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Introduction: Critical Networks

Brian Attebery

Any specialized discipline will develop a close-knit network of scholars who inevitably end up reading one another's work in draft, vetting it for publishers, and reviewing or blurbing it. Within the field of the fantastic, that tendency is compounded by our adjacency to fan culture, in which readers, writers, editors, and publishers regularly gather at conventions and awards ceremonies and frequently exchange roles. Though all of this interaction sometimes creates friction, it also generates fruitful dialogues between creators and consumers, and it leads to powerful and long-lasting friendships.

Most of the books on my shelves come with memories attached: meet-ups at Children's Literature Association or Science Fiction Research Association conferences, paper sessions and Board meetings and poolside chats at the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, arguments over definitions and favorites, correspondence with far-flung colleagues. The more I have been involved in the field, the less I think of printed works as self-contained or final. They are partial records of conversations: conversations that led up to the writing and conversations that continue after publication. I believe this is an entirely accurate way to view both scholarship and literature. It is also (a little) comforting in the face of losses such as the death in April of former SFRA and IAFA president Michael Levy. Mike is gone; his influence and his ideas are still with us in such forms as his and Farah Mendlesohn's *Children's Fantasy Literature* (a book I was happy to blurb and not just because I knew the authors—it's a major work of scholarship).

Editing a journal such as this presents occasional challenges in maintaining the integrity of the peer review process, since potential readers are also potential rivals or buddies. We have always been able to find objective reviewers, nevertheless, and to keep the process as blind as possible. Working behind the scenes I sometimes see odd bits of cross-communication. For instance, work by senior scholars will be faulted for lacking grounding in the field. (We senior scholars fall into lazy habits that emerging scholars haven't had the

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leisure to acquire.) I even had one peer reviewer call out an author for failing to cite that author's own work. I occasionally tap fiction writers as readers, in combination with scholars; the tradition of fan criticism within science fiction means that many of its authors are well grounded not only in the history of the genre but also in literary and cultural theory. (Plus a number of writers are closet academics, but I will not out them here.) I like to think of this periodical as an extension of the conference that gave birth to it: like the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, it is a congenial meeting place of many interests, many cultures, and many points of view.

I said before that texts are products of conversations, but so are individuals. We are all nodes in a network rather than isolated integers. I might wish I could claim sole credit for ideas that were, in reality, half-remembered and reworked insights from others. I don't really wish that, though, since it would mean that I was cut off from the many voices I have assimilated, the many insights I've borrowed, and the many friends I have made in the field, especially those who are here now only as memories, recorded voices, texts, strands in a web.

The articles in this issue represent outgrowths and extensions of the network that is scholarship of the fantastic. José María Mantero discusses the work of fantasist Alberto Chimal in the light of a growing field of Mexican fantasy fiction. Chimal's 2012 novel *La torre y el jardín* (*The Tower and the Garden*) employs the trope of the fantastic tower in a way that, according to Mantero, is both "informed by the national literary tradition and influenced by the consequences of globalization." In other words, to be part of one network is not necessarily to reject connections with another. Genres and themes, like audiences, can cross borders and communicate across cultural divides. Some of that connectedness has been obscured by the tendency to refer to any fantasy from south of the US/Mexican border as "magical realism," a term that implies a shaky understanding of the difference between reported reality and magical belief on the part of non-European or American writers. Bringing works like Chimal's into the English-language conversation greatly augments the genre's ability to critique social systems and ideological restrictions.

Robert Yeates examines two influential novels of the early 1950s and their film offshoots. One is British—John Wyndham's *Day of the Triffids*, filmed in 1962 and again by the BBC in 1981 and 2009. The other is American—Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, source for the 1964 *The Last Man on Earth* as well as 1971's *The Omega Man* and 2007's *I Am Legend*. Yeates looks at both groupings in terms of their depiction of urban and suburban communities and especially the increasing identification of the suburb with whiteness and the city with racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities. The networks within which Yeates's essay functions include not only science fiction scholars such as John Rieder and Veronica Hollinger but also the fields of film studies and social history. A

point of particular interest in the piece is the similarity/difference that marks English and American versions of the embattled white straight male and the position of privilege that such males always seem to feel is slipping away.

Kai-Uwe Werbeck also looks at films, but in a different genre and from a different culture. Looking at German "no-budget" horror films from the 1980s and 90s, Werbeck considers how the official policy of non-censorship and the unofficial policing of content combined to turn imitations of American low-budget slasher movies into a form of social protest. Films like *The Burning Moon* and *NekRomantic* challenge ideas of artistic expression and taste in such a way that attempts to censor them become part of their message. The networks in which they function include not only genre but also history and suburban social norms. It would be interesting to see whether audiences outside Germany would be prepared to receive the same messages that Werbeck identifies as operating for their home audiences.

Staying with the theme of cities, Stefan Ekman formulates new definitions of urban fantasy, a term that variously indicates a gritty response to Tolkienian other-worldliness, a tradition of disruptive fantasies depicting magical intrusions into the everyday, a mode of supernatural romance (usually involving attractive werewolves, fairies, vampires, and the like), or, as Ekman proposes, the theme of the Unseen. This last combines the unrealities of fantasy with the invisible or ignored underlife of cities, including both "subterranean settings that obscure our view [and] social outcasts we consciously look away from." Since Ekman's article is a metacritical one, comparing various definitions and the communities of criticism they represent, it is also an implicit examination of the web of discourses within which we all function.

Finally, Daniel Baker looks at a specific mode of fantasy—or, per Farah Mendlesohn, a rhetorical trope—the portal-quest, as utilized and subverted by Neil Gaiman and China Miéville. Baker starts from the idea that "fantasy is a literature intrinsically situated at intersections: the intersection of history and culture; the intersection of ideas; the intersection of literary traditions; and the intersection between worlds." One implication is that the fantastic is structurally well-suited for representing and investigating the nature of networks, including those within which it is situated. Its portals and parallel realms more accurately reflect our networked existence than can any single version of the real. It is no wonder that fantasies such as Miéville's and Gaiman's veer toward the metafictional: their meta-ness is built into the genre.

One further observation about this issue and the state of connectedness in the modern scholarly world: it is a remarkably international slate of authors and topics, representing Mexico, England, Japan (where Yeates teaches), Germany (though Werbeck resides in the U.S.), Sweden, and Australia. The editorial process involved multiple emails across borders and oceans. We would be far poorer in ideas and interactions if such borders were closed.

Evolutionary Architecture and the Construction of Cruelty: The Building As Symbiotic Monster in *La torre y el jardin*[1]

José María Mantero

Although the relatively recent popularity of Mexican fantasy fiction among the public and critics alike mirrors a trend that underscores both the vitality and diversity of the genre, the origins of fantasy fiction written in Mexico may be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century, to authors such as Guillermo Prieto (1818-1897), José Bernardo Couto (1803-1862), and Justo Sierra (1848-1912), who penned works that "invoked the abnormal, supernatural or unusual" to represent or transgress a specific semi-realistic difficulty (Nava). This tradition continued through the twentieth century, as the 1950s witnessed the publication of works by such canonical figures as Carlos Fuentes, Octavio Paz, Alfonso Reyes, and Amparo Dávila that led to increased readership in Mexico and beyond and to a growing critical interest in the genre (Nava). Since *Cuentos fantásticos mexicanos* (*Fantastic Short Stories from Mexico*) arrived on bookshelves in 1986, the publication of anthologies of Mexican fantasy fiction has continued unabated until today and reflects the interest both generated and harnessed by a number of periodicals and Web sites.[2] Authors such as Mauricio Molina, Héctor de Mauleón, Ana García Bergua, Cecilia Eudave, and Paola Tinoco, among many others, belong to a generation of writers in Mexico that currently enjoys a growing critical and popular attention and uses fantasy fiction to legitimize what have been considered peripheral narratives, marginalized to the confines of "popular culture." In his article "El velo pintado: ¿Por qué no se puede escribir literatura fantástica en México?" ("The Painted Veil: Why Can Fantastic Literature Not Be Written in Mexico?"), for example, Óscar Luviano has underscored a wide selection of literary genres available to the reading public in Mexico—historical fiction, indigenous writing, romantic novels, testimonial literature, self-help books, and children's literature, among many others—and questioned the

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relevance of fantasy literature in Mexico. Does Mexico, asks Luviano, need dragons? (2). The long and productive history of fantasy literature in Mexico and its current attractiveness for critics and readers alike would appear to answer in the affirmative.

Redolent with themes that span the cultural landscape of contemporary Mexico, the work of Alberto Chimal dovetails neatly with current trends in national, North American, and Latin American literature. In Mexico today, authors such as Karen Chacek, Bernardo Fernández, Verónica Murguía, Gabriel Damián, Iliana Vargas, and Chimal´s wife, Raquel Robles, among many others, are writing works of fantasy fiction informed by the national literary tradition and influenced by the consequences of globalization. As the well-known writer and critic Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz has observed, Mexican writers are currently producing works of fantasy and science fiction that are darker (353), that inhabit the margins of mainstream literature (17-18), that break the mold of national literature (23), and that have become embedded in pop culture (355).

Reflecting on current authors of fantasy fiction in Mexico, Trujillo Muñoz also reminds us of the realistic component of these works and declares, "The futures that they have bequeathed us are a literature in code of their respective times, a reflection—dark or transparent—of ourselves" (23).[3] Fantasy fiction, in other words, is not unlike current television programs such as *Black Mirror*, in that it frequently offers unexpected parallels to our daily lives and affords us the opportunity to that "dark or transparent" reflection. His novel *The Tower and the Garden* (2012), for example, uses multiple narrative voices and a series of interconnected plot lines to tell the story of "El Brincadero," a towering structure that serves as a bordello dedicated exclusively to meeting the needs of clients who seek animals for sexual gratification. The function of "El Brincadero," however, is also a pretext to explore the purpose of the tower itself and to trace the multiple paths that have brought the main characters to the tower in search of the famed garden that allegedly exists within the structure. Our intention is to demonstrate that the frequently cruel and unpredictable actions of the building in *The Tower and the Garden* emulate the brutal behavior of human beings and, in the process, warn of the objectifying dangers of post-industrial society.[4] To this end, we will employ as theoretical skeleton the work of the architect John Frazer—particularly his development of an "evolutionary architecture"—and offer examples from the novel of abuse of animals by clients of the brothel and of the ruthless and unpredictable actions of the building.

The house or building has long been employed in fantasy fiction as a vehicle with multiple narrative possibilities, and in Latin America the genre offers a unique variety of examples that reflect local indigenous cultures

and, at the same time, transcend their respective context. The short story "Viaje a la semilla" ("Journey Back to the Source"; 1944) by the Cuban Alejo Carpentier, for example, describes the supernatural gradual reconstruction of a demolished house in the tropics; "Casa tomada" ("House Taken Over"; 1946) by Julio Cortázar, tells the story of a brother and sister in Buenos Aires who are gradually confined to smaller sections of the house by "them" until they are finally forced to leave their home. One could easily argue that the physical structures in such canonical works of fantasy fiction as *Aura* (1962) by Carlos Fuentes, *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*) (1967) by Gabriel García Márquez, *La casa de los espíritus* (*The House of the Spirits*) (1982) by Isabel Allende, and *Como agua para chocolate* (*Like Water for Chocolate*) (1989) by Laura Esquivel, among others, are individual beings that are located within a specific cultural space (respectively, Mexico City, Colombia, Chile, and rural México) and shape the development of the narrative. Dilapidated mansions, decaying houses inhabited by phantasms and poltergeists, and kitchens and dishes remade by the passionate kneadings of the cook not only offer the arena in which the action occurs, they also insinuate themselves into the narrative by manipulating other characters and by becoming indispensable to its progression. *The Tower and the Garden* both dialogues with this context and updates it.

As the author of over twenty collections of essays, novels, shorts stories and comics, Chimal has utilized fantasy and the fantastic to explore the ambiguous and often antagonistic relationship that human beings develop with their physical surroundings, centering on the presence of the fantastic and mysterious in everyday life in México. His book, *Gente de mundo* (*People of the World*; 1998), for example, is a representative collection of mini-narratives and short stories that center around a shadowy private detective and the cases that he investigates. Other works include the novel *Los esclavos* (*The Slaves*; 2009), the short story collections *Éstos son los días* (*These Are the Days*; 2004), *La ciudad imaginada* (*The Imagined City*; 2009), *Los atacantes* (*The Attackers*; 2015), and the graphic novel *Kustos* (2013-2014). A few of his short stories may be found translated to English, but to date none of his published novels or short story collections are available.

Although somewhat dated due to its rather limited depiction of the fantastic, Tzvetan Todorov's detailed description of fantasy literature remains rather relevant to those who look to integrate the multiple narrative possibilities of the genre with issues of literary historiography. Todorov's three conditions for the existence of the fantastic are a text that forces the reader "to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons," "to hesitate between a natural or supernatural explanation of the events described," and to "adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as 'poetic interpretations'" (33). These conditions remind us rather effectively

that, for a work to belong to the realm of fantasy fiction, the reader must be prepared to inhabit a liminal world unburdened by transparent metaphors and thick with logical contradictions, personal identification, and dynamic boundaries of belonging. Published ten years after the English translation of Todorov's work, *En busca del unicornio: los cuentos de Julio Cortázar* (*In Search of the Unicorn: The Short Stories of Julio Cortázar*) by Jaime Alazraki further develops the ideas of Todorov and declares that works of fantasy fiction offer a lucid perspective on our world: "The fantastic represents not an evasion or imaginative digression from reality but rather, on the contrary, a form of penetrating in it beyond systems that fix it within an order that, in literature, we know as 'realism,' but that, in epistemological terms, is defined by our rationalist apprehension of reality" (86). If this "rationalist apprehension of reality" that Alazraki mentions is consistently questioned in works of fantasy fiction, then it becomes reasonably evident that the genre looks to examine the trappings of empirical authority and proffer an alternative objective form of authenticity. For our purposes, however, the presence of mechanical fishes and other technologically described devices in *The Tower and the Garden* maintains a Todovarian hesitation between a natural/technological and a supernatural explanation, making it impossible to choose one that would explain all events.

For a number of theorists today, the idea of a living, evolving, organic structure transcends traditional notions of linear time and rational space. Writing about the Eiffel Tower, for example, Roland Barthes draws attention to its sovereign spirit and notes the paradoxical relationship between the structure and human beings:

> [B]y affording its visitor a whole panoply of pleasures, from technological wonder to haute cuisine, including the panorama, the Tower ultimately reunites with the essential function of all major human sites: autarchy. The Tower can live on itself: one can dream there, eat there, observe there, understand there, marvel there, shop there; as on an ocean liner (another mythic object that sets children dreaming), one can feel oneself cut off from the world and yet the owner of a world. (172)

Henri Lefevbre connects the development of an allegedly innocuous architectural space to the expansion of capitalism and energetically pronounces that "This space has nothing innocent about it: it answers to particular tactics and strategies; it is, quite simply, the space of the dominant mode of production, and hence the space of capitalism, governed by the bourgeoisie" (137). Fredric Jameson also focuses his comments on the influence of capitalism on architecture and draws attention to "the patronage of multinational business" (227), declaring that architecture is not unlike a human body that has evolved

better and more rapidly than we have: "I am proposing the notion that we are here in the presence of something like a mutation in built space itself. My implication is that we ourselves, the human subjects who happen into this new space, have not kept pace with that evolution; there has been a mutation in the object unaccompanied as yet by any mutation in the subject" (229). And Alvy Ray Smith imagined a future in which "buildings construct themselves, growing from a single brick-egg each" (1).

