unit, then it is difficult to imagine characters who might be more alienated than those who populate the pages of Beat writing. In order to explore that alienation, Burroughs renders his drug-addicted protagonist in *Naked Lunch* in spectral terms. He lives "in varying degrees of transparency" and while "not exactly invisible he was at least difficult to see. His presence attracted no special notice...People covered him with a project or dismissed him as a reflection, shadow: 'Some kinda light trick or neon advertisement'" (Burroughs 2015, 60). In a repressive culture that refuses to acknowledge dark realities, drug addicts are rendered almost invisible, with spectral imagery revealing the processes of marginalisation at work in American society through which those deemed undesirable are effectively blotted out. While not literally invisible, as a drug addict Burroughs' protagonist exists in a liminal space where he is both "there" and "not there." Like a ghost, who blurs the boundaries demarcating the living and the dead,

Burroughs' addict is an unhomely trace of an identity that undermines the domesticated optimism of the post-war mainstream. Similarly, in *Dharma Bums* Kerouac stresses the spectral nature of the various bohemians and bums who people the narrative by describing "the pale ghosts" who haunt American bus stations: "in fact one woman streamed by like a wisp of smoke, I was definitely certain *she* didn't exist for sure" (Kerouac 1976, 153). In a later episode, the narrator plays a trick on a group of children by opening the door holding a black cat and saying, "in a low voice 'I am the ghost'" (Kerouac 1976, 183). Another character, Henry Morley, speaks nonsense and is described as being "ungraspable as a ghost" (Kerouac 1976, 194). These bohemian outsiders to mainstream culture are so disturbing and mysterious that even the narrator wonders, "Who were all these strange ghosts rooted to the silly little adventure of earth with me? And who was I?" (Kerouac 1976, 199).

The unknowable ghostly status of those outside the mainstream, and whose very existence undermines the mainstream by insisting on unhealthy addictions, poverty and madness, is particularly evident in *On the Road*, which focuses on a narrator who is unmarried, unemployed and without a stable home. Sal Paradise wakes up one morning in a rented room and experiences a profound sense of dislocation:

I didn't know who I was – I was far away from home, haunted and tired with travel, in a cheap hotel room I'd never seen, hearing the hiss of steam outside, and the creak of the old wood of the hotel, and footsteps upstairs, and all the sad sounds, and I looked at the cracked high ceiling and really didn't know who I was for about fifteen strange seconds. I wasn't scared; I was just somebody else, some stranger, and my whole life was a haunted life, the life of a ghost (Kerouac 1991, 15).

The "life of a ghost" is an existence on the margins of mainstream society where those who do not adhere to the post-war American Dream are exiled. The ghostly lives of these protagonists involve both a sense of being marginalised from mainstream society and a sense of being dislocated from a sense of self. Unmarried and unemployed, a "haggard ghost" who wanders streets that are "shrouded" in fog (Kerouac 1991, 53), Sal Paradise is emblematic of an American identity profoundly alienated from post-war suburbia and corporatisation. As a ghost, Sal more rightfully belongs to the past than to the present, and he idealises his friend Dean Moriarty, who is associated more with frontier America than the newly appointed post-war superpower. As a "young Gene Autry – trim, thin-hipped, blue-eyed, with a real Oklahoma accent – a side burned hero of the snowy West" (Kerouac 1991, 4), Dean represents the antidote to Sal's "stultified" life in New York where he and his friends are in the "negative, nightmare position of putting down society and giving their tired bookish or psychoanalytical reasons" (Kerouac 1991, 9-10). Kerouac's work is distinguished by a powerful nostalgia through which the past becomes a site where those alienated from the present can seek refuge. This recuperative impulse is just as often figured in terms of failure, which works to further emphasise the

profound alienation of Kerouac's characters. When Sal climbs onto an old wrecked ship that he perceives as "the ghost of the San Francisco of Jack London," he discovers that while once upon a time the "beautifully appointed ship" housed "a blue-eyed sea captain" (Kerouac 1991, 65), the only things living in the wreck now are rats. Similarly, in *Vanity of Dulouz*, narrator Jack Dulouz expresses his failure to access a past deemed more authentic when he observes that "I saw the little winding dirt road going west to my lost dream of being a real American Man..." (Kerouac 1979, 159). Both Sal and Jack long to access a frontier identity associated with the past, with all its attendant tropes of masculinity, adventure and self-reliance, but they only find detritus and lost dreams.

For characters such as Jack Dulouz and Sal Paradise, the flight from the modern metropolis "with its millions and millions hustling forever for a buck among themselves ... grabbing, taking, giving, sighing, dying, just so they could be buried in those awful cemetery cities beyond Long Island City" (Kerouac 1991, 96), does not lead to a more authentic America but one in which homelessness is ongoing. Before Sal departs on his first trip from New York to California, he eagerly researches the pioneer journeys of the past, "savoring names like Platte and Cimarron" (Kerouac 1991, 11). His excitement at re-enacting the journey west is soon dissipated when he discovers that the iconic American sites of the past now contain "only cute suburban cottages of one damn kind and another, all laid out in the dismal gray dawn" (Kerouac 1991, 17). When he arrives in Cheyenne he discovers it is Wild West Week and the town is filled with "fat businessmen in boots and ten-gallon hats, with their hefty wives in cowgirl attire" (Kerouac 1991, 30). This commercialisation of American identity strikes Sal as ridiculous and he laments the "absurd devices" the West has fallen back on "to keep its proud traditions" (Kerouac 1991, 30). Kerouac's fiction represents a profound sense of alienation since his ghostly characters fail to truly belong anywhere; not in the post-war world of suburban homes with modern whiteware, and not in a lost world of frontier values banished by modernity. John Clellon Holmes, a close friend of Kerouac's, suggests that the break-up of Kerouac's home in Lowell, Massachusetts, the chaos of the war years and the death of his father "left him disrupted, anchorless, a deeply traditional nature thrown out of kilter" (Cunnell 2007, 7). For Kerouac (and Burroughs too) tropes of haunting and spectrality work to express identities that are unsettled and rootless, and ultimately excluded from the mainstream imaginary. Instead of men in grey flannel suits who commute to their nine to five jobs in the city from their suburban homes, Beat fiction insists on the existence of other forms of American identity that lie outside the structural norms of white, middleclass patriarchy.

As much as ghostliness can be an expression of alienation, Victor Turner's work on liminality positions it as a "between" space, capable of generating new forms, structures and identities. That is, for characters who are figuratively ghosts - dead yet still existing, invisible yet seen - their spectral natures might facilitate self-recognition and new assertions of identity that are potentially liberatory. In *On the Road*, Ed Dunkel recognises himself as a ghost with no sense of alienation, simply

noting, as he wanders through Times Square, that “I was a ghost – it was my ghost walking on the sidewalk” (Kerouac 1991, 118). Ten hours later, in the midst of someone else’s conversation, Ed repeats again, “Yep, it was my ghost walking on the sidewalk” (Kerouac 1991, 118). The calm self-recognition registered by Ed is expanded upon in *Maggie Cassidy* (1959), as the spectral nature of narrator Jack allows him to create new identities. At one point in the novel he describes entering his own house as if he is a stranger:

And I’d turn into 736 Moody and go upstairs and go in the door left unlocked by my family and hear my father’s profound snore in their bedroom and go to my spectral room with the big bed and *Jack Jump Over the Candlestick* on the wall and say to myself, “Well, this is a nice place, I think I’ll sleep in this bed, these people seem nice” – and with strange self-induced whacky but deeply comfortable wonder I’d undress and go to bed and look in the dark at darkness-and fall asleep in the lap of warm life there (Kerouac 1993, 79).

For Jack, this experience has an element of play and a sense of freedom in that he is able to move in and out of a fixed identity. Although his room is “spectral” it is also a “nice place” where he can play at being someone other than himself. This assertion of identity connects ghostliness with creativity, suggesting that a spectral self can usefully facilitate existence as an artist. By experiencing and owning themselves as ghosts, Kerouac’s protagonists explore liminal identities and conditions that remain outside the post-war mainstream. The experience of ghostliness might involve alienation or liberation, but spectrality is nevertheless a potent symbol of people and events that are variously erased or visible only through traces. While this does little for the specific plights of women and minority cultures living on the edges of post-war American culture, Beat writing makes an admirable attempt to diversify notions of what constitutes post-war American identity.

The recurring tropes of haunting and spectrality in Beat literature not only reflect countercultural concerns of alienation, but reveal the various traumas, repressions and disturbances that haunted twentieth century America. One of the most obvious traumas affecting 1950’s America, and one of the most repressed in terms of expression in cultural production, is World War II. The first American novels ostensibly about the Second World War, such as James Gould Cozzens’ *Guard of Honour* (1948) and Herman Wouk’s *The Caine Mutiny* (1950), studiously avoid both the Holocaust and the atomic bomb, even managing in many cases to completely avoid depictions of combat. Marianna Torgovnick notes that morally ambiguous aspects of America’s role in the war, such as internment camps for Japanese and Japanese Americans, incendiary bombing of cities in Germany and Japan, and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are part of the public record, but they “have never registered in America’s image of World War II or in America’s image of itself” (Torgovnick 2005, 4). Following long years of hardship and loss, America wanted a celebration of its heroic part in the conflict, and while this necessarily included violence and death - without which heroism would be impossible - only



rarely was this depicted in any detail. Hollywood films such as *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) might include a flashback scene of combat, and there might be a corpse or two, even an actual killing, but there was no civilian death, no mass destruction, no real contemplation of the Holocaust, and no exploration of the moral implications of the deployment of the atomic bomb. Admiral Gene LaRocque expressed his frustration with popular renderings of the war by pointing out that in “all those films, people get blown up with their clothes and fall gracefully to the ground. You don’t see anybody being blown apart. You see only an antiseptic, clean, neat way to die gloriously” (Adams 1994, 100). Michael C.C. Adams’ *The Best War Ever* relates the story of a combat photographer who recorded the murder of SS soldiers by their American guards only to be informed that the film could not be screened because of “technical difficulties”. When one reporter attempted to broadcast descriptions of faceless, limbless American soldiers in military hospitals, the censors instructed him to write about new miracle drugs and medical instruments instead. Known for his social realist fiction of the 1930’s, John Steinbeck admitted that as a war reporter he deliberately slanted stories to omit anything that might shock civilians (Adams 1994, 9).

In a cultural climate that tended to repress the horrors associated with World War II, tropes of haunting and spectrality are particularly useful in reifying trauma since they insist on the uncanny return of what is repressed. In *Vanity of Duluoaz*, Kerouac describes the war as the destroyer of innocence, with the narrator explaining that none of his friends ever dreamed “we’d all end up in World War II, some of us killed, some of us wounded, the rest of us eviscerated of 1930’s innocent ambition” (Kerouac 1979, 10). This traumatic experience is never represented, only referred to. It is thus expressive of the silence that Cathy Caruth asserts is the post-traumatic sign of fragmentation and unrepresentability. The very resistance of trauma to representation means that it recurs in the text tangentially in spectral imagery related to memories of the narrator’s cat:

Because when I saw the face of my beloved dead cat Timmy in the Heavens, and heard him mew like he used to do in a little voice, it surprised me to realize he wasn’t even born when World War II was on, and therefore at this moment, how can he even be dead? If he wasn’t born, how can he be dead? So just an apparition in molecular form for a while, to haunt our souls with similarities to God’s perfection, in Timmy’s case the perfection was when he’d sit like a lion on the kitchen table, paws straight out, head erect and full-jowled, and God’s imperfection when he was dying and his back was a skeletal run of ribs and spinal joints and his fur falling off and his eyes looking at me: “I may have loved you, I may love you now, but it’s too late... (Kerouac 1979, 163).