Other theorists such as James Law, Frei Otto, Charles Jencks, and William Katavalos, among others, have developed notions of cybertecture[5] and of an organic, liquid "smart" architecture that evolves or mutates based on chemical reactions and environmental interactions. Rachel Armstrong and Neil Spiller, developers of plectic systems architecture,[6] address current issues of ecological compatibility and assert that "architecture needs to become more lifelike in order to be considered truly sustainable" (Armstrong 80-81). According to Armstrong, plectic systems architecture makes use of what has become known as "living technology"[7] by imbuing technological innovations with a growing degree of autonomy:

> Consequently plectic systems architecture enables architects to engage with new materials, design processes and tools to generate symbiotic designs that are able to combine simple and inert materials with a new generation of self-organizing, complex, environmentally responsive, metabolic materials that do not rely on traditional computing methods or human intervention to generate their responsiveness. (82)

Plectic systems architecture, in essence, "strives to produce living architecture" (Armstrong 81) that will interact with the environment and grow gradually more independent of human controls. In this context, architects and thinkers such as Armstrong, Barthes, and Jameson have explored the possibilities of architecture within a global post-industrial society that empowers buildings with a growing degree of autonomy and self-sufficiency. The relationship between the architectural subject and object, to paraphrase Jameson, is rife with surface tension and developing increasingly at cross-purposes.

One of the most intriguing possibilities to date is the concept of evolutionary architecture proposed by James Frazer. Published in 1995, Frazer's work *An Evolutionary Architecture* represented a logical extension of computer-aided design (CAD) technologies to a variety of fields. The roots of evolutionary architecture may be traced back to 1978, when Frazer was asked to collaborate on what became known as the Generator project for designing and constructing a structure for the Gilman Paper Corporation in a clearing in Florida. "This consisted of a kit of parts which enabled enclosures, gangways, screens and services to be arranged and re-arranged to meet the changing require-

ments of the client" (Frazer 40). The potential for architecture, however, was not easily appreciated by professionals who still perceived construction to be primarily "labor-intensive" rather than a "capital-intensive industry" worthy of "adequate research and development capabilities" (15). "The architectural profession," writes Frazer, "have [*sic*] failed to learn from developments in the aircraft, automotive and shipbuilding industries" (15). To this end, the theoretical starting point of evolutionary architecture is that "Architecture is considered as a form of artificial life, subject, like the natural world, to principles of morphogenesis, genetic coding, replication, and selection" (9).

The principle features of evolutionary architecture as described by Frazer may be summarized in the following manner: It represents an evolutionary model of architecture (65) that concerns itself with exploring "the rules for generating form, rather than the forms themselves" (99) and represents "the expression of an equilibrium between the endogenous develoment of the architectural concept and the exogenous influences exerted by the environment" (103). Evolutionary architecture is a form of artificial life in that it proposes architectural models that provide environmental feedback (75) and sustains that it is possible to imagine a structure that will "exhibit metabolism" (103) and co-evolve with its environment (83). From this perspective, an Interactive output device will be able "to store or react to information, exhibit reflex actions, or evaluate signals to display or inhibit a mode of [external] behavior, thus exercising judgement" (78). The long-term goal of evolutionary architecture is to enable "self-constructing" structures that will "incorporate the building process literally into the model" (102). In sum, "Our new architecture will emerge on the very edge of chaos, where all living things emerge, and it will inevitably share some characteristics of primitive life forms. And from this chaos will emerge order: order not particular, peculiar, odd or contrived, but order: generic, typical, natural, fundamental and inevitable—the order of life" (103).

The possibilities envisioned by Frazer´s evolutionary architecture were, on the whole, constructive contributions to human society and to the affirmative relationships that human communities developed with eco-communities throughout the globe. This potential, however, implicitly included a darker side that elevated the architect to the role of divine creator. As Frazer wrote, "This is what we are attempting to do at the moment: to evolve architectural life from nothing, with no preconceptions, no design, just blind tactics" (101). Further, part of the stated original intention of evolutionary architecture was "to intervene in the environment" (103). While Frazer envisioned a symbiotic relationship between an architectural construction, its inhabitants, and the surroundings, it was also the design of evolutionary architecture to form the environment according to the needs of the building and/or the residents. If the intention is that an evolutionary construction gradually develops an organic

awareness of self and its surroundings, it stands to reason that such a consciousness would ultimately rebel against any exploitation or manipulation. For these and other reasons, evolutionary architecture transcends the rather simplistic notion of a building having agency over human beings: evolutionary architecture paves the way toward a fuller understanding of the continuously evolving relationship between building, human beings, and environment, and the turbulence that ensues.

Taking into account the dynamic elements of evolutionary architecture, the parallels between a text and a physical structure are foreseeable. Each text, for example, is individually constructed *vis a vis* a symbiotic relationship between the author and the reader: the writer offers a work that is ultimately altered by the individual and subjective experience of each reader. Not unlike the process advocated by evolutionary architecture, both text and physical structure are forms of artificial life; both are products of internal and external influences, both enunciate a type of metabolic discourse and co-evolve with its environment, both interact with their environment, and both participate in processes that inhabit the liminal spaces created by the interplay between chaos and order. As a conceptual paradigm, evolutionary architecture dovetails with emancipatory strategies of political and social hegemony and offers the possibility that the very dwellings we inhabit will become increasingly autonomous, self-sufficient, and self-directed, and lead us into ambiguous and antagonistic territory. The potential implications of this ambiguity for human society and the consequences for interpersonal relationships cannot but evoke the renowned etching by Francisco de Goya, "El sueño de la razón produce monstruos" ("The dream of reason produces monsters"). The initial logic behind evolutionary architecture—the construction of edifices that will dovetail and practically predict the necessities of the residents—leads us down a treacherous path inhabited by increasingly self-serving and autonomous technologies.

Set in a brothel that serves the zoophilic needs of its clients, *The Tower and the Garden* utilizes the characters of Isabel, her father Don Constantino, the architect Juan Cruz de la Piedra, the proctologist Francisco Molinar, and the journeyman and adventurer Horacio Kustos to tell the story of "El Brincadero" through an intermingling of flashbacks, descriptions, and dialogues that incorporate the tower itself as the principal narrative voice. Described throughout the work, the tower itself may be summarized in the following way: It is called Zhenya by Natalia, one of the principal characters. It was inaugurated in 1946, constructed by imported laborers "with elusive eyes and dressed in black" (74), and is 800 stories high (369). "Outside it seems to be seven stories of moderate height and it is little more than a concrete box, smooth and without decoration" (21). Inside there is a spiral staircase that "looks like a real eye, an ocular globe marked by fine veins" (129) and there are rooms that "have never been

used, with their doors still sealed by the original construction team" (74). This unknown space has given rise to a number of urban legends: "The simplest are the most terrible: for example, many people scare others, or get scared, by merely talking about the shapeless *image* of the unoccupied floors, the tower still closed and dark that is above practically every person and animal, all the time, made of who knows how many levels exactly alike between them and possibly really closed" (219). In a 2014 interview, Chimal described in more detail the role of the architect, Don Cruz: "He dedicates himself to designing and creating mysterious, magical buildings, of all kinds, from hotels at the bottom of the sea to beds or rooms that are like a disguised door into another dimension, all types of strange constructions. He is also a character that rebels or subverts the way in which reality works" ("Entrevista"). Although the reader must assume that the mysteries of the building are intentional, throughout the novel the objectives of Don Cruz are rarely made evident. The most explicit indication of his intentions is the existence of the *Libro azul,* the *Blue Book,* which offers "Directions to better know what we're doing" and contains the names and functions of every floor—including those that do not yet exist (*The Tower and the Garden* 209).

While practically all of the action in the novel occurs in the tower, the structure also doubles as one of the protagonists by infusing a sense of purpose into the main characters and deftly manipulating the course of events. As the novel begins, for example, Kustos and Molinar find themselves locked into adjacent rooms in the tower and introduce themselves by speaking through the wall, exchanging impressions on their predicament. Molinar finds a small ax attached to a sconce, detaches it, makes a hole on his side of the wall and crawls through it, into Kustos's room. Upon inserting himself into the room and trying Kustos's door, they find that, indeed, it was unlocked the entire time. Exiting the room and exploring the hallways, both Kustos and Molinar seem to hear in their heads the same minute descriptions of the purpose and actions of the building and multiple lists of the behaviors exhibited by clients toward their animals. Intermingled with these are fragments of the story of Isabel, the daughter of the owner and the current manager of El Brincadero. Her story is told in a third person voice and relates her childhood in the tower, her rather distant and unemotional understanding of its purpose, and the years that she spent away from the structure and her father in an effort to cleanse herself of its influence. Ultimately, Isabel returned to El Brincadero and assumed ownership of the business when her father passed away. Returning to the present moment in the narrative, Isabel and her assistant Natalia join Molinar and Kustos—who had been disappeared by the building for a time—and decide to show them the celebrated yet rarely seen garden of the tower. While this garden features prominently in the title of the work and is referenced throughout the narrative, it serves best as a symbolic point of ref-

erence—a utopia within the dystopia—and only appears in the last ten pages of the narrative. By the end of the novel, the foursome have been allowed access to the garden and stand observing a group of primordial human beings huddled together and a myriad of animals unknown outside the tower running free through the extensive grasslands. Upon seeing this paradise, Kustos remarks, "If there had been no evolution, we would be like this" (414). Is the building simply trying to protect a virgin space, untouched by modernity and its trappings, or is it attempting to create an alternative world, free from the vices that inhabit other floors? Regardless, the mission of the building remains clear: "The garden must be protected" (380).

Throughout the text, the behavior of the tower toward many of the characters grows increasingly hostile and reflects a process that emulates the conduct of the clients with their respective animals: it toys with them and provokes them, only to discard them once their entertainment potential has been exhausted. Similarly, those who patronize El Brincadero look to satisfy their zoophilic needs and, subsequently, either show little concern for the destiny of their animals or torture them and kill them outright in the process of seeking sexual gratification. In this sense, the monstrous behavior exhibited by human clients toward animals is the model for the subsequent conduct of the building as it gradually comes to interact with them and emulate their actions. Frazer addresses this possibility as he writes of the parallels between evolutionary architecture and ecology and declares that "An ecological approach to architecture does not necessarily imply replicating ecological ecosystems, but the general principles of interaction with the environment are directly applicable" (16). In the example of the tower in the text, such architecture offers another discursive possibility by transcending any ecological associations with building materials and environmental integration and demonstrating the darker side of an evolutionary architecture. Through a transformation of its essential properties and numerous attempts at recombining genetic or molecular configurations in both its physical structure and the animals that inhabit it, nature has, in effect, become denatured.

As is evident in the novel, the rightful monsters are the human beings who treat animals as commodities, products to be abused, consumed, and discarded. Examples of the creatures killed or brutalized for sexual pleasure include elephants, otters, lions, deer, platypuses, and butterflies. The elephants, for example, are "drugged and chained to hidden columns" (29); lions are molested, slaughtered, cut up, and reassembled using robotic parts (166); a platypus is hacked to pieces "with sharp tools, separating its constituent parts: duck bill, beaver tail, mole skin, bee stinger" (174); and with butterflies it is recommended that you "mash them up in your hands and then spread the shiny remains on your body, because ground beauty is an aphrodisiac" (81). Clients may also have their deer or bear or lion desiccated and stuffed by an

on-site taxidermist, even choosing the possibility of prolonging their own pleasure after the death of the animal: "The dissected animals can also be equipped with all types of accessories, including lubricated conduits that open into the body, so that the animals are not merely souvenirs" (50). The piranha cyborgs that are built at El Brincadero are programmed to have a myriad of multiple uses, including erotic stimulation: "[T]he small robots not only moved their jaws but they also swam under their own power and even knew how to locate some parts of the human body and stay close to them" (286). At such a place, where cruelty to animals is not only the norm but the exclusive source of revenue and profit, a conscious structure such as the tower would not only predictably absorb human behavior but would also come to emulate it and present itself as the destabilizing extreme of post-industrial society. If, as Frazer envisioned, an evolutionary structure is equipped with an Interactive output device that houses a developmental section and its corresponding theoretical vertebrae, "the environmental information flows through the detectors and is decoded into appropriate finite-length messages. The classifier system then activates string rules controlling output through the effectors [that respond to stimuli]. In this way, it combines environmental cues and internal rules to determine the environmental response" (78). The structure in the novel is essentially recognizing the "environmental cues" that Frazer remarks on and follows its own "internal rules" to formulate an appropriate reaction to conditions and gradually transcend its physical limitations and come into its own. Unfortunately, this self-realization comes at the expense of a number of individuals in the work and participates in the radical restructuring of society in the tower.

The objectifying dangers of post-industrial society are clearly illustrated throughout the novel by the cruel and malicious acts of the clients. These actions, in turn, are constant reminders of the ultimate objective of El Brincadero, which is to commodify any mammal, reptile, or insect and turn a profit for its owners. It is this association between human cruelty and revenue that influences the behavior of the building and draws attention to the dehumanizing potential of the enterprise. "The section of space assigned to an architect," according to Henri Lefebvre, "is the space of the dominant mode of production" (137). The structure, in turn, participates in stimulating a hidden economy that manages to objectify both clients and animals alike. Fredric Jameson also draws attention to the intimate association between architecture and the market: "Of all the arts, architecture is the closest constitutively to the economic, with which, in the form of commissions and land values, it has a virtually unmediated relationship" (227). In their comments, both Lefevbre and Jameson warn of the increasing interplay between the construction of habitable structures and the ultimate development of such structures strictly for profit.

In the novel, the brutal acts of sexual aggression conclude, the physical consequences and their residues are easily tidied up and removed by a team of individuals that specializes in leaving the rooms spotless and ready for the next clients:

> Those in charge of cleaning the torture instruments in the tower move quickly, before and after the customers: Silent, they clean wheels and joints, pick up feathers or locks of hair and pieces of meat, they sweep everything. The animals that are still alive are taken to the veterinarians; the rest should be taken quickly to the trash or the incinerator or (at times) the kitchens, because disgust for one client may be enjoyment for another. (49)

The commodification of the animals is a result of the initial desires of the clients, yet it is also evident in the cleanup process itself: "torture instruments" are washed so that they may be reused; "feathers or locks of hair and pieces of meat" are collected and disposed of to again make a room available and offer the client the impression of hygienic innocence; and the animal remains may also be consumed by those who prefer to enjoy their experience in a more culinary manner. The unadulterated captivity of animals for profit evident throughout the novel serves as metaphor and warning of the objectification dangers of post-industrial society. As this society—our society—witnesses the creation of more wealth through the service sector than the manufacturing sector, it also manages to transform interpersonal relationships. According to Peter Kivisto, "At issue [in the post-industrial society] is the restructuring of the social fabric following the demise of the self-regulating market and the liberal state" (28). In the novel, "the restructuring of the social fabric" of post-industrial society mentioned by Kivisto is evident not only in the authoritarian role played by the building but also by its growing resemblance to human consciousness as it comes to use telepathy and fluorescent lights to communicate with a select number of residents and manipulates events to its advantage.

A number of characters in the novel gradually come to the realization that what they first assumed were voices in their heads are in reality the running commentary and instructions of the tower as it attempts to embed its own alternative reality in its victim. During a conversation with Molinar in which he realizes that the textual interjections are in reality the interventions of the building, Kustos, for example, discovers he can communicate with it and begins to speak directly to it: "'Very good!', says Kustos out loud, almost yelling. 'Sorry, sorry: Very good,' he says again, quieter. 'You have been hearing us this whole time. Excellent'" (73). His surprise is somewhat mitigated by his apprehension at being overheard by the tower. As Kustos and Molinar have abandoned their respective rooms and are trying to find a way off the floor, Kustos recalls the interspersed descriptions and back stories that separate

their conversations and gradually comes to the realization that the building is conscious: "'I already suspected it since we were locked up … I sensed that it addressed us somehow, and upon seeing that it knew so much … Besides, it hasn't left us alone one instant, all the time it has said phrases that call our attention and given indications that are sometimes what we expect and other times not … The building is alive and it is playing with us'" (127). Later, when Kustos disappears, Molinar understands the building as it uses the electric lights to communicate, blinking once for yes, twice for no. Molinar asks if it was playing when Kustos disappeared, and it blinks once, yes (173). Molinar gets up the nerve to ask "But … Have you been doing more than just playing?" (175) and, again, the hall lights blink once.

Camouflaged as mere narrative descriptions sprinkled throughout the first half of the novel, the intrusions of the voice of the building into interior monologues and during verbal exchanges between characters serve a number of discursive purposes. First, they establish clear parallels between human behavior and the behavior of the structure; second, they offer additional information that will be crucial to understanding the history of the building and the eventual sequence of events in the novel; and finally, they create an aura of ambiguity that reflects the mystery of its ultimate purpose. When "Molinar gets up the nerve to ask" if the tower has "been doing more than just playing" (175), it is because he fears the potential significance and repercussions of an affirmative answer. The tower, in fact, has been "doing more than just playing" because it is expressing its own capacity to control events and its ability to transform itself from object to subject. This, in essence, is the latent promise of evolutionary architecture: that a structure may react to and even influence its environment. Frazer predicted this same possibility and describes the vertical mast named "Interactive output device" that his team had developed:

> [I]t is operated by twelve tensioning arms [and] possesses its own position sensors and control system so that it becomes a closed self-responsive and predictive system to question the state of consciousness. Mimicking the basic characteristics of living systems, in order to respond to their environment, the device has the capacity to store or react to information, exhibit reflex actions or evaluate signals to display or inhibit a mode of behavior, thus exercising judgement. (77)

The transformations that Frazer describes become increasingly evident to the reader as the structure comes to represent that "closed and self-responsive system," capable of feeding off of discrete tensions and provoking particular reactions in individuals such as Molinar and Kustos in order to collect additional patterns of human behavior, "evaluate" them, and "[exercise] judgement" in its decisions to engage with the residents. Post-industrial culture, as

represented by the tower, is a mirror that reflects our own exaggerated image and the vertical alignment of society, shining a bent light on the disparities between us and on our more grotesque and self-involved features. In the novel, the direct participation of the tower in events within its walls eventually contributes to what Kvistos terms the direct dispersion and reassembly of the social fabric (28) by choosing to maim or kill a number of residents, offering itself, in the process, as the prime example of a service industry gone awry in the wake of unchecked desire, power, and privilege.

The building expresses itself in a number of ways that reflect a growing consciousness and mimics the communicative patterns of human behavior. In an episode in which Isabel and others acknowledge that they "hear" the voice of the building in their minds, the narrative voice intervenes and proceeds to describe herself:

> And now she (or he: curious difference, she still can't find the logic) realizes that, like Isabel in the past, she is also growing and has arrived at a new stage. It could be said that it is something like puberty: suddenly her body is more than before, it is different, and not only does it have this new thing, this voice, strange organ, very strange organ, but she also has more: more organs. Faculties. It turns the light on and off. (270-71)

Commenting on the building's ability to communicate with a select few, for example, Kustos observes later that "Zhenya is a creature that expresses herself not with words but with fragments of history" (290). The capacity to communicate represents the structure's increasing appreciation of its own authority and how this authority is able to influence the actions of those who inhabit and work within the walls of the tower. Her "puberty" represents a maturity and coming of age in which her will manipulates individuals and, through them, controls events within her walls. Her physical structure has not grown, but it is "more than before" because its self-perception of its own potential has grown exponentially and residents of the building are mere vehicles of her determination to punish or reward. The distinction between the ability of some to hear her "voice" and her own capability to communicate by blinking the lights once for "yes" and twice for "no" is also significant, as both "speaking" and "blinking" represent alternative options for communication and different modes of exerting influence and control. In order to be effective, her language, therefore, must transcend verbal and non-verbal cues and become "fragments of history" that inscribe themselves into the narrative of the bordello until—as the reader gradually comes to understand—the difference between the text and the tower is indistinguishable. In this, the decisive act of appropriation and possession, the tower has simulated the cruelty and abuse suffered by the wide variety of animals and has become the monster yearning

to expand its boundaries. This desire to find a surrogate language is similar to Frazer's wish for the architectural profession: "We need to find an alternative to the drawing board obsession with fixed forms, and it seems that we have to think in terms of language—of a vocabulary or syntax" (67).

Throughout the text there are also a number of examples that illustrate the violent and aggressive behavior of the tower toward its human residents. At the beginning of the novel, a flashback describes the original intentions of the architect, Juan Cruz: "The will of this building that we are going to create here would look like a javelin, straight, enormous, stuck in the middle of pure drawings, that is to say, plans: the other buildings" (23). Jumpstarting the consciousness of his structure, the architect offers a rather aggressive visual image that serves as omen of its future behavior. In the process, Cruz imbues the structure with hostility, speed, and size, and distinguishes it from traditional architectural design that repeats known patterns of design and breaks no new ground. It is no surprise later in the story that the narrator describes Kustos and Molinar as they exit their respective rooms together and underscores the potential peril that is awaiting them both:

> [T]he intruders, upon crossing the threshold and finding themselves alone, have passed into dangerous territory: the one that is reached by those who touch, albeit lightly, the true mystery of the tower, and therefore get lost and do not return, or they die a little before or a little after some horrible act, or they find that the most terrible creature of the ones that are here is also the largest, the most powerful, the one that bites with the most force. (95)

If we recall that the intervening narrative voice often represents the building itself, then the choice of terms such as "intruders" and "dangerous territory" become clearer. The structure is expressing its admiration of those who dare understand "the true mystery of the tower" and, at the same time, admonishing them for having done so as the consequences are clear: losing their way, disappearing, witnessing "some horrible act," or realizing that "the most terrible creature," "the largest, the most powerful, the one that bites with the most force," is the structure itself. This self-portrait is noteworthy because, at this point in the novel, there have been no human victims or personal tragedies within the walls of the bordello. The description also represents quite effectively the hubris of the building as it has come to understand its own authority over the residents. The path toward understanding the "true mystery" may be fraught with peril, yet this metaphorical trail is blazed and organized willfully by the tower. The self-organization of the tower may also be perceived as a critique of the extreme that post-industrial society has reached in its objective to offer practically any service for a price, even those that commodify sexual gratification between people and animals. While plectic systems architecture

as proposed by Armstrong defends a "more lifelike" architecture and may offer "an alternative to the Victorian practices of mining, factory production, centralization and distribution using heavy transport methods" (84), it is the tower and the practices therein that illustrate the dangers lurking in the corners of self-sustaining structures and the post-industrial commodifications they represent.

In the novel, the capacity of the building to harm others is also demonstrated in the interaction with two female characters, Aurora and Isabel, and in another flashback when Hernán López, an accountant at El Brincadero and part-time minister, decided to bring his congregation to the building because they had been kicked out of their previous place of worship. In the middle of a religious service, a congregant, Aurora Gutiérrez, left in search of a restroom. Unhinged by her frustration at opening door after door and not finding any lavatories on her floor, Aurora opened the wrong door and found herself on a landing that entered the spiral steps of the building and into what was known as the infinite Eye: "She looked down, discovered the infinite Eye and immediately began to scream so loudly that the rest of the congregation heard her, stopped their singing, went to search for her and found her lying on the landing, still screaming, with her face grey and her eyes turned inward" (224). When she was in her twenties, Isabel, the daughter of the owner, had to get away from the family business for a few years because she felt annihilated by the omnipresence of the building. In a letter to her father from abroad, Isabel reflects on what it meant to dwell there: "[W]e live in the interior of this enormous thing, that we do not understand, that we do not want to understand, that does not depend on us and that forces us to follow rules that who knows why they exist or what purpose they serve" (349). Although both Aurora and Isabel emerge differently from their encounters with the building, each has been ineluctably affected by its character: Aurora peers accidentally into the staircase, that "infinite Eye," and loses her sanity; and Isabel—who grew up under its roof—seems frightened by the aura of self-sufficiency and mystery surrounding the structure. The juxtaposition of the "rules" that the residents must obey and the implicit freedom of the tower depict its hegemonic authority and discursive possibilities. In a piece of conceptual architecture baptized as the Generator, John Frazer conceived of a structure that would know how to adapt to a changing environment better than its residents:

> We were concerned that the building would not be changed enough by its users because they would not see the potential to do so, and consequently suggested that a characteristic of intelligence, and therefore of the Generator, was that it would register its own boredom and make suggestions for its own reorganization. … Ultimately, the building itself might be better able to determine its arrangement for the users' benefit than the users themselves. (41)

Benevolent intentions aside, the potential exists for the routine exploitation of residents as any structure influenced by evolutionary architecture ultimately becomes the sole authority on what suits its residents best. The power of the infinite Eye to overwhelm and the fears of Isabel are directly connected to the manner in which the building exerts its control over all who live and work within its walls. By the end of the novel, when the principal characters arrive in the garden, the architect, Don Cruz, describes that the structure is happy: "Zhenya is happy and is not talking to us. It wants to grow. It wants to tell its stories. If it were my son, I would be very proud. Or my daughter" (414-15). Not unlike a child, the only source of happiness for the tower is the tower itself. It is not the nonthreatening structure envisioned by Frazer that would consider exclusively the rhythms of the residents: it is a self-absorbed object, immature and brutal in its capacity to inflict pain and suffering upon those who stray from the implied contract between structure and resident.

One of the most violent episodes in the novel occurs when Juan Escalante, an associate who is also a friend of the owner, Isabel's father, looks to rent a number of rooms inside the tower in order to open a brothel and informs Isabel that he has the permission of El Lobo Campos, a local drug trafficker who deals in El Brincadero. When a half dozen armed men begin to unload boxes from a group of trucks, Isabel decides to call Campos, who tells her that Escalante does not have his permission and that he and his men should not be there. Escalante does not react well to the news, and decides to take her and some members of her staff hostage in order to negotiate with Isabel and Campos and set up his own brothel in the tower. Isabel proceeds to ask the building for help, and suddenly a hole opens up in the side of a wall that suctions Escalante and his men out into the night (276). "Another man," the novel continues, "intended to take one of the girls hostage, tried to take her from behind (as Escalante had done with Isabel just moments before), and until today his case is the one that is talked about the most: the floor opened up at his feet, he fell, disappeared, and was seen for the last time—unharmed but utterly terrified—outside the building, sitting catatonic at the front entrance" (277). The instinct of the building compels it to come to the aid of Isabel and modify its own structure in order to eliminate the danger posed by Escalante and his men. The holes that open up in the wall and in the floor in response to Isabel's request and to the behavior of the intruders are reminiscent of Frazer's Generator and the stated intention of the project that, eventually, the structure would be able to decide better the most beneficial modifications of its structural arrangement than the users themselves (41). In the example, the cruelty exhibited by the tower is offset by a sensitivity to the plight of Isabel. The ability to alter its physical structure allows it to be both aggressive and discriminating and to display a clinical cruelty that takes a scalpel to the infected area instead of destroying an entire floor or section.

The frequently cruel and unpredictable actions of the tower in the text emulate the merciless and aberrant conduct of the clients as they repeatedly exploit animals for sexual gratification. The very lucrative economic transactions involved in this process draw attention to the practically autonomous nature of the enterprise as it establishes an alternative code of ethics that transcends accepted behaviors found outside the confines of the business. This alternative morality, however, epitomizes the double standard of a post-industrial society torn between "knowledge" and "service" (Ferkiss 66) and disassociated from the artifacts produced by human experience. Evolutionary architecture engages with this discussion and applies the potential of engineering and artificial life to the conception of physical structures that will ultimately mirror "the order of life" (Frazer 103). Regrettably, "the order of life" may often generate creatures that take their inspiration from our own behavior as clients and consumers. *The Tower and the Garden* by Alberto Chimal dovetails with current discursive trends in Mexican fantasy fiction and offers a cautionary tale thick with excesses, ambiguity, instability, fractured boundaries, and ethical dilemmas.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Dale Knickerbocker for his astute reading and suggestions and my colleagues Shannon Byrne and Natalia Jacovkis for their insightful comments.

2· Please see, for example, the journals *Escritos 21, Azoth, Umbrales* and *Fractal,* Chimal's own Web site, "Las historias" (www.lashistorias.com.mx), as well as the blog maintained by Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz, trujillo.blogspot.com.

3. All translations of *La torre y el jardín* and other works whose titles appear in Spanish are my own.

4. Coined in 1973 by the sociologist Daniel Bell, the term "post-industrial society" has a wide variety of accepted characteristics. According to Viktor Ferkiss, these include "(1) the increasing importance of 'service' industries (as opposed to primary production) in the economic order; (2) the increasing substitution of 'knowledge'—especially 'theoretical' knowledge—for property as the basis of the social order; (3) a resulting increase in reliance by the political order on technical expertise for the definition of, if not the actual resolution of, social and political problems; and (4) a consequent increase in the rationalization of social and political life, embodied most clearly in social planning of various kinds" (66).

5. As Wolf Hillbertz has noted, cybertecture "is an attempt to formulate a conceptual framework for an evolutionary environmental system" (98).

6. Armstrong and Spiller "propose that it is possible for architecture to possess some of the properties of living systems" (81). As Armstrong indicates, "Consequently plectic systems architecture enables architects to engage with new materials, design

processes and tools to generate symbiotic designs that are able to combine simple and inert materials with a new generation of self-organizing, complex, environmentally responsive, metabolic materials that do not rely on traditional computing methods or human intervention to generate their responsiveness" (82).