As the work of Caruth and others working in the field of trauma theory demonstrates, a historical moment such as World War II might be experienced as a shock to the psyche that overwhelms its functioning, disables its defences, and

estranges it from direct contact with the brutalising event itself. For someone like Jack Duluoz, the horror of the war affected his capacity to deal with the traumatising event as it occurred, and he is only able to access it via his mind's recursive attempts to master what it has failed to experience. As Jack remembers his dead cat, an unprocessed trace returns unbidden in an effort to force the mind to acknowledge previously unclaimed experience. The imagined ghost of Timmy the cat works as a reification of the incomprehensible and inexpressible horrors of World War II that can only be expressed in terms of a ghostliness that is both familiar and domestic.

The connections between Kerouac's writing and World War II was made upon the publication of *On the Road* when Gilbert Millstein suggested in a 1957 review in the *New York Times* that it was similar to that "testament" of the Lost Generation-Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (Millstein 1957, 27). Although Millstein's review acknowledges that there is no technical or philosophical similarity between Hemingway's and Kerouac's novels, it nevertheless implies that both books are capable of summing up a generation defined by the trauma and disillusionment of global war. Kerouac's military service, however, was rather different from Hemingway's heroics. After enlisting with the U.S. Marine Corp in 1942, Kerouac was lured by the better pay of the Merchant Marines and shipped out on a vessel carrying dynamite to Allied bombers in Europe. When he later reported for Navy service he ended up in the Navy psychiatric facility and announced himself incapable of adhering to military discipline. The official verdict was "indifferent character." He was discharged from the Navy, denied a veteran's pension, and signed on to another Merchant Marine vessel which only narrowly survived its mission. Kerouac's first ship sank on its next voyage losing over five hundred men, many of whom Kerouac had known, and his best friend Sebastian Sampas was killed serving as a medic. Although Kerouac signed on for another mission following his own near death, he deserted before sailing and was barred from further service. Kerouac later admitted via a fictional alter ego that he had "goofed" through the entire war (Kerouac 1979, 272).

Having "goofed" a football scholarship and study at Columbia University as well as military service, Kerouac wound up hospitalised in 1945 from a combination of thrombophlebitis and Benzedrine abuse. Kerouac's disorienting experience of loss and failure during the war years - openly admitted to in *Vanity of Duluoz* - is obscured by the emphasis on freedom and fun within *On the Road*. Mark Richardson usefully describes the novel's strange mixture of exuberance and darkness when he suggests that "*On the Road* is tragically optimistic—a fine figure for the 1950s, a haunted, hopeful, doomed decade" (Richardson 2001, 220). Sal is indeed intent on careening journeys and raucous parties, but he cannot completely escape the reminders of twentieth-century conflict that continually darken his horizon. In Washington D.C. he meets with "Great displays of might lined along Pennsylvania Avenue" for Truman's second term inauguration, and at the sight of "B-29s, PT boats, artillery, all kinds of war material that looked murderous in the snowy grass," the car they journey in becomes a "battered boat" (Kerouac 1991, 122) recalling Sal's

oblique references to his war time journeys at sea. Similarly, the first ride that Sal hitches on his first journey west is on a dynamite truck, which recalls the first mission Kerouac took with the Merchant Marines. As much as Kerouac might wish to avoid explicitly exploring the horrors of World War II in his fiction, it nevertheless stages continual returns suggesting the ongoing repercussions of war for American culture in the 1950s.

The uncanny tropes and nostalgia in Kerouac's writing points to a textual preoccupation with death since, as Nicholas Royle points out, "the uncanny may be bound up with the most extreme nostalgia or 'homesickness,' in other words a compulsion to return to an inorganic state, a desire (perhaps unconscious) to die, a death drive" (Royle 2003, 2). The Shrouded Traveler who stalks the dreams of Sal Paradise in *On the Road* is a particularly resonant example of Kerouac's textual preoccupation with death. Sal explains that "Something, someone, some spirit was pursuing all of us across the desert of life and was bound to catch us before we reached heaven. Naturally, now that I look back on it, this is only death: death will overtake us before heaven" (Kerouac 1991, 112). Although Sal attempts to diffuse the threat of the pursuing figure of death by suggesting the naturalness of mortality and the solace of an afterlife, the horrors of dissolution are less successfully avoided when Sal describes how "you start your life a sweet child believing in everything under your father's roof", but then comes the day "when you know you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, and with the visage of a gruesome grieving ghost you go shuddering through nightmare life" (Kerouac 1991, 95). Taking on the guise of a mourning spectre, Sal expresses the ultimate estrangement from the human condition: "I had no more control. All I could see of the morning was a whiteness like the whiteness of the tomb" (Kerouac 1991, 96). Similarly, in *Maggie Cassidy*, the youthful Jack Dulouze describes how "At night I closed my eyes and saw my bones threading the mud of my grave" (Kerouac 1993, 59), while the older narrator in *Vanity of Dulouze* express a similarly macabre perspective when he insists that "all life is but a skullbone and a rack of ribs through which we keep passing food and fuel just so's we can burn so furious" (Kerouac 1979, 114).

Kerouac's death-obsessed narrators suggest that life is haunted by death, and that the living are haunted by the dead. This is precisely the hauntological perspective that Jacques Derrida describes in *Specters of Marx* when he argues that to live is not something one learns from oneself or from life. In order to live, we must seek instruction "from the other and by death." What happens between life and death, "can only *maintain itself* with some ghost, can only *talk with or about* some ghost" (Derrida 1994, xvii, emphases in original). Life is thus entirely dependent on death, as presence relies on absence. The "other" - the ghost - is the one we must converse with in order to live. As the narrator in *Dharma Bum* observes,

"Everything's gone, already gone, already come and gone," I yelled. "Ah," stomping around, coming back, "and things are empty because they appear,

don't they, you see them, but they're made up of atoms that can't be measured or weighed or taken hold of, even the dumb scientists know that now, there *isn't* any finding of the farthest atom so-called, things are just empty arrangements of something that seems solid appearing in the space, they ain't either big or small, near or far, true or false, they're ghosts pure and simple."

"Ghosts!" yelled little Lou amazed. He really agreed with me but he was afraid of my insistence on "Ghosts." (Kerouac 1976, 144).

Kerouac's insistence on ghosts represents a strong repudiation to criticism of his work as solipsistic or merely autobiographical, since recurring tropes of haunting and spectrality suggests that the very essence of these writings is a spectral structure in that they invoke the haunting effect of history and of the past on the present. Although ghosts are often understood as a projection of the fears and longings of characters, in the work of Beat writers they also work as the revelation of past traumas through those who exist in the present. By insisting upon ghosts, Kerouac and his fellow Beat writers meaningfully engage with countercultural concerns such as alienation, as well as fleshing out the various traumas, repressions and disturbances that haunted post-war America. If popular post-war cultural production insists on conformity, belonging and affluence, then Beat writing insists on representing the marginalised identities that exist on the margins of American life, the ongoing trauma of World War II that haunts its veterans, and the dark realities of death and dissolution that must be faced, in order to live.

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## **Playing the Bloody Rose: Deconstructing Childhood with *Kamen Rider Kiva***

### **ABSTRACT**

*Kamen Rider Kiva is a Japanese television programme for preschool aged children, featuring Gothic elements in both content and form which provide a layer of enjoyment for older viewers as well. The series features sexual jealousy, anti-miscegenation discrimination, genocide, betrayal, and haunting along with rubber-suited monsters and slapstick humour. This article uses Kiva as an 'uncanny mirror' to reflect Anglophone cultural constructions of childhood and the relationship between these constructions and television programming for children. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, it draws on sociological research and histories of childhood as well as media and child audience studies to argue that the segregation and exclusion of children plays an important role in the creation and maintenance of adult self-identity. Children's affinity for dark and frightening themes is denied and suppressed by adults because of the unease it creates for adults attempting to reconcile actual children with ideas about childhood innocence and purity - against which adulthood is defined. Children's television programmes with Gothic characteristics challenge the adult/child audience boundary, opening up the possibility of intergenerational entertainment in a very different form to that of 'family' movies. Kiva allows children and adults to focus on whichever story element they find most compelling, from a whole which is presented equally to both.*

**Keywords:** Childhood, *Kamen Rider*, Children's Television, Japan Studies, Gothic Television

In *Kamen Rider Kiva* is a Japanese television programme for preschool aged children that began airing in Japan in 2008. It features the “Bloody Rose”, a violin haunted by the dead father of a vampire hunter, the eponymous Kamen Rider Kiva, and made under the guidance of his vampire mother. While Kiva desires nothing more than to ignore the outside world and focus on his music, the playing of his parents’ violin alerts him to his duty to defend humanity from the attack of stained-glass-skinned vampires. Using the bite of his bat sidekick to transform into a *Kamen Rider* masked hero, he rides out on his extravagantly Goth Honda motorcycle. *Kamen Rider* is not a household name in the Anglophone world, but its sister program’s US adaptation, *Mighty Morphin’ Power Rangers*, hereafter *Power Rangers*, certainly is. Like *Power Rangers*, *Kamen Rider* is a martial arts and wire-stunt based spectacle. Although its plots tend to be more adult and its characters more complex, it is still very much a children’s program. This raises the question of what it means to be considered a ‘children’s program’? What cultural assumptions underlie the definition of ‘age appropriate’? This article uses *Kamen Rider Kiva* as a tool to deconstruct Anglophone cultural constructions of childhood and the relationship between these constructions and television programming for children. It argues that the segregation and exclusion of children plays an important role in the creation and maintenance of adult self-identity, with television programming providing a particularly clear example of the cultural specificity of this segregation. By examining a non-Anglophone program that is aimed at children but also enjoyable for and consumed by adults, this article argues that the conventions and regulation of children’s television in the Anglophone world have more to do with the construction of adult identity in opposition to childhood, than with any universal biological reality of childhood development.