7. According to Armstrong, "Living technology is a new phrase for a broad range of technologies that are extraordinarily powerful and useful because they possess the fundamental properties of living systems. These properties include self-assembly, self-organization, spontaneous repair, metabolism, growth, division, purposeful action, adaptive complexity, evolution and creative intelligence" (n. 2, p. 81).

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Abstract

The novel *La torre y el jardín* (The Tower and the Garden) by Alberto Chimal tells the story of "El Brincadero," a brothel whose clients pay to engage in acts of zoophilia and animal bestiality. The theoretical center of the narrative, however, is the building itself—known simply as Zhenya or "the tower"—as it modifies its own spatial design at will and shows itself to be a form of artificial life, witness to the sexual abuse of animals occurring within its walls. Our intention is to demonstrate that the frequently cruel and unpredictable actions of the building emulate the cruelty of the clients and, in the process, warn of the objectifying dangers of post-industrial society. We will employ the writings of the English architect John Frazer and his work *An Evolutionary Architecture* to frame the discussion and explore issues central to the creation of a living architecture. The majority of our analysis will be dedicated to a study of "the tower" in the novel and to how it transforms itself into a formidable leviathan capable of altering itself at will and, in the process, of emulating the cruelty and destruction of life that occurs within its walls.

Gender and Ethnicity in Post-Apocalyptic Suburbia

Robert Yeates

Significant changes were underway in adjusting the boundaries of British and American cities in the 1950s and early 1960s. While London's suburbs had begun to be viewed as a rustic retreat from city life in the eighteenth century, the restructuring of the city after the Second World War saw the suburbs expand at a particularly marked rate. In the US, a number of factors coincided to make suburbia "the fullest, most unadulterated embodiment of contemporary culture," and a manifestation of "fundamental characteristics of American society" (Jackson 4). Within the communities themselves, despite the apparent flourishing of suburban development during these years, tensions were developing as white males in particular reacted to the gradual refiguring of gender and racial boundaries. Tensions manifested in the development of the suburban areas, influencing architectural forms and zoning, but hostility also spilled over into mass acts of violence such as the UK's Notting Hill riots. The complex social environment of suburbia became the setting for two influential post-apocalyptic science fiction works which imagined their white male protagonists as the last of a dying species: John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951), set in the south of England, and Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954), set in Los Angeles County, California. Building on the tradition of the "last man" theme, these works reveal postwar anxieties connected with suburbia in their unfavorable depictions of women and the descriptions of their antagonists in racially charged language.[1] Both novels soon saw film adaptations, as (respectively) *The Day of the Triffids* (1962) and *The Last Man on Earth* (1964) and have since been adapted for the small and big screens many times.[2] Looking at the novels and their adaptations can provide a means of assessing both a British and an American perspective on the relationship between urban and suburban spaces during the postwar years, and in their use of the last man theme, the gender and racial anxieties of these spaces.

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Suburbia in Britain and the US

London's suburbs had been gradually developing since the eighteenth century, though this picked up significantly over the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, increasing from 400,000 inhabitants in 1861 to 2.7 million in 1911, "37 per cent of the metropolitan total" (Inwood 571). With the housing crisis caused by aerial bombardment in London and other major cities during the Second World War, as well as the development of Welfare State initiatives, the government increased production of "prefab" homes and municipal council estates on the edges of towns, and developed the new-towns program, initiated by the New Towns Act of 1946 and largely modeled on the Garden-City principles of Ebenezer Howard. Despite the expansion of residential areas on the periphery of British cities, the need for more housing was still a critical issue by the end of the 1950s. The desire for private homes grew alongside an emerging consumer culture and a "widely-expressed desire to re-establish marital and family life" seen in the baby-boom that followed the war (Langhamer 349). As rapidly growing suburban housing struggled to cope with demand, there remained something of the prewar notion of the private home as an aspirational space evocative of "stability and security" (362), and a return to a "'normal' existence" after the war (Thane 194). Home life in the postwar years generally retained a similar level of cultural conservatism to that of the 1930s, though "there are signs of a certain, relative loosening up in sexual relations in Britain in the 1950s" (Thane 199). Suburban family life consequently found itself in a similarly transitional era to that of the postwar US.

In the US, postwar suburbanization was fueled in part by the return of service personnel and a subsequent increase in birth rate, the reallocation of industrial land, and improved transport infrastructure, particularly with the rise of car ownership. Central to the economic boom of the late 1940s and early 1950s was the combination of mass industrial production, the emerging consumer culture, and vast residential construction projects. By the early 1960s the suburbs had taken on such a portentous position in American society as to represent "both a planning type and a state of mind based on imagery and symbolism" (Jackson 4-5). The rhetoric and ideology surrounding the suburbs thus came to spur on the rapid growth of these spaces in the postwar years, a growth so far reaching as to have been termed the "fourth migration" by Lewis Mumford (*Urban* xvi).[3] The postwar American suburbs are often conceived in the popular imagination as a place of white middle-class stability and social conservatism. Elaine Tyler May writes of how media and official sources in the early 1950s insisted that white middle-class suburban women be "contented and fulfilled wives devoting themselves to expert childrearing and professionalized homemaking" in order to keep their husbands from

"degenerative seductions" and the "destruction of the nation's moral fiber" (97). While the popular conception of the postwar US suburbs as a place of preoccupation with family life and traditional gender roles is not wholly incorrect, it is reductive in so far as it does not take into account the diversity of experiences of women in these years, and particularly those who were not white, middle-class, and married. The late 1950s also saw women increasingly in independent employment, "promoting undercurrents that would emerge as dominant trends in the 1960s and 1970s" (Hartmann 98). The growing suburbs of the late 1940s and 1950s in both Britain and American were thus more dynamic than conventional wisdom would conceive them. These were transitional spaces, in which the physical and societal conceptions of the home and family were neither fixed nor immutable.

As city dwellers in the UK and US increasingly moved out to the suburbs, the city came to be perceived as a place of threat. In the UK, this was partly due to the pollution and congestion of the industrialized centers, along with the memory of area bombing experienced during the war. Although aerial bombardment was not a new phenomenon, the scale of bombing campaigns against cities during the Second World War was unprecedented, and it was often carried out with the explicit intention of suspending services and striking terror into the civilian populace. In the US, much of the perceived danger of the city originated from the threat of nuclear war: if such a war were to break out, the cities would be the primary targets. Cities became "nuclear environments. No longer places of refuge protected by encircling walls—the new perspective was from above, not outside—they were places to flee from not to" (Cordle 65). Moving to suburbia was not quite enough to protect against nuclear war, and so Civil Defense literature focused to a great extent on fortifying suburban homes. This greater emphasis was justified partly by "a strong ideological investment in making the middle-class environments of contemporary America seem secure," but also by the idea that "defense against nuclear attack, always liable to seem absurd, was marginally more credible in areas at a slight remove from the main target areas" (31). Gender played a role in alleviating the fear of these dangers. As May shows, the stability of the family was connected by authorities to the effort to maintain national security. White, middle-class married women in particular were expected to uphold the integrity of the family unit in suburban enclaves, ensuring their basement bomb shelters were as well-stocked as "grandma's pantry," establishing the home as a refuge against the uncertain threat of the wider world (May 105). It is in this context of an emerging and developing suburban way of life that Wyndham's and Matheson's post-apocalyptic tales of suburban retreat first appear.

The "Last Man" Tales of Wyndham and Matheson

The Day of the Triffids (hereafter *Triffids*) tells the story of William "Bill" Masen, a man who awakens in a London hospital to find that society has broken down completely as a result of sudden worldwide blindness. His eyes having been covered at the moment of catastrophe, his sight is both blessing and curse, as the few remaining sighted are coveted assets for the hordes of desperate blind citizens. Though seeming at first to be the only sighted person left in London, Masen soon meets novelist Josella Playton, who has also retained her sight, and the two remain allied over the course of the novel, resisting the efforts of other disreputable groups of the sighted and blind to pull them apart for their own purposes. Alongside their travels and the conflicts experienced in an effort to re-establish society, the two are also threatened by the constant presence of triffids: venomous, carnivorous, and apparently intelligent plants that come to dominate a humanity disadvantaged by blindness. Masen and Playton, accompanied by adopted daughter Susan and soon their young son David, escape the mainland to join a community which has settled on the Isle of Wight, and there is some hope for their future. Steve Sekely's 1962 adaptation makes several considerable changes. Masen (Howard Keel) is now a US naval officer, who awakens in a London hospital and, on discovering what has happened during the night, heads across Europe in search of any naval base still manned by US troops. He finally finds such a place in Alicante, where he is rescued along with two of the characters he had met along the way: a young English orphan named Susan (Janina Faye), and a French woman named Christine Durrant (Nicole Maurey).[4] The adaptation has been heavily criticized, for changing the source material in such a way that it "falls too gratefully upon the horror film that is implied within Wyndham's story," and with the trek across Europe "loses the novel's sense of cultural claustrophobia" (Sawyer 81).

More overt horror elements are found in Matheson's *I Am Legend* (hereafter *Legend*). The novel's protagonist is Robert "Bob" Neville, the last man and indeed the last human on Earth. Neville lives on Cimarron Street, near Compton in post-apocalyptic Los Angeles County, a macabre parody of a typical suburban neighborhood. The quiet houses are now occupied by vampires, who descend on his home at night calling for Neville to come outside, to be bitten and join them. Much of his life by day is spent in routine chores, one of which is discovering and exterminating vampires. His desperate loneliness leads to his capture by the living vampires when he meets Ruth, a vampire disguised as a human. With this encounter Neville discovers that his indiscriminate slaughter of vampires has included both live innocents infected with the plague, who are banding together to form a new society, and the reanimated dead, who are merely monstrous. He realizes too late that he has become the

monster, exterminating the infected living as they sleep. The novel in this way "suggests that in a world that does not contain Good or Evil, violence, even when it is […] undertaken in the name of survival, necessarily dehumanizes and creates monsters" (Waller 262). Having surrendered to capture, Neville dies the final example of his fearsome species, to become merely a "legend." The protagonist of Sidney Salkow's 1964 adaptation *The Last Man on Earth* (hereafter *Earth*) is Robert "Bob" Morgan (Vincent Price). Much of the action of the film remains the same as in Matheson's novel, except that Morgan is a scientist who has long been working on a cure for the vampire plague. At the end of the film he manages to cure Ruth (Franca Bettoia) before being killed beside his wife's grave. What will happen to the cured Ruth is left unresolved, but his act seems to leave the film with some hope that the vampires might one day become human again, which would mean Morgan had not become not a monstrous legend, but rather a legendary martyr.

The two novels and their film adaptations contain many parallels. In both novels, it is the hubristic and militaristic advancement of mankind that sees its downfall. In *Triffids*, the blindness is thought to be caused by the accidental use of nuclear and biological weapons aboard satellites, and the triffid invasion is caused by the cultivation of the plants for use as a renewable fuel source. The novel's depiction of military technology leading to widespread blindness recalls the blinding flash of light that accompanies nuclear weapon detonation. It also precedes the first example of artificial satellite technology, the Soviet Union's Sputnik, which was launched in 1957 and heightened the anxieties of the US and its allies over the future of the Space Race. In an essay titled "Science Fiction and Armageddon," Wyndham writes that he finds "scare-'em-to-death approaches" to apocalyptic fiction that directly involve nuclear war and the Space Race unconvincing (1). This may explain why he chose the unusual and indirect route of a story about mass blindness and walking plants. Military and scientific progress is also at fault in *Legend*, as bombs used during the war lead to a virus mutation which turns people into vampires. The film adaptations of both novels take less critical views of humanity by making meteorites solely responsible for blindness and triffids in Sekely's adaptation of *Triffids*, and a mysterious plague responsible for zombie infection in *Earth*. This simplification may be a result of the increased anxiety around nuclear issues in the early 1960s, the years in which heightened Cold War tensions led to the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Limited Test Ban Treaty. As scholars such as Paul Boyer and Robert A. Jacobs demonstrate, from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s heightened nuclear anxieties saw a direct effect in fictional portrayals of World War III, which became "far more brutal than those of the earlier period [of the Cold War]" (R. Jacobs 402). As the two films draw on texts published in the early 1950s, these changes seem to indicate a longing for a perceived time of lessened nuclear threat.

The four works are also similar in that a coincidence saves the male protagonist and allows him to become the last man, a singular witness of a world gone awry: Masen in the novel is stung in the eyes by a triffid, but this experience of near-blindness ironically leaves him among the few to keep their sight; Neville and Morgan are bitten by a vampire bat with an early mutation of the virus and so become immune to the disease. Their early awareness of the emerging threats to humanity prepares these characters to resist that threat later on. Lastly, each of the four texts features a lone male protagonist with a common monosyllabic nickname: "Bill" and "Bob." The reader's surrogates in their exploration of the post-apocalyptic worlds, these are presented as every-man characters, though they carry with them the prejudices of their time.

Masculinity in Crisis

Despite presenting in his first-person narration many independent female characters with believable motivations, Masen's actions through the novel seem a determined attempt to establish his dominance as a man. In a chapter appropriately titled "The Groping City," Masen attempts to intervene as blind and sighted men sexually assault blind women in the overcrowded Piccadilly Circus. He views his attempted intervention as "a mixture of schoolboy heroics and noble sentiments," but also as a foolish move. Knocked down by another sighted man, Masen regains his "sense" and allows them to continue, remarking, "I felt doubtful whether any of the women hereabouts would seriously mind, anyway" (Wyndham, *Triffids* 59). Within one or two sentences following the introduction of any female character, Masen is quick to define them in terms of their physical attractiveness to him: he notes that it "seemed likely that beneath the smudges and smears [Playton] was good-looking" (65); Sandra Telmont has a "pleasant though unexotic countenance" (105); Miss Cary has a face "interesting rather than good-looking" (111); Stephen Brennell's unnamed female "companion" is "a good-looking, well-built girl" (193); even the young Susan has to be described as a "pretty little girl" (210). This demeaning attitude toward women is also reinforced by his supposedly superior and exaggerated calmness with regards to triffids, which stands in contrast to the reaction of the women around him, who act, as he reports, "hysterically" (78). Sekely's film is also determined to present women as hysterical, with most of the screen time for Karen Goodwin (Janette Scott), Durrant, and Susan consisting of petrified screaming as the men push past them to fight back triffids. The women's career independence is tempered by physical and mental weakness, as the scientist Karen relies on brawny, aggressive husband Tom (Kieron Moore), and Durrant and Miss Coker (Alison Leggatt), who started their own hospital, must lean on the military Masen and the intellectual Mr. Coker (Mervyn Johns). While Wyndham is not necessarily implicated in the masculine supremacist attitudes of his character, depend-

ing on the reader's perception of the contrast between narrator and implied author, neither the novel nor the film challenges their protagonists to reevaluate their attitudes toward gender.