First, it is perhaps worth considering, what is a child? The question may seem frivolous, yet, it’s extremely difficult to answer. Childhood is a cultural construct, yet the distinction between child and adult seems so natural, and age-based social segregation so prima facie necessary that “deconstructing childhood” sounds almost sinister. So, what *is* a child? One’s first response may be a temporal one, following legal definitions. A child is a person who is under 18, or under 21, or various other ages depending on the country. Of course, even within the same country at different times childhood has had very different definitions. In the UK for example the age of adulthood for various purposes has at times been 13, 21, and is now 18. Clearly these different ages relate to social conditions not biology - an Australian 18-year-old and a Japanese 18-year-old are unlikely to be noticeably different in their development, yet the Australian teenager is an adult while the Japanese teen’s transition to adulthood will not be celebrated for another two years. We understand that these numbers are somewhat arbitrary, yet we would surely also insist that children are



nevertheless distinct from adults in some fundamental way. We may grope toward an explanation of immaturity; that just as a child's body is still growing, in other ways, too, the child is an as-yet unfinished adult. In fact, much of contemporary western culture is predicated on this notion of childhood as a linear journey toward adulthood. Toys are marketed in developmental stages, schools are divided into age-based grades, and in Australia we regulate media-ratings in an age-based progression. Children pass these and other 'waypoints' - such as getting a driver's license - on their journeys from incomplete personhood to their final adult form (surely the most Gothic of all journeys). According to James and Prout, "children are marginalized beings awaiting temporal passage, through the acquisition of cognitive skills, into the social world of adults" (1997, 11).

At the same time, there also exists a cultural narrative of childhood as a 'walled garden' of carefree innocence and wonder that provokes nostalgia and longing in adults. Holland argues that adults use representations of childhood to gain control over both actual children and our own childhood memories, writing, "there is an active struggle to maintain childhood - if not actual children - as pure and uncontaminated" (1992, 12-13). Through this conceptualisation childhood is less a journey and more a binary state: having fallen from grace and become polluted by the adult world, children are eventually eternally banished from their Eden-like garden of childish innocence. We see these ideas reflected in the framing of discussions about child soldiers or factory workers whose 'childhood ended abruptly', or victims of sexual abuse who are described as having their childhood stolen or their innocence destroyed (Kitzinger 1997). Jenkins sums up these occasionally conflicting models of childhood thus:

Childhood- a temporary state - becomes an emblem for our anxieties about the passing of time, the destruction of historical formations, or conversely, a vehicle for our hopes for the future. The innocent child is caught somewhere over the rainbow- between nostalgia and utopian optimism, between the past and the future (1998, 5).

While variations of these two conceptualisations of childhood are culturally dominant in the Anglosphere, there are of course others. Jenkins' work identifies children as having their own agency, writing: "Children, no less than adults, are active participants in the process of defining their own identities, though they join those interactions from positions of unequal power" (1998, 4). Emily Plank writes "[j]ust as I assumed Germans were somehow Americans with a different language, so do adults often tacitly assume children are mini-versions of themselves" (2016, 7). She goes on to mount a powerful argument that childhood represents a complete and distinct culture; shaped by, yet distinct from the dominant culture in which it resides.

Cultural constructions of childhood impact how media for children are produced, regulated, and distributed, what themes are explored, and when and how

children access media. In turn, media plays an important role in the lives of children and families and may influence the ongoing social construction of the concepts of childhood and family. The precise impacts and mechanisms of the interactions between these two forces (conceptualisations of childhood and media for children) have long been identified as worthy of study, and yet our understanding remains inadequate. In his expansive work on children and media *After the Death of Childhood*, Buckingham identifies the lack of a broader social analysis of the child audience and advocates for greater connections to be forged between “research on children and media and the growing body of research on the sociology and history of childhood” (2000, 118). Writing thirteen years later, Lemish renews calls for an interdisciplinary approach, “a call with burning relevancy to its application in the current study of children and media” (2013, 6). This article is a modest step towards just such an interdisciplinary conversation. Its methodological contributions are twofold: it proposes the Gothic as a framework to understand transgression in the context of children’s television, and uses an intercultural example to draw attention to encultured assumptions and practices about and around the production and regulation of children’s television.

Dominant cultural conceptualisations of childhood inform policies, laws, and regulations around the content of children’s media. Because of the belief that there are special considerations surrounding childhood, media such as television programs created for children faces a number of unique issues (Bryant 2007, ix). Content is regulated both to make it ‘developmentally appropriate’ (the journey model) and also to ‘protect’ the children’s innocence from being polluted by ‘adult themes’ (the walled garden model). These restrictions on children’s media content reflect different cultural constructions of childhood and cultural values. In some domains, violence is more highly regulated than sexual content, while the opposite may be true elsewhere. If we accept that childhood is a social construction then “the way it is constructed will produce variations in children’s media around the world” (Awan and Steemers 2017, 20). Such variations are the focus of this article. How fantasy violence is conceptualised and regulated is a particularly fascinating site of cultural difference. For the purposes of this article, however, I am interested in those ‘adult themes’ which are trickier to define: death, grief, loss, betrayal, and revenge. All of which brings me back to *Kamen Rider Kiva*.

As I have asserted, much of public discourse around childhood is culturally specific in ways we are often oblivious to. The moments of encounter between different cultural constructions force implicit assumptions to be made explicit. Like *Power Rangers*, *Kamen Rider* has numerous iterations with different themes and characters, but there are certain recurrent elements, and all of the seasons (1971~ongoing) are collectively referred to by the meta title *Kamen Rider*. *Kamen Rider Kiva* aired in Japan in 2008 as a double bill with *Enjin Sentai Gōonjā*, which was adapted for American television as *Power Rangers RPM* (2009). *Kamen Rider* is broadcast on Japanese free to air television at 9am on a Sunday, followed by *Super Sentai* (adapted in English as *Power Rangers*) at 9.30. The two are broadcast together

in a viewing slot called “super hero time” ([www.tv-asahi.co.jp](http://www.tv-asahi.co.jp)), and always feature at least one cross-over episode where the Sentai and Riders visit each other’s worlds. Like *Power Rangers*, *Kamen Rider* is a vehicle for toy and merchandise sales (Allison 2006, 112, 121). The children featured in the advertisements for the toys shown during the program are usually aged between five and eight years old, with the advertised clothing ranges beginning at 100cm (ages 3-4). Almost every item advertised during the commercial breaks in a *Kamen Rider* broadcast is *Kamen Rider* branded, including shoes, candy, lunch boxes, colouring books, and even happy birthday phone calls from your favourite character. The only non-branded item regularly advertised during my period of observation (2013 to 2015) was *randoseru*, extremely expensive handmade leather school bags presented as a gift to Japanese children before their commencement of elementary school at age six. Allison (2006, 188) gives the target audience for *Super Sentai* as two to seven-year olds, which - given the close relationship between the two titles - can be broadly applied to *Kamen Rider* as well. Toy company Bandai sponsors and co-produces *Kamen Rider*, has been explicitly stated that the target audience is five-year-olds (Johnson 2009), confirming Allison’s assertion.

Although *Kiva* is a program for young children with strong links to toy sales, it is also very much a Gothic text in both content and form. The story is told in a non-linear style, jumping between timelines in 1986-8 with protagonists who are the parents of the main characters from the second timeline, set in 2008-9. The 1980s plot contains subplots with their own flashbacks to the 1970s. The non-linear style is further complicated by a series of unreliable narrators, revelations of deception, and misdirection. Central to linking the timelines are a reportedly haunted mansion and a definitely haunted violin (the “Bloody Rose”) inherited by Wataru, the protagonist of the 2000s from his father Otoya, who is a protagonist from the earlier timeline. The program’s main premise is the conflict between a vampiric species called ‘fangire’ that feed on human life-energy, and “The Wonderful Blue Sky Organization”, a secret society sworn to battle against them. In the 80’s timeline, The Wonderful Blue Sky Organization develops a range of (not particularly effective) weapons to fight the fangire. In the 2000’s Wataru is much more successful, but partly transforms into a fangire himself in order to battle them, making the secret society suspicious of him.

Parallel to the human story we see some episodes focusing on fangire society, which is stratified into ranks based on chess pieces. It is ruled by the king and his consort, whose primary role as queen is the execution of fangires who have transgressed by entering into romantic relationships with humans. In the course of 48 episodes the series deals with sexual jealousy, anti-miscegenation discrimination, genocide, betrayal, and haunting in ways that would likely be unheard of in an Anglophone context. This is not to say that Anglophone children’s media are homogenous; there are significant differences between media environments in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and so on, of course, which will be discussed in more detail later in this article. Nor do I claim that Anglophone

children's media is devoid of Gothic texts. Indeed, Wheatley (2012) identifies a number of British children's television programs from the 1970s and 80s which qualify as Gothic texts (although, as will be discussed further, such programs would be unlikely to be produced today). Further, Jackson, McGillis, and Coats argue that "fear or the pretence of fear has become a dominant mode of enjoyment in literature for young people" (2007, 1). However, by employing a specific focus on a Japanese text, I intend to provide a kind of 'uncanny mirror' to encultured assumptions about children's media.

The world of *Kiva* draws heavily on European cultural history and Anglophone Gothic texts. Chess, Crusader imagery, stained glass, classical music, and European fine art feature prominently, and the 'monsters' include species based on vampires, werewolves, Frankenstein's monster, and the *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. In terms of aesthetic and in-world mythology, *Kiva* draws upon Western rather than Japanese conventions. This use of culturally familiar tropes makes the differences in the content presented to children all the more interesting. For example, the character Jirou is the last survivor of the wolfen, a werewolf species systematically exterminated by the fangire. During the 1980's episodes he and Otoyā are romantic rivals for the affection of the secret society's star fangire hunter, Yuri. Jirou's motives are entirely unromantic however- having seen Yuri in battle he feels she is the only human woman strong enough to bear wolfen cubs. His overwhelming motivation is the restoration of his species, and he sees Yuri as a means to this end. After the various moral panics of the 1980s and 90s and the following changes to the television market of the new millennium, it strikes me as unlikely that such explicit linkage between flirtation and reproduction, and the conceptual leap from genocide to sex would ever be approved for broadcast in a live-action, English language program for kindergarteners.

As previously stated, there are significant linguistic and cultural differences between regulatory and market environments across the Anglophone world. Despite close cultural proximity, UK broadcasters are more conservative than their Australian counterparts, for example (Potter 2017, 22). Australia and the UK share a history of well-funded public broadcasters, which has in the past allowed for the production of expensive live action teen dramas (Potter 2017, 28), including some with dark and confronting themes (Potter 2017, 24). However, for both locales over the last decade, publicly funded content production has become increasingly risk averse in response to fears about both reductions in government funding and audience fragmentation (Potter 2017, 23-24). As the BBC and ABC have expanded into multiple channels and online viewing apps, their "focus on attracting and retaining younger audiences in digital walled gardens also suggests robust and diverse content is less likely to be commissioned" (Potter 2017, 28). In contrast, the production environment in the United States is influenced by a long history of media regulation, including the Hay's film code, which was implemented between 1930 and 1968, the Comics Code from 1954 to 2000s, the Television Code from 1952 to 1983 and subsequently MediaScope's "Special Considerations for Creators of Children's

Media". While these examples are all of explicit guidelines, since the advent of the new millennium the regulation of children's television content has become an opaque, in-house affair with television networks establishing their own Broadcast Standards and Practices departments. These each have their own internal guidelines which are not disseminated to content producers or researchers (Hendershot 1998, 25). Furthermore, as Potter explains,

the autonomy enjoyed by compliance viewers allows their personal preferences, programme tastes and beliefs about childhood to inform their interpretation of programme codes. Compliance officers' employment status will also affect their judgement. Many across the industry, especially those in very large pay-TV operations, are on short-term and part-time appointments and understandably reluctant for their editorial decision-making to lead to mass complaints and regulatory attention (2017, 28).