Much of this hysterical femininity and dominant masculinity seems to emerge from resentment toward the new economic role of women in the years following the Second World War. The number of women aged between 35 and 49 in employment in Britain had risen sharply by 1951 to 43 per cent, up from just 26 per cent in 1931 (Langhamer 359). In the US, rates of women's employment in the mid-1950s "matched the artificially high levels attained during World War II" (Harmann 86). While many public officials on both sides of the Atlantic openly supported such changes, others publicly objected. A frustrated speech by Coker demonstrates this ambivalence, as he lambasts a young woman for what he sees as "a mess of myth and affectation" that hides the fact that "women can or do—or rather did—handle the most complicated and delicate machines when they took the trouble to understand them" (175). Coker entirely ignores any expectations of domestic responsibility placed on women by society, directing the blame entirely at women and refusing to acknowledge any fault on the part of men. In fact, both Coker and Masen paradoxically celebrate the resourcefulness of women while expecting their obedience and occupation as housewives. The once independent novelist Playton feels conflicted over this issue, both wishing to make Masen happy and feeling that she "wasn't meant for this kind of life" as "a farmer's wife" (228). Wyndham's inclusion of Playton's internal conflict over her assumption of a traditional domestic role means that the novel is far more sensitive to contemporary gender concerns than it would have been in its absence.

Neville, too, is a character who represents the insecurity of postwar masculinity. Neville seeks to dominate women at any opportunity, though he is restricted by necessity to female vampires. Neville's test subjects in understanding the vampire plague are almost always women: "the question posed in his mind: Why do you always experiment on women? He didn't care to admit the inference had any validity" (Matheson, *Legend* 49). He considers the fact that, faced with a sleeping female vampire, he could rape her without consequence: "Morality, after all, had fallen with society. He was his own ethic" (50). W. Warren Wagar notes that post-apocalyptic last men frequently take the position of "high court of the world" (69), and this is clearly the case with Neville. Feeling insecure about whether Ruth is outsmarting him, he reassures himself that being male gives him an innate advantage: "That's ridiculous, he argued. She's just a woman" (Matheson, *Legend* 126). Noting her choice of music, he comforts himself with the thought that "Her taste isn't remarkably advanced" (131). Neville attempts to reassure himself of his masculine superiority in these scenes, viewing women as having inferior intellects and only deserving his attention as targets of lust. It is in part his underestimation

of Ruth, which culminates in the rejection of her advice that he abandon his stubborn occupation of the house on Cimarron Street, that leads to his demise.

Neville's need to assert a primitive masculinity is due in part to his loss of identity with the deaths of both his wife and daughter, whose existence defined him as husband and father, and in part to the breakdown of society, in which he was defined by his maleness and more specifically by his military rank. It is also related to issues with his father, which appear early in our introduction to Neville, when we are told that "Neville had loathed his father and fought the acquisition of his father's logic and mechanical facility every inch of the way" (15). Despite his resistance to scientific thinking Neville finds that he must activate this part of his brain to try to discover a cure for the vampire disease, and in the process unwittingly to become more like his father. Interestingly, in *Triffids*, Masen seems to have similar issues with *his* father: "my inability to make any column of figures reach the same total twice caused me to be something of a mystery as well as a disappointment to him. […] And until I was thirteen or fourteen I would shake my head, conscious of my sad inadequacy" (Wyndham, *Triffids* 25-6). Reliant on their supposedly superior male brains, both characters feel weakened by the fact that these qualities seem not to have passed from their fathers to them. Unequipped with these masculine qualities and so unable to pass them on, both characters are doomed to die as last men.

Initially content with objectifying female characters, developing a close homosocial relationship with Coker, and helping to rebuild society, Masen later becomes obsessed with beginning a relationship with Playton. In other words, after a "youth" of wandering eyes, male bonding, and career focus, he devotes himself to finding a wife and concentrating only on his family. Taking Susan with him, he finds Playton in the Suffolk Downs. Their house, named Shirning Farm, is a "modernized and reconstructed" farm with a "suburban rather than a rural tidiness" which "tired Londoners had found adaptable to their needs" (218). With their adopted daughter Susan and their own son David, Masen and Playton call themselves husband and wife and become a typical suburban family. They even drive a "station-waggon" (80), "*the* family car of the 1950s" (Jancovich 149, emphasis in original). Neville and Morgan, too, drive station wagons. In the film Morgan notes, as he drives the bodies of vampires from his street to be burned in a pit, "there was a time I shopped for a car—now I need a hearse." Making a connection with the procedures and rituals of death shows suburban and consumerist aspirations such as the purchase of station wagons are defeating for these last men—they represent only dead ends. At the farm Playton devotes her time to learning to cook and keep house as Masen drives into London to gather supplies. The triffid-related violence Masen witnesses on these commutes connects to the fear of "urban violence and decay spreading outside the bounds of the city center" that Robert Beuka identifies as a common thread in fiction concerning sub-

urbia, particularly when allied to the "racial pluralism of the city" (41). With Playton's domain the adapted rural home and Masen's the dangerous city, the characters fit into prescribed roles as described by Abraham Akkerman in his principals of "Philosophical Urbanism." According to Akkerman, the Western city, or citadel, is deeply rooted in the masculine myth, so much so that the two have long informed each other. Femininity, on the other hand, is commonly associated with the opposite space, the garden, with its connotations of fertility and motherhood (230). Masen and Playton fit into these paradigms with little thought, following the long tradition associated with these spaces.

Cities and Race

In addition to the division of the urban and suburban realms by gender, their developing definition was also complicated by racial prejudice. In the US, the years following the Second World War saw millions of African Americans relocating from the segregated South to large Northern cities. Alongside this exodus, and perhaps because of it, the rate of relocation to the suburbs by white residents of the city escalated. The term "white flight" designates a "wholesale departure of white folks from many formerly segregated communities" who feared "the encroachment of people of color" (Camarillo 143). In addition to this physical redistribution, suburban enclaves sought to institutionalize the separation of races between city and suburb. The Federal Housing Authority established covenants to maintain racial segregation as a matter of policy: "Urban ghettos were reserved for African Americans and other minorities; suburbs were to remain lily white" (Baxandall and Ewen 175). In Britain, the 1948 British Nationality Act standardized Commonwealth citizenship laws, and this, coupled with high unemployment in the West Indies, saw the first significant era of black immigration (Clapson 80). Besides the West Indies, these years also saw significant immigration from former British colonies and territories such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. Until the early 1950s this immigration proceeded at a low rate: only 15,000 people of West Indian birth lived in the UK in 1951, for example, and of these only 4,200 lived in London (Inwood 856). The McCarren-Walter Act of 1952, greatly restricting West Indian immigration into the US, saw this rate increase sharply, leading to stricter British immigration laws in 1962. The preceding years saw a growing racial prejudice against the perceived Other. This manifested in groups such as Oswald Mosley's "Union Movement," "Keep Britain White," and the "White Defense League," although prejudice was generally "ubiquitous but well camouflaged" (858). The so-called "Notting Hill Riots" of 1958 were an unusually large-scale and vicious manifestation of such prejudice, which saw white gangs targeting minority ethnic residents and businesses in the Notting Hill area. Though there was no legal segregation comparable to that of the US, it was still the case that the black population typically resided in poorer areas of the

city that had been effectively abandoned to decay by white Britons, communities such as Peckham and Brixton.

In both Britain and America relocation to the suburbs cost money, making it a largely white middle-class phenomenon, and housing-market discrimination reinforced the racial demarcation between suburban and urban spaces. The abandonment of cities to their fate in the event of nuclear war, therefore, takes on racial implications when they are considered as spaces with the highest proportion of black residents, as opposed to the almost exclusively white suburbs. As Jacqueline Foertsch writes, for "policy makers in general, negroes were a 'problem,' like the bomb, to be solved as expeditiously as possible. For white America, the answer in both cases was flight to the protected suburb, even as it knew that the solution was provisional at best" (136). Indeed, as Paul Williams shows, civil defense planning on both sides of the Atlantic "privileged the suburban family (silently encoded as white)" (*Race* 111). Though it would be a stretch to suggest that either *Triffids* or *Legend* is a conscious parable about the phenomenon of white flight to the suburbs and the sacrificing of black cities, both works are products of prevailing contemporary anxieties over the threats toward cities and suburbs, and fit into a history of works of this kind. As Eric Avila notes, the "rise of Hollywood science fiction paralleled the acceleration of white flight in postwar America and not only recorded popular anxieties about political and sexual deviants, but also captured white preoccupations with the increasing visibility of the alien Other" (88). Sean Brayton, too, observes that there has long been a connection in fiction between dystopia or catastrophe, and multicultural landscapes (66). Both *Triffids* and *Legend*, along with their film adaptations, can be said to engage (whether consciously or not) with these kinds of concerns in their depictions of urban and suburban spaces.

Triffids and Vampires as Racialized Others

Making a life in suburbia, the "sterile" cities become merely an "oppressive memory" to Masen and Playton (Wyndham, *Triffids* 164). The ever-present threat to this suburban idyll is that of triffids, which necessitates a daily maintenance of the home's defenses. Masen, Susan, and Playton have their time consumed with fixing fences and burning hordes of triffids with flamethrowers. The ritual exaggerates routine maintenance of the suburban garden, aggrandizing the achievement of keeping invasive species from spreading to their patch of land. Though they have left the city to decay and be reclaimed by nature, the danger does not remain there but instead threatens to encroach upon their lives in suburbia. The gradual migration of triffids from the city center is a manageable threat, nonetheless, while the ultimate danger occurs when a human gang from the city targets their attractive suburban sanctuary. Defense against such a horde of invaders is Neville's daily ritual, too, and

much of *Legend* is spent telling of his trips to acquire garlic and mirrors, his efforts to maintain the house, and his production of wooden stakes. His suburban bachelor home is now a fortress against the constant tide of vampires emerging from their city homes and terrorizing him by night, a scheduled daily encounter with the horrors of his proximity to the metropolis. As with the 1950s civil defense efforts, these characters are continually reinforcing their suburban homes against the threat originating from the nearby existence of the city. Though this vigilance can be clearly connected with the nuclear threat, there is also a distinct racial undertone to the novels and films.

Race is not explicitly dealt with either by *Triffids* or *Legend*. Though Dr. E. H. Vorless advocates in *Triffids* "one primary prejudice, and that is that *the race is worth preserving*" (119, emphasis in original), and Ruth refers to Neville as "the last of the old race" (157), these mentions refer merely to the fight between the human race and a species which is "Other," whether triffid or vampire.[5] There does, however, seem to be some cause to view the threats to the main characters as stand-ins for racialized Others. As Avila writes, there has long been an "ominous affinity between the alien Other of science fiction film and the racialized Other of American history" (88). Vincent Price and Howard Keel are both white men, and there is evidence in the novels that Masen and Neville are both white. The race of characters in *Triffids* is only specifically mentioned with regards to the "dark" Umberto, of "assorted Latin descent," which appears to suggest that he is the only character whose race deserves remark as being outside the supposed norm (Wyndham, *Triffids* 29-30). Neville's race is more clearly alluded to, as he is described as having a "blond beard," "blue eyes" (Matheson, *Legend* 109), and a father named "Fritz" (15). Conversely the antagonists of the stories, the triffids and the vampires, who invade the city and displace the white heroes into the suburbs, are described in terms of their darkness. Umberto, who is largely responsible for the proliferation of triffids, is "sleek, dark" (Wyndham, *Triffids* 30), mysterious, and manipulative; Masen sees the triffids themselves as "odd and somehow *foreign*" looking (37, emphasis in original) and they stand out from other foliage by making "a dark border round any inhabited place" (255). The "dark border" here is suggestive of the poorer suburban neighborhoods on the outskirts of towns. Racial minorities in the UK generally did not move out to suburban areas until policy decisions from 1969 encouraged this by making it economically viable, and even then only in small numbers due to the isolating effects of moving into predominantly white areas. Cheaper land tended to be on the outskirts of town, which made it a suitable site for low-income council estates. This created division within suburbia along class lines, as the council estates were distinct from the "many originally prosperous and class-specific suburbs [which] have remained as bywords of suburban kudos" (Clapson 72).

In *Legend*, Neville repeatedly refers to the vampires with such terms as "black bastards" (Matheson 24) and "dark men" (150). He even mockingly refers to his fight against them as "minority prejudice" (20), suggesting that, while theoretically he could live side-by-side with vampires, he would not "let [his] sister marry one" (21).[6] Comments such as this imply that while Neville recognizes the arbitrariness of his prejudice against the Other, he nonetheless perceives associating and procreating with them as potentially dangerous to his own identity. This feared dilution of identity raises the supposed threat of "race suicide," which is connected to contemporary fears that independent white women would not have children (May 100). Neville's encounters with the vampires in the city invariably begin with a drive along Compton Boulevard, which runs through the middle of the city of Compton. Whether or not Neville's house is within Compton itself or merely nearby, the repeated reminders of this particular city in Los Angeles County is evocative of racialized spaces. At the time of the novel's publication Compton was becoming deeply divided because of the process of blockbusting by real estate agents, which "divided Compton in half, creating a racially bifurcated city" (Camarillo 142). Neville's repeated characterization of the vampires as "black" and "dark" therefore suggests that whatever his attitudes toward the racial composition of Compton prior to the apocalypse, as Bernice M. Murphy writes, "now a *really* bad element had moved into the neighborhood, [Neville] can violently express feelings that otherwise have been repressed" (33). The use of Los Angeles in this way can thus be viewed as further evidence that the vampires are representative of African Americans, and that Neville is used by Matheson to demonstrate a racial antagonism at least partially repressed in the city at the time of the novel's publication.

These invading forces, the triffids and vampires, are suggestive of a new colonialism, in which roles have been reversed and the white colonizers have become the colonized. As John Rieder demonstrates, stories of sf invasion have a close connection to the subject of colonialism: "all these are not merely nightmares morbidly fixed upon by science fiction writers and readers, but are rather the bare historical record of what happened to non-European people and lands after being 'discovered' by Europeans and integrated into Europe's economic and political arrangements" (124). Peter Hutchings makes a similar point, noting the telling nature of British obsession with invasion narratives: "In reality Britain has rarely been invaded. In its fantasies the opposite is true. It is perhaps fitting that a nation with such an expansive imperial past should have developed a rich tradition of narratives about itself being invaded" (337). While many of these invasion narratives imagine a European, often German, aggressor (as demonstrated by I. F. Clarke in *Voices Prophesying War: Future Wars 1763-3749* [1992]), the logic carries forward to a postwar era which saw unprecedented degrees of immigration from countries previously under colo-

nial rule. The post-apocalyptic landscape, re-ordered by catastrophe, allows for a new colonial encounter to take place:

> The world after nuclear war, then, mirrors the pre-colonial and "pre-civilized" world of soft places that defy European cartography. Both spaces are positioned outside human civilization, either awaiting its imprint or the result of its self-destruction.[7] And as such, the post-apocalyptic world can be an arena for the replaying of the colonial encounter, frightening in its unintelligibility but alluring in its virgin promise. (Williams "Beyond" 304)

The history of British colonialism, therefore, makes the post-apocalyptic terrain of southern England the perfect environment for a new colonial encounter to take place, in the tradition of H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1897). The title "*The Day of the Triffids*" shows a colonial role reversal of this kind in which humanity is no longer the most powerful species, and Masen remarks that it is "an unnatural thought that one type of creature should dominate perpetually" (Wyndham, *Triffids* 112). *Triffids* and its film adaptation reflect a post-colonial Britain, and the rise of the American Empire in its place. In America, too, what Rieder describes as "the form of global hegemony being established by the United States in the wake of World II" ignites anxiety of the reversal of colonizer/colonized (148). As Patrick B. Sharp demonstrates, nuclear frontier stories, a genre of which *Legend* might be considered a part, incorporate the "frontier imagery of the nineteenth century," with survivors needing to "battle the manifestations of savagery in order to establish a new America out of the wreckage of the old" (172). While the reader is initially led to interpret this as Neville battling the savagery of the vampires, Neville's discovery of the distinction between the living and dead among the infected means that it is he who represents the savagery of the old world which must be vanquished. By the end of *Legend*, Neville finally comes to realize that majority and minority roles in his world have reversed: "I'm the abnormal one now. Normalcy was a majority concept, the standard of many and not the standard of just one man" (Matheson 159). The vampire in particular is a figure through which conventional oppressor/victim relationships have often been explored and deconstructed in fiction, as Veronica Hollinger writes in her 1989 essay "The Vampire and the Alien: Variations on the Outsider" (155). Each of the four texts thus expresses anxieties over the inversion of colonial power, in which karmic reprisal is meted out for the crimes of empire.