While I cannot categorically state that Jirou's storyline would be considered inappropriate for pre-schooler television in every Anglophone country, this trend towards risk aversion lends credence to my claim that it would not be considered appropriate. In a humorous article for *Slate* Nick Confalone (a television animation writer who has worked on programmes such as *My Little Pony* and *Littlest Pet Shop*) share some of the notes he has received from Standards and Practices departments, including a "reminder that both characters should be wearing helmets while riding the T-Rex" (2017). Given the significance of the US market for television globally, this tendency to err on the side of caution may have a chilling effect on children's television content produced in other countries. Havens states that "children's television is one of the most commonly traded forms of television programming" (2007, sec. 2, para. 1). The "US remains the primary source of imported programming for countries everywhere" (Davies 2013, xxiv) and selling original content to overseas markets including the US is an important income stream for publicly funded broadcasters like the BBC and ABC. Thus, while there are significant differences children's television content across Anglophone countries, there is also a consistent awareness of international expectations.

Most points of tension and drama in *Kiva* centre on the family; the Jirou subplot is far from an aberration. Wheatley describes menacing domestic situations and family secrets as common characteristics of Gothic television, along with, "perhaps most importantly, homes and families which are haunted, tortured, or troubled in some way" (2006, 3) When the fangire queen Maya begins an affair (also described in the show as haunting) with the human Otoya, we are shown an escalation of the domestic violence she endures within the walls of the royal residence Castle Doran. Eventually the fangire King threatens to kill their baby son Taiga if she continues seeing Otoya. A confrontation between Otoya and the King ensues. In the climactic moments of the battle, in which Otoya is killed, the King attempts to kill Maya as she holds Taiga. The baby summons a barrier which reflects the attack back at the King, his father, killing him. Following the King's dying

words, (“a new king is born”) we see the mark of the king appear on the baby’s hand. Back in the 2000’s, we see the adult Taiga attack Maya, enraged that she has passed an hereditary weapon to Wataru not to him. As he chokes her, she says “just like your father”, making him recoil. Taiga is torn between his desire to be different than his father; to be a strong king and to have a relationship with his half-brother. Further, we also see his pain at his mother’s abandonment of him to the care of fangire hating humans, which festers into resentment over his belief that she favours Wataru over him. For his part Wataru feels paralysed by the pressure he faces to live up to the greatness of his father. After his mother abandons him as a young child to live alone in his dead father’s purportedly haunted mansion, he becomes deeply fearful. Indeed, first episode of the program introduces him as having severe social anxiety as a consequence of this. He lives in the home he inherited from Otoya and is compelled to fight the fangire by the insistent strumming of the Bloody Rose; the violin crafted by his parents which is in some sense haunted by Otoya’s presence.

Far from a site of sanctuary, then, family is experienced by both brothers as a site of fear, violence, abandonment, and overwhelming and repressive responsibilities. The idea that parents do not necessarily know best or may not be acting in their children’s best interests is a potentially dangerous one in a culture which demands immediate and unquestioning compliance from children. In his detailed discussion of regulatory intervention directed against *Power Rangers* in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada in 1994, Simpson references concerns that the depiction of teens solving problems without relying on adult guidance meant that the programme undermined family values “through its lack of any role for parental authority” (2004, 109). As previously discussed, one can no longer access an explicit list of the standards used to determine what is and is not permissible for US children’s television. However, *Kiva*’s portrayal of adult-child relationships would have been explicitly discouraged by the now redundant US “Special Considerations for Creators of Children’s Media”, which states that “Adults should be portrayed in a positive and supportive way, unless the program is focusing on adult behaviour that is harmful or hurtful to the child, and depicts the child’s appropriate response” (MediaScope 2000). While I am certainly not advocating for the glib or dismissive treatment of domestic or family violence, I do find this insistence on depicting adults positively quite revealing. In Australia approximately a quarter of all children have been exposed to domestic violence (Family and Community Services 2018), with similar estimates in the United States (O’Donnell and Quarshie 2019). Sadly, for a great many children, adults are a source of fear and genuine danger rather than benign authority. Considering this, it ought not be unreasonable to suggest that an insistence upon positive representations of adults does a greater service to the preservation of adult power than it does to the preservation of childhood innocence.

Furthermore, while it may provoke discomfort in some adults to acknowledge as much, ‘dark’ themes are often attractive to children. Jackson, McGillis, and Coats observe that children “have always had a predilection for what we now categorize as the Gothic, for ghosts and goblins, hauntings and horrors, fear

and the pretence of fear” (2007, 2). Drawing on a decade of experience as an early childhood educator, Plank (2016) describes “the wild and overgrown fringes of childhood make-believe, the dark forests” (91) as containing fear, violence, airplane crashes and family members who die “with a strange matter-of-fact regularity” (90). Adults become disturbed by children’s darker imaginings, pondering at possible evidence of trauma, and may ban this kind of play outright (See Holland 2003). Writing about two films which polarised reviewers on the topic of the appropriate audience age, *Frankenweenie* and *ParaNorman*, Hawley (2016, n.p.) points out that they,

rewrite the myth of childhood innocence by depicting Victor and Norman as children with dark, difficult lives. Importantly, each boy has encountered death and, for each, his parents have failed to effectively guide him through the experience. [...] The films are also reminders that a child’s first experience of death can come very young, and often occurs via the loss of an elderly relative or a beloved pet.

The discomfort that these films provoked in the reviews referenced by Hawley, and the many warnings they include against allowing young children to watch the films, suggests that this reminder is an unwelcome one.

The transition from the dark and gruesome nursery stories Tatar describes as traditional (2009, 45) to the kind of stories we may today consider “child appropriate” coincided with broader social changes around the status of children which increased the segregation of children from the everyday lives of adults (prohibitions against child labour, mandatory age-based schooling and so on). The further segregated children become from adults, the easier it is to romanticise their innocence and purity. Plank continues:

we never assume that the natural, uncontaminated well of childhood imagination contains both light and dark [...] Out of a strong desire to preserve the innocence in our early childhood environments, we ban the wild, violent, or scary elements and redirect imaginary play to the tame and domesticated storylines that aren’t so problematic (2016, 91).

She concludes that children use fantasy as a safe way to explore anger, fear, sadness and power as emotions (94). Similarly, Punter and Byron (2004, 39) argue that the Gothic is a genre that gains particular force during times of cultural crisis as a way of working through social anxieties in a displaced form. To go even further, Jackson, McGillis, and Coats question whether “the really strange development of the eighteenth century was the transformation of the Gothic narrative into an adult genre, when it had really belonged to children’s literature all along” (2007, 2).

*Kiva* is a programme that embraces darkness, complexity, and fear. However, it never takes itself very seriously or veers too far from the kind of absurdity we may

be more familiar with in children's entertainment. It transgresses Anglophone conventions of appropriate content for children not only because it has dark themes, but paradoxically because it is by no means a 'serious' show. It does not raise serious issues to explore and resolve them; rather it mixes tragedy and comedy so thoroughly that it can at times be disorienting – even uncanny. The complex structure and 'adult' themes coexist with the sort of rubber-suited monsters, slapstick fight scenes and cute comedic pet/side-kicks viewers of *Power Rangers* will be familiar with. The program is thus able to operate at different levels for different viewers, which the 'adult' content hidden in plain sight. Although children's media is produced and regulated in unique ways globally, Manabe argues that in Japan,

children's culture is embraced and absorbed into adult culture, partly because it is part of adults' activities with children. Parents and grandparents read children's stories to them, watch children's movies and television programs with them, and sing children's songs with them. As such, much of children's culture is formulated to stimulate adults as well as children (2017, 266).

I began watching *Kiva* incidentally when my young son was watching it. I found the plot intriguing but sat in boredom through the fight scenes. My son, however, was only interested in the fights and slapstick humour and would use the 'talking' portions of the show as toilet or snack breaks. He didn't understand the double timeline at all, but had encyclopaedic knowledge of the minutiae of all the weapons and special attacks which went entirely over my head. In some ways, we were enjoying two entirely different shows. The experience was qualitatively different, however, from something like the *Sesame Street* "Twin Beaks" sketch (February 26, 1991). Because it is unlikely that any child watching *Sesame Street* would be familiar with *Twin Peaks*, there is a real imbalance to the enjoyment an adult has watching the segment versus a child. Essentially the adult is in on the joke while the child is not. With *Kiva* my son and I had access to all the same information, we simply filtered it differently.<sup>1</sup>

Okuhara argues that this is also a feature of Japanese animation and links it to folklore, writing that:

folk tales were originally for both the old and the young. Each audience interpreted the tales in his or her way; there was no need to distinguish tales for the old and young. Everyone gathered and enjoyed the same old tales in one place (2009, 201).

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<sup>1</sup> While I understand that the inclusion of first-person ethnographic narrative it is not stylistically accepted in all disciplines, self-ethnography has a long-established place in both Japan Studies and Media and Cultural Studies. Anne Allison's seminal work on Japanese toys describes explicitly having been inspired by her sons' play experiences while living in Tokyo during her field work for a different piece of research and draws heavily on these family experiences (Allison 2006, particularly page 110), and Henry Jenkins writes about his relationship with his childhood dog in his widely cited textual analysis of *Lassie* (Jenkins 2007). The inclusion of this anecdote intends to expand on the point raised, which is an essential component of the article's argument.



This is in stark contrast to trends in the Anglophone media sphere, where distinctions between adult and child content are now so pronounced that even public broadcasters such as Australia's ABC offers different channels for children, further separated into younger and older cohorts with ABC Kids and ABC Me. The experience of intergenerational sharing of television programmes certainly exists in the Anglosphere, but without necessarily being supported or encouraged by content producers and regulators. Booth and Kelly's (2013) respondents highlight the importance of intergenerational viewing relationships when discussing the *Doctor Who* fandom. However, depending on the regulatory domain and specific episode, parents may be officially advised against allowing young children to watch *Doctor Who*. This is a small but significant difference from the Japanese context. Booth and Kelly's interviewees describe watching *Doctor Who* together as an activity which strengthens family bonds, and shared enjoyment of the program as something which has brought family members closer together (67-68). One respondent in particular mentions the associations *Doctor Who* has for her with spending time with both her father and her son (67). In addition to folk tales, texts with Gothic characteristics such as multiple narratives or that play with temporality, parody and subversion (Round 2014, 56) are perhaps particularly well suited to this kind of multi-layered viewing experience. *Doctor Who* and *Kiva* certainly share these characteristics. This reveals something of a paradox. If it is the Gothic characteristics of a program like *Kiva* that facilitate intergenerational viewing, and yet those same characteristics render it incompatible with Anglophone conceptions of childhood, what are the implications? Could it imply that the segregation of children and adults is inherent to the dominant cultural construction of childhood in the Anglosphere?