Spaces that had previously been dominated by humans such as Masen and Neville have come to be reallocated as belonging to a new and invasive force. In Triffids, this takes the form of the reclamation by nature of built spaces. Commenting on rural developments, Playton notes that "people were wailing about the way those bungalows were destroying the countryside. Now

look at them." Masen replies, "The countryside is having its revenge, all right" (Wyndham, *Triffids* 242). In depicting the conflict between the natural and built environments, the bungalow possesses very specific connotations. An architectural form originating in India with a hybrid Bengali name, bungalows were used by members of the East India Company and the British Raj, and were later appropriated for use in Britain itself (Kennedy 103). At the apex of the British Empire in the late nineteenth century, London occupied a central global position in banking, finance, and services. Bungalows were constructed on the outskirts of the city to accommodate the "new bourgeoisie" who worked in these industries (King 65), representing "the symbolic display of private property ownership" in their purposely uneconomical horizontal use of space (56). Even after the Empire began to decline, the bungalow continued to be a stalwart of suburban housing. After the Second World War, local authorities took over army land and erected 15,000 temporary bungalows or "hutments," and the "popularity of these aluminum-framed 'prefabs,' produced in their tens of thousands by redundant aircraft factories at the end of the war, was one of the surprises of the postwar years. All but 500 of them were still in use in 1955" (Inwood 824). A quintessentially suburban development, bungalows are thus structures associated with the privilege of a colonial power that spread broadly across rural land. Their reclamation by nature in *Triffids*, therefore, displays an inversion of the established power structure. Human colonizers are now the colonized, as nature moves in to destroy them and their homes.[8]

In *Legend*, the new society is one not wholly different from humanity, albeit in an earlier, more primitive form. Neville wonders, "Did they have to do it like this, with such a black and brutal slaughtering? […] They were more like gangsters than men forced into a situation" (Matheson, *Legend* 149). Indeed, the labeling of this new society as "gangsters" links them to a specifically urban American space, putting them further at odds with Neville's suburban identity. In *The Immediate Experience* (1962), Robert Warshow writes that "the experience of the gangster as an experience of art is universal to Americans," and describes the figure of the gangster as "the man of the city, with the city's language and knowledge, with its queer and dishonest skills and its terrible daring" (86, emphasis in original). When Charlton Heston was pitching the novel for a second film adaptation (which would become *The Omega Man* [1971]), he characterized the "Others" as a gang-like group, its members like teenagers who stay in all day and wake at night, and whose affliction is like drug abuse, "capable of chemically inducing a progressive and irreversible psychosis" (2). Given the formation of youth gangs such as Compton's Pirus in the 1960s and 1970s, Heston's description pairs the vampires with a particularly urban incarnation of drug-related and violent crime comprising gangs of "minority youths, dressed out in certain colors or clothing, and striking menacing poses as 'outsiders'" (Cummings and Monti viii). While

it is not always the case, some violent gangs emerge in response to "disparities between aspirations of young persons and the lack of opportunities they have in poor communities" (Moore 33), enabling a modicum of empowerment and resistance to the dominant, oppressive forces of society.

Accordingly, Ruth shows Neville the hypocrisy of his criticisms: "New societies are always primitive. […] In a way we're like a revolutionary group—repressing society by violence. It's inevitable. Violence is no stranger to you. You've killed. Many times" (Matheson, *Legend* 156). Those infected with the vampire plague and hunted by Neville have organized and formed a rebellion to overthrow his dominion and reclaim the land. Neville's stubborn confidence in his claim of superiority is evidenced by his attempt to hold out against the rebellion, and he refuses to heed Ruth's instruction that he abandon his suburban domain. In a scene redolent of a race riot, and in an urban county that was to see the Watts Riots of 1965, the vampires come by night "in their dark cars with their spotlights and their guns and their axes and their pikes. Came from the blackness […] around the [Compton] boulevard corner and clutching out at Cimarron Street" (Matheson, *Legend* 147). The city is a place "custom made for spreading disease," such as *Legend*'s vampire infection, where if "forces of social order and discipline weaken […] country folk will presumably go on behaving like solid citizens, but urbanites will turn into a mob" (Abbott 185-6). Imagining the vampires in terms of the inhuman, racialized Other in rebellion against white masculine rule brings to mind the origins of the "zombie," not least because of Legend's crucial importance in the evolution of the zombie myth itself.

Blurred Boundaries

The Haitian zombie, which would later be appropriated by Hollywood, began as an adapted form of West African religious ideas repurposed to speak to the experiences of slaves in the Caribbean. A person robbed of their volition and humanity and set to work tirelessly in the fields, the zombie represented both a fate to be feared and a clear parody of the dependence of Euro-American capitalism upon slave labor. The idea of the zombie originated first in the colony of Saint Domingue, later the site of the Haitian Revolution and a localized overthrow of the system of slavery, and came to be used by outside observers to illustrate the primitiveness of Haitian self-rule. The revolution of a majority Other which is viewed as primitive by the white oppressor has clear links with the story of *Legend*. Indeed, the vampires of *Legend* and *Earth* provide something of a bridge between the Haitian origins and Hollywood appropriation of the zombie. Though referred to throughout as vampires, the Others of *Earth* are scruffy, shambling, groaning creatures, the reanimated dead, and visually share far more in common with the zombies of future George A. Romero films (1968-2009) than vampires depicted in films such as *Dracula* (1931). Their

infection in the novel is through Bacillus vampiris, mutated by the use of bombs during the war and transmitted via mosquitoes and dust storms. The infection in the film is merely an airborne virus. In both cases the means of transmission has moved from the body horror of gothic vampire stories to the scientific reasoning of the sf zombie. The chemical nature of the vampire epidemic, a form of germ invasion, speaks to contemporary fears of an insidious enemy with the ability to infect normal, upstanding American citizens.

In this way *Legend* and *Earth*, along with *Triffids* in its novel and film incarnations, fit into the broader history of invasion-scare narratives of the postwar years, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) being a classic example, in which aliens and monsters are often seen as stand-ins for communists. The vast majority of scholarship on postwar sf focuses on this theme as the primary concern. As Mark Jancovich writes, however, this is an oversimplification which excludes "a great many films which simply do not fit with this subgenre," and "even the 1950s invasion narratives are often markedly different from one another" (2). Reflecting the racial anxiety of the time, the boundaries between races, once so clearly demarcated for Neville, have become blurred, and he realizes that it is he who has become the feared monster. As Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry write in "The Zombie Manifesto: The Nonhuman Condition in the Era of Advanced Capitalism" (2008), the zombie is a figure highly suited to these issues: "the zombie's irreconcilable body (both living and dead) raises the insufficiency of the dialectical model (subject/object)" (87). Established divisions in society, therefore, have become problematized. As with the blurred boundaries between racialized bodies, the racialized city is not clearly demarcated.

While attempts were being made to racially segregate populations between the suburbs and the urban centers, in practice these boundaries were not so clearly defined. Despite the persistence of "separate but equal" laws even after Brown v. Board of Education, "the lines between black space and white space increasingly blurred [in the 1950s], particularly in the cities, where racialized minorities, blacks in particular, concentrated in unprecedented numbers" (Avila 89). The decentralization of cities no doubt influenced this amorphousness in racial boundaries. Jane Jacobs, in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), lamented the role of the automobile in decentralizing American cities, resulting in the formation of "Noplace" (352). Mumford, too, wrote of the mechanical functionality of "formless urbanization" brought about by automobile transportation, which "disrupted urban space […] recklessly" (Reader 110). Despite the prevalence of white flight to the suburbs, urban and suburban spaces were nebulous and formless enough that they were not wholly separate but rather bled into one another, as, consequently, did supposedly black and white spaces. Nor were the suburbs exclusively white. In London, for instance, while West Indian immigrants seldom lived in the outer

suburbs, most lived in "poorer inner suburbs" (Inwood 858). In America, studies such as Kevin M. Kruse's *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (2007) demonstrate that the conventional wisdom of a division between black urban centers and white suburbs is only part of the story, as many cities had both white suburbs and black suburbs. The interdependence of city and suburbs also challenges this idea of a clear demarcation. Beuka writes that fictional depictions of the daily commute between suburb and city "both highlights and ultimately works to dissolve the distinction between the urban and nonurban realms" (250), and this can be seen in both of the novels and their adaptations. The routine drives between suburb and city by Masen in *Triffids*, and by Neville and Morgan, make clear the lack of an absolute division between the supposedly violent and dangerous city and the sanctuary of the suburbs.

Conclusion

There are clear parallels between the two novels and their film adaptations in terms of the use of the last man theme to portray anxieties regarding the status of white males in cities and suburbs. There are noteworthy differences between them, however, caused by their differing settings of Britain and America. In *Triffids*, Masen notes frequent mentions of America tied to the hope that America will eventually intervene to save the afflicted Britons. Brennell's "good-looking" companion, for instance, "had an utterly unshakeable conviction that nothing serious could have happened to America, and that it was only a matter of holding out for a while until the Americans arrived to put everything in order" (Wyndham, *Triffids* 194). Other refugees refuse to join up with Masen and Coker, holding a "widespread and fixed idea" that the Americans "would never have allowed such a thing to happen in their country." Masen and Coker, although not being able to disprove these ideas, react to them with scorn, mockingly referring to belief in "American fairy godmothers" and remarking that "any surviving Americans would be likely to have their hands more than full at home" (202). Masen instead prefers to rely only on a British "make-do" attitude such as that championed during wartime. In the film adaptation, Masen is now a member of the American military, and though he cannot save Britain, he does at least manage to save Susan and Durrant. The remaining American naval personnel (all white, all male) in Alicante are the only organized force left in Europe, and they alone are evacuating survivors from the ruined Europe to the (presumably) better-off America. It is only through the power and stability of the American military and its white masculinity, therefore, that anyone on the continent survives the apocalypse. This highly positive spin on US military power separates film from novel and makes the film far more typical of American monster movies of the time. In America itself, in *Legend* and *Earth*, there is no real mention of Europe or any

other continent. With the knowledge that Los Angeles and therefore the rest of the US has ceased to function, Neville and Morgan hold out no hope for being saved by another nation: if America has fallen, the world has fallen. The difference is telling: in all four works the existence of America stands for the continued existence of the world, so much so that it possesses the aura of a fairy-tale in *Triffids*. In contrast to earlier post-apocalyptic sf texts that focus on London as the nexus of Western civilization, a transition is underway in the immediate postwar years to passing that title to the great American cities such as Los Angeles.

The two novels and their film adaptations, in their use of the last man theme and their exploration of post-apocalyptic urban centers and suburbia, depict Britain and America in an identity crisis. White masculinity has ceased to be the dominant mode, as cities, which Akkerman shows to be inherently male spaces, are given up to the threat of nuclear annihilation and an increasing proportion of black residents. Moving to the suburbs, the white male protagonists struggle to adjust to a space of female empowerment, and additionally feel themselves threatened by a black populace that is no longer subject to "separate but equal" laws. Though living surrounded by many other beings, whether the blind, the vampiric, or the independent and successful Josella and Ruth, the last men are characters nonetheless profoundly alone and desperate to assert the superiority of their gender. Their only refuge is in the futile defense of their suburban homes against an emergent new society with which they are not compatible, in the obstinate conservatism of a doomed order.

With their last white men standing in as generic everymen, it is mainly in their incompatibility with the developing society that these texts interrogate such a conservatism. Neville's realization of his own monstrosity in Legend, although coming too late to save himself, is the only moment in these four works in which this interrogation is consciously addressed. As Jancovich notes, "Matheson's fiction seems to be preoccupied with the male anxieties of the 1950s, although he does not necessarily endorse these anxieties. More commonly, he explores and criticizes the conceptions of normality upon which these anxieties are often founded" (130). The novel's depiction of "the privileged trying to maintain their privilege" (148) places readers "in an uneasy relationship to Neville in which they are not only deeply involved in his thought processes and responses, but are also able to identify their limitations and omissions" (149). This ability is certainly not forced upon the reader, and while Neville is clearly a character with many limitations, it is not until the conclusion of the novel that he gains the self-awareness to recognize his role in their formation.

While it might be argued that we are placed in a similarly uneasy relationship to Masen, particularly given his attitudes toward women, the refusal of

Triffids to pass judgment on him as a character could be read either as a lack of self-awareness, or as an indication that Wyndham is leaving this judgment entirely to the reader. In an early manuscript, *Triffids* had possessed a Foreword written in the style of the disclaimer before an eyewitness report:

> The Editors wish to make it clear that the following account is the personal story of one man involved in disaster, and the opinions expressed are his personal views. William Masen was not a person of any importance in the pre-catastrophe world. He was an ordinary man of his time, reacting as an ordinary man. (Wyndham, *Manuscript* 1)

A conceit similar to that used in the quasi-journalistic sf stories of writers such as Wells, the Foreword introduces moral distance from Masen, indicating that perhaps the conservatism typical of men of his time was no more endorsed by Wyndham than by Matheson. Its removal, however, makes this uncertain. Neither film adaptation bears quite this level of ambiguity. Rather, both draw on novels from a decade prior and reinforce the conservative tendencies in each to separate white heroes from dark villains and powerful male protagonists from defenseless female supporting characters. Both novels and their film adaptations can thus be seen as products and critiques of white male anxieties in postwar Britain and America, anxieties closely connected to the demographic makeup of both the urban and suburban realms.

Notes

1. Once extremely popular, post-apocalyptic tales in which a lone male protagonist wanders an unpopulated world, such as Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), had fallen out of fashion by the late nineteenth century, but were coming to take on a new significance. Alfred Noyes's novel *The Last Man* (1940) tells the story of a world almost destroyed (but for one Englishman) by a death-ray. George Orwell had for his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) the working title "The Last Man in Europe," referring to protagonist Winston Smith's suspicion that he is the only man who desires to resist the totalitarian panopticon of Big Brother (Ingle 118). Within the context of the postwar era and with the Cold War well under way, the last man theme came to assume a new and pertinent position.