To explore this, let us return to the idea that when adults police the boundaries of childhood we are in some sense negotiating with our own pasts. Gray writes that when "adult fans buy *Star Wars* toys for a child, what they may be trying to hand over as a gift is their own nostalgically remembered relationship with the text" (2010, 185). In his exploration of childhood in the 1960's Buckingham (2018) describes an adult counterculture which simultaneously attempted to get adults 'back to the garden' while trying to reshape childhood for the next generation into "the childhoods we wished we had had, or thought we wished we had had" (Diski 2009, 117 cited in Buckingham 2018). We see here an entirely adult centric conception of childhood. The 'child' is a reconstructed memory whose significance is in its distinction from the adult it has become, whether in a nostalgic frame or one of regret and resentment. Consequently, decisions about contemporary children are made on the basis of how adults remember their own time as children -almost as though one's own past could be edited by creating different (or recreating the same) experiences for a future generation. A strict separation between adult and child is thus necessary in order for the adult's definition of self to remain intact. Children who behave too much like adults threaten the integrity of the border between the two, representing "a challenge to adult power" (Buckingham 2000, 14). Policing this border, Buckingham argues, "is thus not just a matter of the *separation* between

children and adults: it also entails an active *exclusion* of children from what is seen to be the adult world" (15). When family movies throw in jokes and intertextual references for adults that are inaccessible to children, they actually serve to reinforce the adult child border. This is particularly true of sexual innuendo which parents may laugh at but refuse to explain to their irritated offspring. The answer to the question this article opened with (what is a child?) may simply be: the Other against which Anglophone adulthood defines itself.

The cultural specificity of this adult/child border in television programs is apparent in the following description of the localisation process for the original Japanese *Pokémon* TV series into a version acceptable for the US (and via the US other Anglophone countries):

the original Japanese product was geared to a wider audience, including adults, whereas the American product was directed at young children and thus required significant adaptation. The American version thus became more dynamic, with brighter colo[u]rs, faster pace, and sharper and more clear-cut editing (Götz et al. 2005, 152).

The authors do not question why American children require brighter colours or faster pacing than Japanese children. Given *Pokémon's* popularity with young children in Japan these changes are perhaps less about catering to any developmental specificities of childhood and more about signifying 'childishness' to signpost that the program was not intended for adults in American, reinforcing segregated viewing habits. The uncanny mirror reveals a children's television culture similar and yet profoundly different: the possibility of treating the child audience with more emphasis on audience, and less on child.

By virtue of its Gothic characteristics, *Kiva* offers a multilayered text which adults and children can enjoy by self-selecting the aspects of the story which appeal to them from a whole which is presented equally. I argue that this opens up radical possibilities for the weakening of the segregation of children and adults through television production practices which discourage mixed age group viewing. In *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* Rose writes: "Instead of asking what children want, or need, from literature, this book has asked what it is that adults, through literature, want or demand of the child" (1993, 137). This article examines television rather than literature, but its concerns are similar. Adults create, broadcast, regulate and control access to children's television content. When writing about children's television it is vital that we engage with constructions of childhood and their cultural contexts in which those constructions have arisen, and ask what it is that adults are demanding from children through television. The beliefs adults hold around the meaning of childhood, and the inherent assumptions in dominant cultural constructions of childhood have a great deal of power over what kinds of programs are available to child audiences. Awan and Steemers identify a lack of research into childhood and children's media studies outside of North America and

Europe, writing that the absence of more global research, “matters because globalizing forces in the media landscape, including children’s media, are liable to expose tensions between different conceptualizations of child and types of media content that children are likely to encounter” (2017, 20). Rather than write about a Japanese programme in the Japanese context, I have chosen in this article to use a Japanese program to draw attention to Anglophone contexts. As Lemish points out, cross-cultural studies “help us understand the complicated intertwining of culture and media” and have the “potential to make obvious the deep ethnocentrism and cultural biases we all assume, to some degree” (2013, 7). By using an intercultural example this article has drawn attention to some of the less explicitly articulated aspects of the processes by which cultural beliefs about childhood impact television content.

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## **Shared Trauma: Historical Memory and the Doppelgänger in Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *The Shadow of the Wind***

### **ABSTRACT**

*Carlos Ruiz Zafón's international bestseller The Shadow of the Wind (2001) is a figurehead of Spain's neo-Gothic literary movement. Within the explicitly Gothic atmosphere of post-Civil War Barcelona, Ruiz Zafón creates a complicated, intertextual narrative that employs the doppelgänger motif in order to create a parallel of actual historical characters and events from that era. This essay seeks to demonstrate that in The Shadow of the Wind, the spectral (here, the traumatic past) becomes present through the corporeal double relationships at the centre of the plot: Julián and Daniel, Julián and Laín Coubert, and Fermín Romero de Torres and the Spanish self. The doppelgänger motif is key to understanding the important historical connections in The Shadow of the Wind because it allows us to read each individual narrative as symptomatic of – and participatory in – a larger discourse about the traumatic past. The inherently transgressive qualities of the doppelgänger speak clearly to an audience of readers at a time in which the self – be it individual, national, global, or all these – is problematically divided. By intertwining the specific journeys of his characters with classic Gothic tropes, Ruiz Zafón establishes the concept of historical memory as one that can, in fact, transcend national boundaries, resulting in a novel that speaks to the present readers in a manner that allows them to actively engage in the reconstruction of the past.*

**Keywords:** Spain, *doppelgänger*, war, memory, Carlos Ruiz Zafón, Spanish Gothic

After publishing four young-adult novels in the 1990's, Carlos Ruiz Zafón made his adult fiction debut in 2001 with *The Shadow of the Wind* (*La sombra del viento*). This novel fortified Ruiz Zafón's marketability and catapulted him into the bestselling arena alongside only a handful of his Spanish contemporaries. Ruiz Zafón has since become Spain's number-one bestselling author, and *The Shadow of the Wind* has received numerous literary awards from around the world. The book's popularity has as much to do with its still-relevant historical themes as it does with Ruiz Zafón's ability to craft a complicated, multi-dimensional narrative that relies on aspects of several interrelated literary genres, like the mystery and detective novel, the romance novel and, most importantly, the Gothic novel.

*The Shadow of the Wind* is a *Bildungsroman* narrative, as noted by Maria Sergia Steen (2008), and as such it recounts the formative years of the protagonist and narrator Daniel Sempere's childhood and adolescence, and his adventures in the old Gothic quarter of Barcelona. Within the first few paragraphs we learn that Daniel's mother died from cholera at the end of the Spanish Civil War and that he and his father run a small bookstore. The first chapter also introduces us to the Cemetery of Forgotten Books, a secret building in the dark streets of the Gothic quarter that safeguards censored and unwanted books from those who would seek to destroy them. On his first visit there as a young boy, Daniel is allowed to take one of the books to read and keep forever. His choice, *The Shadow of the Wind* by a man named Julián Carax, is what ultimately inspires and leads to Daniel's dangerous yet exciting search for the author. Throughout Ruiz Zafón's novel, Carax and Daniel's lives, and narratives become intertwined, each person seemingly a shadow of the other. As Julián searches for the truth about his love, Penélope, Daniel also faces hardships with his own girlfriend, Bea. The appearance of the villainous Laín Coubert also connects the two males: initially, Coubert attempts to purchase Daniel's copy of *The Shadow of the Wind* in order to burn it, although we later discover that Coubert is actually Julián's alter-ego, seeking to destroy what is left of Carax's legacy.

In addition to these separate yet intricately connected stories, there are multiple side narratives that more explicitly relate the social and political situation of the post-war era, which is especially emphasized in an ongoing battle between Fermín Romero de Torres (Daniel's friend, a former homeless man) and Inspector Fumero, a stereotypically hard-boiled, corrupt detective. As I shall demonstrate, in many respects these relationships, symbolize the historical circumstances of the aftermath of Spain's Civil War (1936-1939), which resulted in the nearly four-decade dictatorship of Francisco Franco until his death on November 20, 1975. In the end, Daniel's love for books and his persistence in the fight against multiple forms of evil (exemplified by Fumero and Coubert in particular) allow him to save the very last

copy of *The Shadow of the Wind* as well as to help its author, Julián Carax, to recuperate emotionally and to revive his career.

Given the novel's international popularity, it is unsurprising that numerous authors have written academic studies on *The Shadow of the Wind* since its publication, many of which have focused on the role of historical and collective memory in the text. Robert Richmond Ellis focuses on the metafictional aspect of *The Shadow of the Wind* by considering the novel to be "part of a long tradition of Spanish-language books about books" (Richmond Ellis 2006, 839). Although he places the novel within the category of "memory texts" that gained popularity in late-20<sup>th</sup> century Spain, he also argues that Ruiz Zafón "depoliticizes history" in his portrayal of the effects of the war as personal, rather than collective, traumas (Richmond Ellis 2006, 846). Sara Brenneis disagrees, arguing for a serious reading of the novel as one that discusses real historical events by making them accessible to a general fiction-reading public, noting: "Ruiz Zafón's novel arrives at a pivotal point along the timeline of Spain's dialogue with its own history and the country's assertion of a relevant voice in world affairs, and leaves its own significant mark on both issues" (Brenneis 2008, 64). Cinta Ramblado chooses to examine the detective-novel nature of the text by studying Fermín and Fumero as important characters in the exercise of memory in the plot. Like Brenneis, Ramblado notes the importance of the socio-political underpinnings of the text, declaring that the novel "can be considered a contribution to the defense of memory in contemporary Spain" (Ramblado 2008, 74). Others have focused on the Gothic nature of the novel. For instance, Tiffany Gagliardi Trotman studies the use of space in the text, focusing on the city of Barcelona, the Cemetery of Forgotten Books and Montjuic Castle; claiming that, "the author's use of Gothic space is emblematic of the socio-historical milieu in which he sets the narrative" (Gagliardi Trotman 2007, 269). More recently Glennis and Gordon Byron have studied the relationship between the memory text and the Gothic, problematizing former critics' declaration of the novel as a "memory text" given the way in which it approaches the historical past. For Byron, "the gothic text rather focuses on the continuing presence of that past, on its continuing power and threat" (Byron 2012, 74). Likewise, Ann Davies notes the novel's purposeful use of the "Gothic motif of the past haunting the present" (Davies 2016, 73); and Xavier Aldana Reyes declares that Ruiz Zafón "has become synonymous with the Spanish Gothic as a mode" (Aldana Reyes 2017, 27).

For the purpose of the present study, I would like to note the important arguments made by Brenneis, Ramblado, Trotman, and Byron in establishing the historical nature of Ruiz Zafón's novel. Like these authors, I also argue for the serious consideration of the depiction of history and trauma in *The Shadow of the Wind*. Moreover, the more recent examinations of the role of the Gothic in Ruiz Zafón's text also help to inform the present study: there is an undeniably dark, ominous and transgressively Gothic tone that continues throughout the novel which significantly impacts the actions and reactions of the characters within their individual and shared experiences. Although some of the above-mentioned scholars



have noted the connections between this novel and issues of memory and real history from the Spanish Civil War period, Ruiz Zafón's purposeful use of doubles as part of his overarching commentary on war and memory has been under-explored. With this in mind, I will focus my own investigation on Ruiz Zafón's use of the Gothic motif of the *doppelgänger*, not only to portray his characters within this highly Gothicised fictional environment, but also to create an allegory of the various factions of Spanish society living in Barcelona during the immediate post-war period. Taylor Stoehr notes the Gothic technique of using narrative multiplicity as a backdrop for the emergence of *doppelgängers* in novels in which:

the heroes of the repeated tableaux nearly always resemble each other, and are frequently doubles, and [...] the plots, too, are closely parallel, [yet they] are nonetheless kept rigidly separate by those devices of crumbling manuscripts, conventual secrecy, taboos on the communication of a family curse (as cited in Sedgwick 1986, 19).

Ruiz Zafón's own multi-faceted narrative combines numerous instances of duplicity within the ominous environment of post-war Barcelona. As we will see here, this use of the *doppelgänger* relies heavily on the spectral presence of the past, a phenomenon in contemporary Spanish fiction noted by Jo Labanyi (2000) and, more recently, Fiona Schouten (2010). The re-historicization of these Gothic motifs will play an important role in this study, since both the grotesque atmosphere and the entire cast of the novel represent, in unison, the impossibility of modernity existing in Francisco Franco's Spain.

### **The *Doppelgänger* and Ruiz Zafón's Historical Doubles**

Although the notion of the double self can be traced for centuries back to ancient myths and cultural folklore, the word *doppelgänger* (German, literally meaning "double walker") was first used by German author Jean Paul in his Romantic novel, *Siebankäs*, in 1796. Antonio Ballesteros González explains that the *doppelgänger* "constitutes a recurrent motif in Gothic and horror literature, mostly in the nineteenth century, ultimately coming from the anthropological belief in an innate duality in man" (as cited in Mulvey-Roberts 2009, 119). This belief has endured centuries of literary representation and is shared by many different cultures, even appearing occasionally in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spanish fiction. In her 2010 book on Gothic fiction in Spain, Abigail Lee Six dedicated a chapter to studying the image of the double in Galdós's *La sombra*, Unamuno's play *El otro* and Espido Freire's novel *Diabulus in musica*. As such, Lee Six has discovered that:

like most celebrated Gothic texts dealing with duplication, they address a basic human anxiety concerning selfhood. Specifically, they confront their characters—and by extension their readers—with the disturbing possibility that the self may not be whole, homogeneous, and neatly separated from

others, but perhaps a far more complex, fragmented, or permeable entity (Lee Six 2010, 63).

This understanding of the *doppelgänger* is especially useful in our present study, because it addresses the notion of the complex issues with identity that are underscored in the doubling process.

Indeed, the numerous instances of doubling throughout *The Shadow of the Wind* give way to the haunting presence of the past in the lives of the characters and within the very streets of Gothic Barcelona. Ruiz Zafón's *doppelgängers* serve as constant corporeal reminders of the trauma stemming from the Civil War era, a period that saw the splitting of the Spanish self and the fragmentation of national identity. Jo Labanyi, having written extensively on the ghosts of the past in contemporary Spanish fiction and film, notes that:

For ghosts, as the traces of those who have not been allowed to leave a trace (Derrida's formulation again)—are by definition the victims of history who return to demand reparation; that is, that their name, instead of being erased, be honoured (Labanyi 2000, 65).

Fiona Schouten also refers to Derrida's theory of hauntology when she states:

In the case of memory novels that deal with a difficult past, though, haunting may be expected due to the presence of trauma. Trauma is, of course, very likely to return in a ghostlike manner: repressed and consciously forgotten, it is nevertheless still felt (Schouten 2010, 56).

In her study of the Gothic body, Marie Mulvey-Roberts connects the notion of the body with the spectral past: "All bodies, whether fictional or otherwise, are bearers of a politicised message. As the fleshed-out ghost of history, the body comes heavily laden" (Mulvey-Roberts 2016, 4). In historicized Gothic texts like Ruiz Zafón's novel, the corporeal and the spectral merge to represent the fractured body as a whole, highly influenced by the hauntingly traumatic past while existing within the decaying physical confines of the present. Therefore, what I seek to demonstrate here, is that in *The Shadow of the Wind*, the spectral (here, the traumatic past) becomes present through the corporeal double relationships at the centre of the plot: Julián and Daniel, Julián and Laín Coubert, and Fermín Romero de Torres and the Spanish self.

The most explicit *doppelgänger* relationship in *The Shadow of the Wind* is that of Julián and Daniel. The two protagonists demonstrate the notion that not all *doppelgängers* are "alter-egos" but rather they act more as twins who illustrate the Gothic splitting of self. There are eight episodes throughout the book in which Ruiz Zafón highlights the similarities between the protagonists, most often through the perspective of another character who remarks on the common features or

personality traits that they share. Their general biographies certainly resemble one another: both are avid readers, both are called to military service at the age of 16, and both have illicit relationships with 17-year-old girls (respectively, with Penélope and Bea – also paired doubles) which result in pregnancies. Aside from this, Julián and Daniel have similar physical features. Nuria Monfort – Julián’s ex-lover – is the first to comment on Daniel’s resemblance to Julián when she states:

You remind me a bit of Julián [...]. The way you look, and your gestures. He used to do what you are doing now. He would stare at you without saying a word, and you wouldn’t know what he was thinking (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 164).

When Daniel and Fermín go to speak with Father Fernando (an old classmate of Julián), Fernando, too, comments on the physical resemblance: “Do you know that you look a bit like Julián when he was young?” (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 200). The protagonists’ common physical attributes and life stories form the base of this primary *doppelgänger* relationship. The focus on their mutual resemblance also draws attention to the Gothic preoccupation with the body and its frequently problematic relationship with identity. Julián and Daniel’s similar features serve to highlight the notion that each protagonist is the missing half of the other: that both characters are essentially one soul or identity that has been split into two separate physical entities.

Unlike many other classic Gothic *doppelgängers*, this particular double relationship between Julián and Daniel is not motivated by hatred and destruction, but rather by their need to find and then save each other. Despite being separated by time (as seen in their difference of age), the doubled protagonists have finally been brought together because of one novel – *The Shadow of the Wind* – that Daniel had chosen many years ago in the Cemetery of Forgotten Books. To this extent, the beginning of the *doppelgänger* motif in Ruiz Zafón’s text is based entirely on the salvation of that particular novel authored by Julián. Isaac, the keeper of the Cemetery of Forgotten Books, tells the young Daniel that each book in the old building has a soul and that “[e]very time a book changes hands, every time someone runs his eyes down its pages, its spirit grows and strengthens” (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 5-6). When Daniel gives new life to a forgotten work of fiction, Julián (the book’s author) also receives new life. From this resurrection of a fictional text, both protagonists’ lives become intricately connected and follow a narrative similar to that of Carax’s text: “a ghostly odyssey in which the protagonist struggled to recover his lost youth, and in which the shadow of a cursed love slowly surfaced to haunt him until his last breath” (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 7). The narratives that Ruiz Zafón creates for Julián and Daniel remarkably parallel the fictional text-within-a-text that Julián has written (which is, as stated, also titled *The Shadow of the Wind*). Ruiz Zafón’s multiple plots capitalize particularly on the phantasmagoric aspect of Carax’s metatext by continuously relating to each other through the interplay of shadows and darkness. In this manner, the *doppelgänger* motif takes on the characteristics of its surroundings in the Gothic quarter of Barcelona and evokes a spectral presence in the form of the double; a presence that forces the doubled characters to question

their own sense of self in relation to the Gothic atmosphere in which they are situated. The self-referentiality throughout Ruiz Zafón's novel serves to draw attention to these intimate connections between his characters, but especially between his two protagonists.

The unique bond between Julián and Daniel becomes increasingly important toward the end of the novel, as Barcelona's Gothic streets are permeated with a diabolical presence. Julián is the first to understand the significance of the doubling effect, and his care for Daniel is made obvious in a conversation he has with Nuria:

'His name is Daniel. He's the son of a bookseller whose shop, on Calle Santa Ana, Miquel used to frequent. He lives with his father in an apartment above the shop. He lost his mother when he was very young.'

'You sound as if you were speaking about yourself.'

'Perhaps. This boy reminds me of myself' (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 443).

Julián's ability to recognize himself in his double is vital for the safety of both protagonists: by defending Daniel from Fumero's ruthlessness, Julián also saves himself. Since the moment in which young Daniel gave new life to Julián and to his book, both protagonists have depended on each other for survival. If one of them dies, then the other will remain "shadowless" – that is, without a complete sense of self. As Julián's increased interest in Daniel indicates his dependence on the boy, Nuria begins to understand this complex relationship and she relates all of this in a letter to Daniel, writing: "Julián became increasingly watchful of you, of your progress. [...] You were both looking for each other, Daniel" (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 444). Julián's need to keep track of Daniel allows him – as a grown man living in self-imposed isolation – to live vicariously through his double. Given the novel's overarching Gothic context, it is important to note the role of duplicity in the creation of true identity. Since the discovery of their *doppelgänger* relationship, Julián and Daniel must continually seek each other out in order to foment the growth of the Other, as well as to protect the existence of the self. Moreover, in overt reference to the spectral presence of the past, the double relationship between Julián and Daniel hinges upon the latter's discovery of trauma in the former's adolescence and young adulthood. Daniel is only able to avoid Julián's fate by learning from the past through his interactions with both the written text and face-to-face interviews and confrontations with the characters in Julián's real-life narrative.

Julián is one of the most interesting and complex figures in Ruiz Zafón's novel because of his narrative multiplicity, which manifests itself in the form of his own *doppelgängers* that serve to split his narrative into separate subtexts of the main plot. As we have already seen, one of these *doppelgängers* (and, therefore, one of the subordinate texts in Julián's total narrative structure) is Daniel. The other is Laín Coubert, who represents the typical Gothic trope of the alter-ego, and is particularly reminiscent of the relationship between Jekyll and Hyde in the classic Robert Louis

Stevenson tale. His burnt and scarred skin, seemingly “devoured by fire” (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 60), gives Laín a monstrous appearance: he is neither a fully functional, intact human being—for he has no nose, lips nor eyelids—nor an other-worldly being. Laín’s semi-human state, then, derives from the classic Gothic fear of and obsession with deformity, and highlights the genre’s frequent anxiety with notions of the body and the self. This impression of Laín greatly recalls that of Mr. Hyde in Stevenson’s tale: the doctor’s alter-ego is described as giving “an impression of deformity” that provokes “disgust, loathing and fear” in those who encounter him (Stevenson 1991, 20).