2. *The Day of the Triffids* most notably as two television mini-series, of the same title, in 1981 and 2009. For more on the various adaptations, see Terry Harpold's "The End Begins: John Wyndham's Zombie Cozy" (2011). *I Am Legend* most notably as *The Omega Man* (1971) and *I Am Legend* (2007). The influences of both works go further than direct adaptations, with, for example, *Triffids* clearly influencing such popular films as *28 Days Later…* (2002) and *Legend* inspiring George A. Romero's creation of

the ghoulish zombies introduced in his *Night of the Living Dead* series of films (1968-2009).

3. The first migration refers to the clearance of the land west of the Alleghenies by pioneers; the second migration to the reworking of this recently opened land with a "pattern of factories, railroads, and dingy industrial towns, the bequest of the industrial pioneer"; the third to the flow of people and materials into financial centers, where "buildings and profits leap upward in riotous pyramids" (Mumford, *Urban* x). The essay, first published in *Survey Graphic* in May 1925, was considered still accurate enough to be reprinted in 1968 as the preface to his *The Urban Prospect*.

4. In the novel Ms. Durrant is a puritanical tyrant who represents the perilousness of conservative inaction in governance; in the film, Durrant is the hero's love interest, and comes swiftly around to his way of thinking.

5. The mercenary methods suggested by Dr. Vorless to preserve the race involve using blind women for procreation and refusing to help blind men. In a reading of the novel based on race, the views he espouses make him somewhat evocative of the academic proponents of eugenics such as Dr. Ernst Rüdin. It also raises the history of the social construction of race, which often made allowances for the sexualization of women of ethnic minorities, as Ian F. Haney-López notes (32). While Vorless finds the blind male Other useless to his cause, the blind female Other can be acceptably brought into his new race.

6. Mathias Clasen argues against reading any kind of subtext into phrases such as these, writing dismissively, "To be sure, the vampire is an apt metaphor for the other, the mother, the subaltern, the liminal, for the allure of death, for fear of death, desire for immortality, fear of immortality, for immigration, the phallus, the vagina, capitalism, for colonization, female sexuality, male sexuality, amorphous sexuality, and probably much else" (318). The argument that any of these suggestions could be made and that therefore none of them should be, of course, gets us nowhere.

7. The term "soft places" derives from Neil Gaiman's description of the "phenomenon of 'nothing' spaces resistant to cartographic inscription," (Williams, "Beyond" 86), which equates to the "space preceding colonization." Soft places both acknowledge and value "the space that exists before its 'discovery' by colonists" and "offers a sentimentalized space where past and present meet in a site outside colonial history" (87).

8. For more on botanical incursions in sf, see Rob Latham's "Biotic Invasions: Ecological Imperialism in New Wave Science Fiction" (2007).

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Abstract

This essay looks at the iconic science fiction texts *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) by John Wyndham and *I Am Legend* (1954) by Richard Matheson, as well as their first film adaptations (respectively 1962 and 1964). In these works, the changes surrounding urban and suburban areas in postwar Britain and America manifest in the portrayal of their "last man" protagonists, who struggle to assert their dominance while fearing independent women and a "dark" and threatening Other. Despite the established scholarly narrative suggesting a flourishing of British and American suburban development immediately after the Second World War, these texts demonstrate how tensions developed within these communities as white males reacted to the gradual refiguring of gender and racial dynamics.

The State vs. Buttgereit and Ittenbach: Censorship and Subversion in German No-Budget Horror Film

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In the late 1980s and early 1990s, West German indie directors released a comparatively high number of hyper-violent horror films, domestic no-budget productions often shot with camcorders. Screened at genre festivals and disseminated as grainy VHS or Betamax bootlegs, these films constitute anomalies in the history of German postwar cinema where horror films in general and splatter movies in particular have been rare, at least up until the 2000s.[1] This article focuses on two of the most prominent exponents of these cheap German genre flicks: Jörg Buttgereit's controversial and highly self-reflexive *NekRomantik 2* (1991) and Olaf Ittenbach's infamous gore-fest *The Burning Moon* (1992), both part of a huge but largely obscure underground culture of homebrew horror. I argue that both *NekRomantik 2* and *The Burning Moon*—amateurish and raw as they may appear—successfully reflect the state of non-normative filmmaking in a country where, according to Germany's Basic Law, "There shall be no censorship."[2] Yet, the nation's strict media laws—tied, in particular, to the *Jugendschutz* (protection of minors)—have clearly limited the horror genre in terms of production, distribution, and reception. In this light, *NekRomantik 2* and *The Burning Moon* become noteworthy case-studies that in various ways query Germany's complex relation to the practice of media control after 1945. Not only do both films have an interesting history with regard to the idiosyncratic form of censorship practiced in postwar (West) Germany, they also openly engage with the topic by reacting to the challenges of transgressive art in an adverse cultural climate.

A direct response to the West German government's cracking down on graphic horror films in the wake of the so-called British "video nasties panic" during the early eighties, *NekRomantik 2*—much like its 1987 predecessor *NekRomantik*—probes the limits of artistic expression through a no-holds-barred engagement with the extreme taboo of necrophilia. At the same time, however, the sequel plays with the expectations of the ever-watchful German

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authorities, anticipating the cuts that would presumably be imposed by the regulatory bodies in order to allow for an official release. In *NekRomantik 2* the fault lines—so to speak—are located between long stretches of art-house *ennui* as eruptions of strong violence and deviant sexuality, creating a formal frame that separates the graphic moments from the rather mundane rest and crafting a highly symmetrical text. The result is a fierce attack on the stigmatization of violent art that results from a blanket condemnation of the horror genre as an inferior and emotionally scarring form of debased entertainment. In *The Burning Moon* Ittenbach more openly attacks Germany's double standards as he slashes into the façade of Bavaria's conservative suburbia, arguing in his wild splatter anthology that under the surface of the nation's middle-class culture a repressed lust for blood and guts still lingers. The outrageous *The Burning Moon*—which is still banned to this day in Germany—suggests that an oppressive media landscape which provides no artistic safety valve leads to the inability to address underlying tensions, a problematic development that the director visualizes in the steadily escalating narrative arc of his film's segments. It culminates in a horrific vision of hell in which narrative has no place. In order to discuss the two titles from the shared angle of subversion and anti-censorship rhetoric, it is first necessary to outline the cultural climate of (West) Germany in the 1980s, including the ways in which the state has regulated horror films after the Second World War.

Horror Cinema, the BPjM, and the Video Nasty Panic of the 1980s

When we discuss West German no-budget horror, we need to talk briefly about the situation of horror cinema in postwar Germany in general and changes in the culture-political landscape of the 1980s in particular. German horror film—as academic lore has it—barely survived the aesthetic reconfigurations of the Third Reich, and its rebirth onto the screens of the republic, it seems, has been a slow and painful process. The consensus is often that "[d]er deutsche Horrorfilm blieb nach den Erfolgen der Stummfilmzeit bis heute marginal" ["German postwar horror film remained marginal after its success during the silent film era"] (Vossen 24). Lutz Koepnick notes how:

> Nazi cinema tried to massage minds and coordinate desire, but unlike Hollywood in the 1930s it had little tolerance for transporting its audiences to unknown places and times, for scaring viewers with wacky scientists and gruesome monsters (77).

To be sure, the genre clearly suffered during the twelve years' reign of fascism, and for the longest time it never really recuperated while dealing with "the lasting burdens of a violent past haunting the present in each and every

one of its moments" (Koepnick 83). As Ursula Vossen argues, "Während des Zweiten Weltkriegs erlebte der Horrorfilm eine deutlichen Einbruch, galt er doch angesichts des realen Schreckens und Leides als unangemessen" ["During World War II the horror film experienced a severe slump as it was considered inappropriate in the face of real terror and suffering"] (20-21). Yet, the perceived absence of German postwar horror *film*—even though there have been, of course, German horror *films*—appears perplexing when taking into account the influence that German Expressionism had on global cinema—including Hollywood and its *film noir* gangsters and Universal monsters—most famously through works such as Robert Wiene's 1920 expressionist poster-child *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and F.W. Murnau's 1922 masterpiece *Nosferatu*. While countries such as the United States and Japan either simply continued or quickly revived their respective domestic versions of horror cinema—and at times even reimported it to Germany—the self-proclaimed nation of *poets and thinkers* largely rejected its own tradition.

The reasons for this are complex. Important for this essay is the fact that both the Bonn Republic and its successor, the Berlin Republic, found themselves in a particularly sensitive position concerning the pitfalls and promises of mass media, especially their ability to fulfill or fail the political *Bildungsauftrag*, (West) Germany's constitutional mandate for media to be democratic and educational. After the Second World War, the fear of a resurgence of National Socialist ideology drove both the decentralization of channels of dissemination and the development of a media regulation system. Shortly after Germany's official capitulation on May 9, 1945, two regulatory bodies came into effect. In 1949, the semi-governmental *Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft* (FSK; Voluntary Self-Regulation of the Motion Picture Industry) was founded to ensure that each movie to be screened in theaters received a rating before it could get released. In the mid-1970s, the federal agency *Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Schriften* later *Medien* (BPjS, since 2003 BPjM; Federal Department for Writings/Media Harmful to Minors)—established in 1954 and tasked with the protection of minors from violent, racist, and pornographic content in literature and comic books—reacted to an increase in instances of visual media that were considered problematic and potentially harmful to persons under the age of 18. While the British tabloids opened a veritable witch hunt—calling for the banning of offensive materials, including the demand to burn the tapes that ended up on the so-called video nasty list—the West German government also responded to the perceived threat. State attorneys and federal judges increasingly enforced the §*131* StGB (penal code) dealing with the "glorification of violence,"[3] which became law in 1973 and was expanded to include video releases in 1985.[4]

A second, concurrent development at the intersection of technology and cultural geography further impacted the genre's position domestically.

With the advent of relatively affordable home video systems and the availability of Betamax and VHS tapes—rented at mushrooming video stores or illegally copied from one recorder to another—graphic horror films became an overnight phenomenon that led to drastic changes in both public perception and West German media politics. In the early 1980s, the newly and readily available copies of violent films from all around the world intensified the discussions over the impact of horror on younger audiences after "die Presse brandmarkte die neuen Videocassetten als 'Schmuddelmedium'" ["the press had labeled the new medium of video tapes 'filth'"] (Seim 2008, 58). When titles such as Sam Raimi's groundbreaking *The Evil Dead* (1981) hit theaters as well as VCRs in West Germany, they triggered severe objections and concerns from various parties due to their unprecedented graphic violence and overt and often misogynistic sexuality.[5] As a result, films such as *The Evil Dead* were quickly pulled from theaters and video stores; several of those ended up on the index or were banned altogether. This coincided with a political seachange that occurred when Helmut Kohl became chancellor in 1982 and his government shifted towards a more conservative culture politics.[6] Favoring established and proven directors and producers, the state almost exclusively funded film projects that played it safe, artistically as well as financially. Critical and/or all-too provocative art-house fare—and non-normative genre films even more so—hardly had any chance of receiving the crucial subsidies of the *Deutsche Filmförderung* (German Film Fund), which also required support from a national television network, a rule that affected gory horror films in particular as they could not be aired (uncut) on public television.

Subsequently, domestic horror films became risky endeavors, morally, financially, and, most importantly, legally. As Thomas Groh sums up the situation, "Wer den gewaltsam geöffneten Körper auf Zelluloid bannt, Abbilder auf Konserve davon im Handel anbietet oder sich gar zur Rezeption bekennt, begibt sich ganz schnell auf justiziables Terrain" ["Whoever puts the forcefully opened body on celluloid tenders images of it, or admits to watching them, very quickly ends up dealing with legal repercussions"] (178). Unsurprisingly, the number of West German productions, low to begin with, not only stagnated but decreased, leaving the genre in the hands of independent filmmakers shooting in their basements with the help of friends, while the amateurishly produced tapes turned into elusive and sought-after artifacts. This cultural pressure-cooker atmosphere in West Germany—spilling over into the early days of reunified Germany—contributed to the emergence of the idiosyncratic German no-budget horror of the 1980s and 90s under consideration here. The absence of West German horror by default challenged the country's self-understanding as a democracy that through its *Basic Law* guarantees freedom of expression: to keep a long, complex story short, if the protection of minors results in the unavailability of specific cultural materials even to persons of

legal age on the grounds of the glorification of (fictional) violence, is it still true that "There shall be no censorship" in Germany? *NekRomantik 2* and *The Burning Moon* tap into these debates not only because both films have experienced massive problems with the BPjM upon their release, but also because they display a subversive attitude toward and even open critique of various forms of media regulation.

Anticipating the Cut: The Strategic Symmetry of *Nekromantik 2*

Jörg Buttgereit is arguably the most visible German horror film director of the 1980s and early 1990s.[7] Harzheim, for example, claims that Buttgereit "seit den zwanziger Jahren des vorigen Jahrhunderts der erste deutschsprachige Regisseur [ist], der dem Horrorfilm neue Impulse gab" ["is the first German director since the 1920s who gave the horror genre new impulses"] (309). To be sure, Buttgereit has been taken seriously by scholars as an avant-garde director whose aesthetic resembles that of renowned international filmmakers.[8] As Mikel J. Koven argues, the two installments of *NekRomantik* gesture toward Buttgereit's "obsession with the past […which] echoes his own feelings of national identity within a post-Nazi Germany" (191). Buttgereit, however, has repeatedly stated that he does not feel completely comfortable with the interpretation of the corpse(s) in *NekRomantik 2* as signifiers of the concentration camps.[9] The corpse then is more than a reminder of fascism's atrocities, even though it is that too. It provided, as I argue in this essay, a critical commentary on the status quo of Germany's postwar media politics. Less researched than its striking scenes of necrophilia (and thus arguably eclipsed by them), we find intertextual moments that range from diegetic references—for example, a visit to an art-house cinema or the in-movie watching of a VHS tape that depicts the autopsy of an animal cadaver—to explicit displays of filmic techniques breaking the immersive flow. As Harzheim observes, Buttgereit plays "wiederholt mit dem Mittel des Films im Film, nicht zuletzt auch, um filmhistorische Seitenhiebe zu verteilen: […] bis hin zu dem von ihm gehassten *My Dinner with Andre* […], den er vor allem mit *NekRomantik 2* karikiert" ["repeatedly with the technique of film in film, in part to make snarky side comments: […] this includes *My Dinner with Andre*, which he loathes and ridicules in *NekRomantik 2*"] (312). The key to the text, then, can be found in the tensions between the neo-realist moments of violence and these cinematic gimmicks.