As the alter-ego villain in the novel, Laín Coubert also represents the devastating results of the war. His charred skin and numerous scars, combined with his affinity for destruction, make him a monstrous anthropomorphisation of the traumatic effects of the war on the Spanish population. Indeed, it is highly significant that the items and people he attempts to destroy are all related to his former self, Julián. The self-destructive state under which Laín operates is an internalised replication of the similarly self-destructive environments during the Civil War, when the formerly united Spanish self becomes split into two opposing sides and each strives for the power to destroy the other. In effect, Ruiz Zafón utilizes the *doppelgänger* motif in his portrayal of Julián and Laín to create a direct dialogue with Spanish history’s own doubled self. As Stevenson cunningly demonstrated in his *doppelgänger* story, the forces of evil that permeate humankind itself ultimately lead to its destruction. In like manner, Ruiz Zafón manipulates this classic Gothic motif so as to draw Stevenson’s moralistic conclusion straight into recent Spanish history; he portrays—as many have—the nationalist side led by Franco as the inherently evil part of the two halves of the Spanish self. Ultimately, then, Laín Coubert comes to represent the evil that invades the human spirit and transforms it into an unrecognizable entity which, without hope of rescue, will continue on a path of self-destruction until nothing is left of the former self.

Another *doppelgänger* character in the novel is Fermín Romero de Torres. As a homeless man whom Daniel and his father take into their care, Fermín provides an immediate glimpse of post-war Spanish society as one whose citizens are abused—sometimes even tortured—and left to roam the streets, suffering from physical and emotional scarring that this narrative stipulates is a direct consequence of the dictatorship. In this manner, Fermín represents the embodiment of trauma; his body, literally scarred from acts of war, becomes the symbolic double of Spanish society under the Franco dictatorship. In his discussion of torture and the Gothic in the *Hostel* film series, Xavier Aldana Reyes notes:

The body, particularly in the torture scenes—where it appears as a canvas for the sadistic fantasies of others—becomes a site of gothic horror, abused by others and reduced to its capacity for suffering (Aldana Reyes 2014, 130).

Fermín's body thus becomes the physical marker of the trauma of war and its aftermath. Daniel and his father first get a glimpse of the torture Fermín has experienced when they help him undress before a bath: "With nothing on, he looked like a wartime photograph" (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 83). Fermín's naked body is a somatic representation of the atrocities of the war itself. His scars are not only numerous but also deep and visibly irritated. The state of helplessness in which we first see Fermín signals a more widespread notion of pain and suffering among the Spanish people. As Fermín himself later states: "These marks are the least important. The worst ones remain inside" (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 321). Therefore, physical scars in Ruiz Zafón's novel are doubly significant, representing those wounds that we cannot see – those which penetrate deeper than the flesh and which inflict pain for a much longer period of time. Once again, through the Gothic positioning of the scarred and mistreated body, Ruiz Zafón depicts these post-war anxieties in a very intense manner. If Fermín's body is a representation of the fragmented Spanish self in the post-Civil War era, then the damage that the war affects on the body (deformation, decay, scarring, loss of limbs) suggests damage to the psychological self as well.

Due to his connections with the Republican party, Fermín is blacklisted after the war is over, and Inspector Fumero makes sure that he will not get a job. He thus ends up homeless and begging on the streets alongside scores of others exactly like him:

There were many others like me, colleagues from prison or parole. The lucky ones had somebody they could count on outside, somebody or something they could go back to. The rest of us would join the army of the dispossessed. Once you're given a card for that club, you never cease to be a member. Most of us came out only at night, when the world isn't looking. I met many like me. Rarely did I see them again. Life on the streets is short. People look at you in disgust, even the ones who give you alms, but this is nothing compared to the revulsion you feel for yourself. It's like being trapped inside a walking corpse, a corpse that's hungry, stinks, and refuses to die (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 321-22).

As Ruiz Zafón describes the war's aftermath – people transformed by the dozens into members of a new version of the living dead, wandering the streets at night – he employs the Gothic convention of depicting monstrous conversion in a society that appears almost post-apocalyptic. Fermín characterizes these people as the "dispossessed": those whose promise of freedom (and, at the most extreme level, of life itself) has been revoked by the new authorities under Franco's regime. Like a truly grotesque Gothic creation forged from human and non-human (or once-human) parts, the dispossessed provoke repulsion and shame in those they come across and, tragically, like Frankenstein's monster, they also induce the same reaction in themselves. The image of their nightly wandering through the dark, shadowy streets of a decrepit Barcelona is precisely the kind of scene that Ruiz Zafón utilizes in order to demonstrate the historical effects of the war in his country. The

hopelessness and physical deformities of these dispossessed civilians make them a centrepiece for the author's depiction of history and memory in the post-war era, and again draw attention to the haunting presence of the spectral past as it forces itself onto the corporeal present. The zombie-like image of the dispossessed requires us to consider the victims' physical bodies as both living and (un)dead, as both human and inhuman, or monstrous. Mulvey-Roberts notes succinctly that:

Monstrosity derives in part from the Latin verb '*monstrare*' ('to show'). Its spectacular derivation points to how the monstrous functions as a looking-glass, permitting us to see our own inner-monster and revealing the extent to which monsters are us (Mulvey-Roberts 2016, 9).

We must therefore consider Fermín's symbolically doubled self as a commentary on the atrocities of war and the ability of humankind to act in monstrous ways that serve to fragment, displace, and even deny the formation and retention of identity.

### ***Doppelgängers* and Fiction as Tools of Memory**

As we have seen, the *doppelgänger* motif in Ruiz Zafón's novel is highly dependent on the spectral presence of the past within an overtly Gothic environment. The *doppelgänger* relationships that we have studied here also depend on the notion of authorship as the catalyst for their existence. Through the multiple, interwoven narratives that give *The Shadow of the Wind* its structure, Ruiz Zafón portrays the acts of reading and writing as primary tools of creation and destruction; the numerous *doppelgängers* in this novel demonstrate the constant splitting of self within the highly-charged Gothic environment of war and its aftermath. As Mulvey-Roberts aptly states: "The most threatening collective of dangerous bodies is undoubtedly that generated by war, the supreme Gothic horror" (Mulvey-Roberts 2016, 8). Thus, the constant doubling of characters and wartime history throughout Ruiz Zafón's text facilitates a discussion of the acts of reading and writing as participatory acts in the (re)creation of memory.

Daniel is the central character around whom the double motif and the authorial act of reading converge. The term "authorial" here is used in reference to the creative aspect of readership as it is illustrated throughout *The Shadow of the Wind* because, in addition to fomenting the imaginative process, the act of reading is directly responsible for the chain of events that follows Daniel's initial perusal of Carax's novel and, therefore, provide the structure for the protagonist's *Bildungsroman*-like journey. Thus, we are led to understand that reading, itself, spurs the creation of new narratives in real life. Moreover, as Isaac Monfort – the primary caretaker of the Cemetery of Forgotten Books – tells the young protagonist, reading has the power to rejuvenate a book's soul by resurrecting its message from within the folds of oblivion. What we have not yet mentioned, however, is the ability of these banished books to also indicate a historical consciousness. When Daniel returns to the Cemetery of Forgotten Books to hide his copy of Carax's novel, he

notices for the first time the sombre atmosphere of the place, commenting:

I felt myself surrounded by millions of abandoned pages, by worlds and souls without an owner sinking in an ocean of darkness, while the world that throbbed outside the library seemed to be losing its memory, day after day, unknowingly, feeling all the wiser the more it forgot (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 76).

Daniel's observation calls attention to the historical significance of Ruiz Zafón's Cemetery: the secret library is a metaphor for the repression of memory and knowledge that occur as a result of war. Particularly in the case of Franco's Spain, governmental censorship carried tremendous influence throughout the country. In Ruiz Zafón's Barcelona, this censorship has been translated into the Cemetery of Forgotten (i.e. censored) Books: a resting place for the burial of past knowledge and creative endeavours that are no longer allowed in the present. For this reason, when Daniel asks Nuria Monfort why anyone would want to burn Carax's books, she responds: "Why are books burned? Through stupidity, ignorance, hatred... goodness only knows" (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 171). The destruction of knowledge is a strategy carried out by dictatorial regimes like that of Franco, whose government sought to control its citizens' access to information and modern ideas, thereby maintaining strict traditions of the past and not allowing the present to be interrupted by any new concept that did not adhere to the restrictions dictated by Franco himself.

The convergence of the multiple fictions and the *doppelgänger* motifs around Daniel also highlights these negative effects of the war and of the dictatorship by blending historical fact with the authorial act of narration: as the shadows of the multiple narratives around him blend together, Daniel begins to believe that they are, in fact, his own. His sense of identity is entirely dependent on the narrative multiplicity which has allowed even his own person to become doubled in the form of Julián Carax. In *The Shadow of the Wind*, narratives are lives, which are, in turn, countered by representational shadows that lurk in the Gothic streets of a decaying, post-war Barcelona. In order to come to terms with the shadows and to return to his former self, Daniel must recognize the power of memory, and he must use it to combat the forces that wish to destroy the other works of fiction—the other narratives that belong to the pre-war past.

War—specifically, the Spanish Civil War—and memory are concepts that underlie Ruiz Zafón's entire narrative, which as Nuria explains, are inevitably intertwined. In fact, each of the author's main characters, seems to comment on the negative effects of the war, but those who have the most to say do so in the form of a narrative; most notably, Nuria's letter and Daniel's narration in the form of the book we know as *The Shadow of the Wind*. In her letter to Daniel, Nuria Monfort warns the protagonist: "Never underestimate the talent for forgetting that wars awaken, Daniel" (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 410). When Nuria describes the war, she draws attention to the overarching motif of the double and the notion of self. She depicts Barcelona



at the end of the war as a place racked by despair and years of suffering. More importantly, she notes the stifling effect that the war has on collective memory, stating:

Wars have no memory, and nobody has the courage to understand them until there are no voices left to tell what happened, until the moment comes when we no longer recognize them and they return, with another face and another name, to devour what they left behind (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 428).

Her statement illustrates the hidden trauma of war: the likelihood of a repetition of traumatic events in the future due to the repression of memory and to the regime's campaigned insistence on avoiding and forgetting the past. Moreover, Nuria's depiction of the war returning with another face also recalls the *doppelgänger* motif: wars, as we are led to believe, are capable of reproducing themselves, of splitting off from their original form and of transforming into another separate, yet similar, entity. When this happens, as Nuria warns, whatever is left of the residual collective memory will be forever destroyed. Thus, within his employment of the Gothic *doppelgänger* motif, Ruiz Zafón portrays war through the concepts of representation, mimicry, memory and history. From this perspective, war is nothing more than a degenerative machine: it continually spawns in the present new versions of its past self while destroying all traces of individuality, which are primarily demonstrated in the abstract form of memory. Within a Gothic setting, war becomes an uncontrollable catalyst of the doubling process by transforming the societies within and around it into shadows—*doppelgängers*—of their former, true selves, thereby burying their memories and leaving them powerless in the face of oppression.

Daniel's manner of describing the aftermath of the war seems to indicate that the process which Nuria has characterized is, in fact, already underway. Toward the end of Ruiz Zafón's novel, Daniel tells us:

Nineteen forty-five, a year of ashes. Only six years had elapsed since the end of the Civil War, and although its bruises were felt at every step, almost nobody spoke about it openly. Now people talked about the other war, the world war, which had polluted the entire globe with a stench of corpses that would never go away (Ruiz Zafón 2004, 432).

Here, the reprisal of the symbolism of ashes and scars again links the notion of the body—in this case, Spain itself—with historical trauma and decay. Ruiz Zafón's reference to World War II indicates the worldwide effects of such trauma, making the Spanish Civil War only one part of the overall global narrative of war and trauma in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This connection with the outside world is a crucial aspect of Ruiz Zafón's text that allows the Civil War itself to act as a double of other wars in a historical context that unites the past, present and future through its narrative multiplicity and intertextuality.

## Conclusion

Ruiz Zafón's modern Gothic novel provides an excellent example of the continued relevance of this literary genre in today's changing society. The Gothic novel's inherent ability to mutate and transform itself according to the socio-political anxieties of the present is part of its success – which contributes to the popularity of novels like *The Shadow of the Wind*. The inherently transgressive qualities of the motif of the double speak clearly to an audience of readers at a time in which the self – be it individual, national, global, or all these – is problematically divided. Ruiz Zafón's novel gives readers the opportunity to understand such issues from a multi-faceted, intertextual perspective that is general enough to include common human experience, yet specific enough to engage readers in a literary experience that speaks to them as individuals.

As we have seen here, the *doppelgänger* motif is key to understanding the important historical connections in *The Shadow of the Wind* because it allows us to read each individual narrative as symptomatic of – and participatory in – a larger discourse about the traumatic past. Labanyi's Derridean notion of the ghosts of the past has provided us with a theoretical marker that links the spectral with the doubled body. Throughout his novel, Ruiz Zafón shows the insistent, unending presence of the spectral past and the need to give this past a voice – to acknowledge its narrative as corporeal and vital to the future formation and preservation of identity.

As with every aspect of Ruiz Zafón's narrative, the ending also is increasingly self-aware: through the three-tiered salvation of Carax's novel, of Daniel and of Carax himself, Ruiz Zafón's all-inclusive version of *The Shadow of the Wind* also seeks the acknowledgement of memory and of the national self. We, as readers of Ruiz Zafón's fictional tale, ignite the same process that Isaac describes to the young Daniel: the revival of the text, and the corresponding return of a long-repressed history. If Daniel's simple act of reading could trigger such an important change in the dynamics of his relationship with history and the present, then Ruiz Zafón's modern Gothic novel indicates that we, too, can effectuate a similar change through the reading and sharing of narratives about the traumatic past.

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Lisa Mullen. *Mid-Century Gothic: The Uncanny Objects of Modernity in British Literature and Culture After the Second World War*. Manchester University Press, 2019. 240 pp. ISBN: 978-1-5261-3277-2**

*Reviewed by Derek Johnston (Queen's University Belfast)*

Lisa Mullen's *Mid-Century Gothic* focuses on the decade following the end of the Second World War, positing it as an uncanny time between the modernism of the pre-War period and the post-modernism of the 1960s. The disruption of life and culture caused by the War is captured in the familiar image of the house with a wall torn away by bombing, presenting the materials of the everyday private lives lived inside to the public. In this way, life and culture became re-presented as *unheimlich*: familiar yet unfamiliar and brought back to our attention rather than taken for granted as everyday. Mullen examines this incursion of the uncanny through a range of cultural products, including novels, art exhibits, films (particularly five from Powell and Pressburger), opera, clothing, and the technologies of television, radar and robots. She presents this mid-century period as significant not just as a time when the UK was recovering from the trauma of the War, but also as a "liminal moment when objects began to stake out a more intimate claim on human subjectivity, opening the door for the consumerist ideology that was to define subsequent decades" (121).

As with any attempt at an overarching survey, it would be easy to pick at various issues that arise in this book. There is the assumption that post-War Britain *was* more consumerist than before the war, without presenting any evidence for this. There is the disconnect between the broad concepts covered in each chapter and the

more detailed case studies that form the body of each chapter. It can feel as if there is a layer of explanation missing between the broad and the specific that makes clear how these examples fit together, or what they illuminate or suggest more widely. There is the focus on literature and art, widely conceived, as well as the absence of much popular culture. When popular culture is mentioned, it is usually through contemporary commentary rather than through direct engagement and analysis. Advertising is considered only in the way that it was reused by artists such as Barbara Jones or The Independent Group, rather than in its own right. Jazz features as the subject of a Karel Reisz documentary, rather than as a form of popular music, and other forms of popular music are not featured at all. Television is considered primarily as a technology, with little sense of the dramatic changes in not just the technology itself, but also its content and its availability from in the period beginning in 1946 - when television was only available in London - to 1956, when around 95% of the UK could receive BBC television and ITV was first introduced. Radio and comics are mostly absent from Mullen's work. The use of *Moonraker*, in reference to the threat of nuclear weapons and the relationships between humans and those weapons, seems oddly placed in a book arguing that this period was succeeded by distracting pleasures and the significance of things as commodities, when one considers that Fleming's Bond novels are steeped in the pleasures of brands, consumption, and human domination of the machine.

Because of the broad claims made on such a breadth of material, the gaps in Mullen's claims stand out so much more than if a narrower focus had been taken, and a deeper, richer analysis given to this subject. Further, there is also the concluding assertion that "as the twentieth century progressed, the uncanny was increasingly associated with a technological other, and science fiction took the place of gothic as the genre which critiqued the totalisation of mass culture" (212). There is some truth to this, but Mullen does not consider the success of Hammer Films, which built largely on adapting the BBC's *Quatermass* serials, but developed its future projects based more on the horror productions, rather than on the science fiction elements. I would also have liked to have seen more engagement with the existing academic work on consumerism during and surrounding the period, such as Rob Turnock's *Television and Consumer Culture*, or Raphael Samuel's *Theatres of Memory*, as part of developing this material in more detail.

However, despite these lacks, Mullen has engaged with an enormous range of material in this book, which encourages response, and her ambition ought to be praised. Indeed, I suggest that it is this ambition that is the root cause of the problems that I have identified. In my opinion, Mullen has tried to do too much, when this material deserves more detailed and extensive examination, examination which could extend across several volumes. A more focused study that makes more specific claims would also have been more convincing in its specific arguments. The key ideas presented here are generally convincing and always interesting, particularly when considering different aspects of the fragmentation of self and how that is related through fragmentation of objects and settings.

I also particularly liked the interpretation of the shift from the junk shop (and its gothic perils) to the antiques shop, signalling a move from interest in objects as objects, to objects as items of monetary value, although the trope of the gothic junk shop continued at least into the 1970s (e.g. *From Beyond the Grave*, 1974). Again, questions are raised about the period-specificity of these ideas. Individual case studies always raise interesting points, and the breadth of material means most readers are likely to find new texts to explore. Despite my reservations, this is definitely a book that I would recommend because of its useful central concepts and its interesting approach to a period which deserves more study. It is also one that I will be returning to myself, even if that is with the intent to pick up individual ideas, interrogate them and build on them, and ideally to fill in some of the gaps.

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## BOOK REVIEW

**David Annwn Jones. *Re-Envisaging the First Age of Cinematic Horror 1896- 1934: Quanta of Fear*. University of Wales Press, 2018. 231 pp.  
Book ISBN: 978-1-78683-335-8**

*Reviewed by Sophia Staite, University of Tasmania*

David Annwn Jones' *Re-Envisaging the First Age of Cinematic Horror* is part of the *Horror Studies* series edited by Xavier Reyes and published by the University of Wales Press. The series examines horror in all its manifestations, and aims to be a student-friendly addition to the field of Horror Studies (ii). In this volume, Jones examines twenty-two films made between 1896 and 1934 in broadly chronological order across six chapters, while the Introduction and Afterword engage more substantially with theory and debates over genre and methodology. This is a heavily descriptive work; and necessarily so, as student readers cannot be assumed to have access to all the titles and sources that it references. The analysis of each film is thoughtfully situated within wider entertainment contexts than film alone, with reference to contemporary opera and ballet productions, novels, and as one would expect from magic lanternist David Annwn Jones - lantern shows. Lobby cards, print reviews, and notes from directors' diaries also provide further context.

The book's subtitle, *Quanta of Fear*, draws attention to its primary methodological contribution to the field. Jones uses the introduction to forcefully argue against existing definitions of horror as a film genre, and questions (but does not completely reject) the usefulness of genre as a framework for analysis. He is heavily critical of the writings of Alison Peirse and Roy Kinnard whom, Jones asserts, exemplify the pitfalls of existing genre-based research in regard to these early films. In particular, Jones identifies the apparent exclusivity of the horror genre as problematic, pointing to the Hollywood-centric approach of some theorists who



would overlook some of the titles that this book examines. Jones insists that “critics of early horror film should certainly keep their minds open to the true complexity of an evolving and heterogeneous field of cinematic production, rather than applying retrospectively an unwieldy generic paradigm” (10). He proposes instead a model in which the individual cinematic elements that provoke fear may be broken down into their smallest components and studied thematically:

Films, these shifting and scintillating optical vistas, are themselves seas of intricate light quanta. Using analogies with subatomic physics, Klaus Wyborny, film-maker and physicist, describes the way in which a film projector shoots light and image particles at a screen which, in turn, reflects these particles onto the viewer’s eyes (Wyborny, 2016). These image particles are shaped by film-makers and the exigencies of the evolving medium itself. It is in recognising and discussing a selection of some of the most vivid and haunting of these thronging minutiae, the quanta of horror effects, in selected productions, that we will begin to see those films most clearly. (Jones 2018, p. 21)

This presents an intriguing approach which can be adequately explained without misappropriating the terminology and concepts of physics quite as much as Jones does. But perhaps more pertinently, it will be informative for students to follow the development of the model in the Introduction through to its application in Jones’ analyses of individual films.

Jones repeatedly draws the reader’s attention to the diversity of fear and horror elements in the early years of film, with his selection of titles ranging from the earliest era of film production such as single-reel film *The Sealed Room* (1909) through the expansion into multiple-reel and more complex stories like *The Phantom Carriage* (1921) and the transition to ‘talkies’, *Seven Footprints to Satan* (1929), for example, was released in both silent and sound versions. This emphasis on heterogeneity is also evident in the inclusion of directors from France, Spain, Moravia, Germany, Italy, Denmark, and Mexico, in addition to the USA and UK. This heterogeneity in the objects of analysis is mirrored by the expansive context Jones provides for each title. The section on *The Black Cat* (1934) is particularly noteworthy, combining as it does consideration of older novels and films referenced in *The Black Cat* itself; trends in architecture, specific events during the First World War, the court cases of Aleister Crowley, the *Lustmord* murders in Weimar Germany, and the rise of new cults and belief systems including National Socialism. While the historical detail and discussion of the films’ antecedents is exceptional, Jones also refers to the ongoing influence of the titles, identifying references to key scenes and motifs inspiring later works.

*Re-Envisaging the First Age of Cinematic Horror* is a meticulously researched book, with an attention to detail that affords the reader a truly immersive historical experience. It is an important addition to scholarship on early film in general, as well

as to Horror Studies in particular. The *Horror Studies* series' objectives mentioned earlier and inclusion of a glossary of basic terms such as "zoom" indicate the intended primary audience to be tertiary students. The engagement with debates around genre and classification, as well as the construction of an alternative analytical model, however, mean that this will also be a significant work for researchers.

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