Buttgereit's film explicitly focuses its attention on the socio-cultural and political climate in West Germany with a particular focus on media production and consumption. In an interview with Stefan Höltgen and Julia Köhne about his early days as an artist, Buttgereit states his intention: "Das Verständnis von Gegenkultur, das ich damals hatte, habe ich versucht, in diesen Film zu stecken" ["I tried to inscribe the understanding of counter culture that I

had in those days into this film"] (207).[10] In *NekRomantik 2*, he crafts a text that could air as an avant-garde rom-com on national prime time television with only 5 total cuts made, an interpretation supported by the fact that the extended version of the movie—only screened twice in 1991 until its release in 2016 as a Blu Ray mediabook—was recut by Buttgereit in part to achieve the desired mix of a realist aesthetic booby-trapped with avant-garde stumbling blocks that frame clearly delineated moments of excessive gore. The film's subtexts result from the director's own experiences as an artist working in a genre that has repeatedly clashed with the (West) German censorship apparatus, reflecting Buttgereit's overall political approach to filmmaking. As he explains in an interview with Shade Rupe for *Screem* magazine: "I will not [make any cuts] because of the political message that my film is unrated" (Rupe 20). Buttgereit's film openly challenged the practices of the BPjM, accepting the legal risks this involved. Ironically, when *NekRomantik 2* was actually confiscated by the authorities after a screening in Munich, the director was shocked by the severity of the charges levelled against him.

Released as an unrated version in 1991, *NekRomantik 2* was intended from the get-go to raise a ruckus, but the intensity of the backlash arguably exceeded what the filmmakers had expected. After the movie had toured the festival circuit for almost a year, it screened in Munich at the *Werkstattkino*. The highly conservative Bavarian authorities had the screening stopped and confiscated the print in 1992. The projectionist of the *Werkstattkino*, Doris Kuhn, was fined, while Buttgereit and his producer Manfred Jelinski were charged in accordance with §131 of the penal code. As with part one, Buttgereit had never submitted his movie to the FSK[11] board—nor to the lawyer panel of the *Spitzenorganisation der Filmwirtschaft* (Umbrella Organization of the Film Industry; SPIO)—and thus risked not only financial disadvantages but also prosecution. In order to avoid the charge of "glorification of violence," Buttgereit somewhat reluctantly campaigned for *NekRomantik 2* to be considered art (including commissioning an academic evaluation of the work), an eventually successful maneuver that exploited the freedom of art "loophole" in the Basic Law. In the meantime, however, the movie had been banned in Germany and thus pulled from circulation. Jelinski's apartment was raided by the police searching for the negatives in 1992; had the negatives been found, they would have been destroyed. When the police couldn't find the negatives, the authorities in fact finally struck an unprecedented bargain. After approximately two years, they offered to drop the charges against Buttgereit and Jelinski. Today, *NekRomantik 2* occupies an interesting grey zone in the German media landscape: it has been redeemed from a legal standpoint—and could even be sold and screened publicly to an audience over the age of 18 (it was actually released in 2016 as a rated retro-VHS version) but remains controversial and usually 'out of sight' because retailers and theater owners are

hesitant to sell or screen the title due to its nefarious reputation and presumed unclear legal status.

At this point it is helpful to take a step back at this point and briefly familiarize ourselves with the story of *NekRomantik 2* in order to set up the structural analysis that propels my reading. In its opening scenes, the film replays the grotesque finale of part one in black-and-white. Rob, a necrophiliac, disembowels himself while masturbating, reaching a violent climax with his belly already sliced open. Using full-frontal (plastic) nudity and extreme gore, Rob's ejaculation—and at this point the sequel switches to color film—turns from milky white into a gushing fountain of red. Drawing a clear line between the two texts, Monika, also a necrophiliac, then learns about Rob's suicide from the newspapers. She digs him up and begins a sexual relationship with the corpse, an appalling withered thing, blackened and covered in decomposition fluids. Trying to lead a more normal life Monika later begins dating Mark. Both their sexual activities and their everyday life as a couple, however, leave Monika's desires unfulfilled. At the film's halfway mark—at minute 52 out of its total of 104—she attempts to literally sever her ties with Rob and dismembers his decomposed body in a very graphic scene. In the infamous climax—after more sequences focusing on Monika and Mark's attempt at a 'normal' life—Monika cuts off Mark's head during intercourse and replaces it with Rob's head before finishing the sexual act, creating a hybrid creature that resides at a liminal place between life and death. In a final scene, the audience also learns that Monika is pregnant, a twist ending that paves the way for a final installment of a trilogy that has yet to be realized, at least on film.[12] Thus, Buttgereit frames the love triangle between Monika, Rob, and Mark with three meticulously placed scenes of a very graphic nature.

The text's symmetrical organization strongly suggests that Buttgereit had foreseen potential interventions and repercussions and preemptively inserted them into the fabric of the text. The director compartmentalizes *NekRomantik 2* into two long stretches of non-horror narrative sandwiched between the three extreme scenes that give the movie its nefarious reputation.[13] The scenes between the film's bursts of violence are filled with moments such as Monika and Mark enjoying an East Berlin fairground on a sunny day. Buttgereit drags out these latter scenes with a devilish joy, adding to the monotony with—what he deems to be even more infuriating—instances of avant-garde playfulness and inter-textual references. While explicitly intended as an endurance test for hardcore splatter fans looking for violence as entertainment, the film is also a meditation on the effect of the cut—both in the form of editing and censorship—for genre and medium alike.[14] Buttgereit's structural choices imply that cutting the three concentrated scenes of violence results in a narrative that is still fully functional and theoretically suitable for public broadcasting yet painfully pretentious. Approximately 15 minutes shorter, *NekRomantik 2* would

still clock in at the 90-minute mark, being transformed from underground low-budget horror to art-film-slash-love story. These violent scenes are strangely at odds with the more overt 'disruptive' moments of avant-garde playfulness in the film. While the latter feel rather displaced with regard to the realism that dominates the rest of the text, it is clear that, for example, the long black-and-white segment that mocks *My Dinner with Andre* will make the cut in the true sense of the word while the more genre-typical set-pieces would have been ordered to be removed by the BPjM due to their problematic content.

Along these lines, I argue that Buttgereit's approach challenges the specific form of interference executed by the German state, which does not exercise any form of *Vorzensur* (censorship prior to the release) but rather makes it the responsibility of the filmmakers to ensure compliance with legal standards and only acts after the fact. When Buttgereit has Monika cut up and preserve parts of Rob's body he channels the best-of reels of *NekRomantik*'s juiciest parts that currently circulate on platforms such as YouTube, at least, as long as they don't get removed by the web sites' admins. By drawing attention to a mind-set in which horror films are perceived as moving from set-piece to set-piece while the act of watching them becomes highly fetishized, the director also gestures to the fact that these set-pieces have long been virtually invisible after the intervention of the BPjM.[15] Thus, *NekRomantik 2* establishes Rob's corpse as the aesthetic, cultural, and media-political afterlife of part one. In other words, his body reemerges as a metaphor for the fascination with the ostensibly "unrepresentable" in German culture—including but, importantly, not limited to the concentration camps—a decomposed and ugly thing that refuses to stay underground. Rob's remains symbolize the probable rejection of the film, the inability to find a place for a text that digs deep. In this regard, *NekRomantik 2* can be considered a comment on how the past influences the present. For Buttgereit, the interferences of semi-private and government institutions are more than attempts to protect minors from violent images. They in fact foster an impotent art aimed at the mainstream, tolerable only as long as it does not overstep boundaries. Buttgereit thus offers a scathing critique of the limits imposed on transgressive art, which hamper not only the traditional horror genre but innovative and critical filmmaking writ large, as certain topics—by default—are ordered to be better left alone.

Slashing up the Middle Class: *The Burning Moon* and its Narrative of Escalation

Even though underground filmmaker Olaf Ittenbach belongs to a small group of relatively well established German horror film directors, he has received little scholarly attention and even less critical acclaim. The neglect can in part be attributed to Ittenbach himself: in an interview conducted for the "making-of" of *The Burning Moon*—included on the North American InterVi-

sion DVD—he answers a question about what drives him as a film-maker with a single word: "Gaudi," 'fun.' This sets Ittenbach apart from the more artistic goals of Jörg Buttgereit, who—arguably somewhat tongue-in-cheek—likes to play with his image as an auteur and intellectual. In comparison, the Munich-based Ittenbach comes across as a provincial hack appealing exclusively to the low-brow tastes of the hardened horror audience. As Harzheim explains, "anders als deutsche Horrorfilmer wie […] Ittenbach […] galt Buttgereits Interesse stets dem Experiment, in formaler wie inhaltlicher Hinsicht" ["in contrast to German horror directors such as […] Ittenbach, Buttgereit has always had an interest in formal and narrative experiments"] (310). It is by no means my intention to reframe Ittenbach as an arbiter of high culture; yet, I suggest reading *The Burning Moon* too as a critical comment on German media culture, albeit one that goes in a somewhat different direction. The 1992 splatter anthology casts a piercing if naïve gaze into quaint middle-class life and the suppressed desires and double-standards that underwrite it, a deep-running fascination with the morbid that is not allowed to be openly expressed. Where Buttgereit plays with audience expectations by "cutting up" viewing experiences, Ittenbach announces his final verdict on the domestic horror genre in the face of a stifling media regulation apparatus, namely that it is marginalized to a point where it becomes problematic. In reaction to this, he employs a strategy of escalation to suggest that the moral rejection of mainstream horror runs counter to the nation's dark past and eventually leads to a generic development that can only function through empty excess.

Not all readers will be familiar with Ittenbach's horror anthology. *The Burning Moon* is the last German horror film—to this date—to get and remain banned in its country of origin; in contrast to *NekRomantik 2* it is, as of 2017, still illegal in Germany. In 1993, Ittenbach was fined DM 3000 and the court ordered his private home searched; during the raid, the authorities destroyed the master tapes of *The Burning Moon*. Yet, copies of the film have survived, as the aforementioned US release by InterVision, for example, proves. The film's legal situation in Germany—the potential and often unclear repercussions for selling or screening a copy—renders Ittenbach's work even less visible than *NekRomantik 2*. Shot on video primarily on weekends by Ittenbach and his friends over the span of several years, *The Burning Moon* establishes a frame narrative in which Peter, an unstable, drug-addicted juvenile, is grounded by his parents for his disrespectful behavior; they also task him with babysitting his little sister while they go out to dinner. Peter decides to tell his sister two gruesome bedtime stories—the two large segments that comprise the lion's share of the anthology's 98-minute running time—before he ends up stabbing her to death during the climax of the film. Drugged up and under the influence of the eponymous burning moon, Peter then takes his own life by slicing his wrists on the balcony of his parents' cozy *Einfamilienhaus*

(single-family house) located in a Munich suburb under constant construction.

The first bedtime story, "Julia's Love," revolves around the eponymous young woman, who, unaware of his true identity, goes on a date with the escaped serial killer Cliff Parker. After an awkward dinner at a restaurant, Cliff runs amok and murders Julia's family in order to have her for himself. Julia, however, survives the various attacks and Cliff is finally shot by the police. The second bedtime story, "The Purity," set in rural Lower Bavaria in 1957, focuses on Father Ralf, who is revealed to be a rapist, Satanist, and murderer. His transgressions result in the death of an innocent man, Justus, whom the villagers incorrectly assume to be the killer. When some of the men pay one of their own to kill the mentally slow Justus, the events spiral out of control. Justus indeed dies, but returns as a zombie who succeeds in sending his assassin to hell by marking his house with the number of the beast. The second bedtime story culminates in a scene—only loosely related to the rest of *The Burning Moon*—in which Ittenbach celebrates a cheaply executed yet nonetheless effective deconstruction of the human body as the killer descends into a hellish, other-worldly realm where he is slowly dismembered by monstrous creatures. It is the ensuing prolonged torture scene that has earned *The Burning Moon* its considerable reputation on the midnight circuit. This scene—of which Seim writes, "die Höllen-Szene des insbesondere beanstandeten Schlußes [geht] vorallem wegen der heftig realen Bohrmaschinen-gegen-Zahnreihen-Sequenz schon ziemlich an die Ekelgrenze" ["the hell-scene of the much-criticized ending goes beyond the limits of good taste, in particular with regard to the extremely real-looking power drill against teeth sequence"]—thus informs my reading (2012; 74).

To be sure, the movie makes some rather flatfooted claims about German socio-politics, but it is the narrative arc—culminating in the metaphysical torture scene described above—that underscores the subversive quality inscribed in the text. While all four segments include clashes with figures of authority, *The Burning Moon* is neither a reflection nor a serious analysis of the *Generationenkonflikt*, the struggle between the WWII-era generation and the grandchildren over who was responsible for the Third Reich. Rather, the overall tenor of childish rage triggered by quaint Bavarian life invites a somewhat ironic reading that positions the text as a deliberately immature attack—almost silly at first, but becoming increasingly sickening as the story progresses—on conservative media politics and normative culture. To this end, Ittenbach deploys what I would like to call a strategy of escalation over the course of the film's 96-minute running time. The violence in *The Burning Moon* quickly evolves through various stages, going from—as I show in greater detail below—unintentionally funny, if gory, to outright cynical and shocking, a fast-forward romp through the history of modern horror from the formulaic slasher tropes

of the late 70s to the sexually charged hellscapes of the late 80s.[16] Overall, *The Burning Moon* intimates that reunified Germany's tidy, bourgeois façade hides a double-standard that publicly denounces the horror genre while a very real aggression is cultivated behind closed doors. The gore on display not only intensifies as the movie progresses but also changes registers with regard to the visceral impact of the brutal scenes hurled at the audience.

The Germany we at first observe in *The Burning Moon* is a place devoid of excitement into which violence then suddenly erupts. Paired with a healthy dose of boredom, the film's social topography creates a specific representation of a garden-gnome-infested suburbia that both necessitates and suppresses, as far as Ittenbach is concerned, a transgressive life-style outside of the mainstream. The Bavaria depicted on screen, at least in the beginning, is one of conservatism permeated by rampant consumerism. Ittenbach's Munich suburbs are full of newly built houses; the life he conjures up is that of the middle-class that settles into its new abodes and remains rather uninterested in questioning the situation of the new German socio-political and geographical landscape after 1990. Peter, too, lives in such a nice house with his parents. When he disrespects his mother after he comes home from a botched job interview and a sluggishly filmed gang fight, his father immediately puts him in his place, using physical force. Until the end, Ittenbach stages Peter as an almost comic fair-weather rebel and middle-class wannabe thug whose unintentionally funny disregard of his own family then unexpectedly culminates in the unexpected killing of the younger sibling; a coda to the hell-scene mentioned above. The violence in the frame narrative is initially comical—in particular with regard to the gang brawl—up to the moment when the little sister ends up dead with a knife sticking out of her chest. Peter's suicide by cutting his wrist is equally disturbing, in particular because the scene's relative understatement starkly contrasts with the metaphysical torture sequence that immediately precedes it.

While the frame narrative is relatively low on gore, "Julia's Love" gradually increases the level of violence, clearly emulating the American slasher movies of the late 70s and early 80s, in particular John Carpenter's 1978 genre milestone *Halloween* but also its formulaic—and usually gorier—offspring along the lines of the *Friday the 13th* franchise. Yet Parker's killing spree is still framed in relatively restrained fashion for the first two acts before it resorts to a mode of amateurish exaggeration that is reminiscent of the contemporaneous Splatstick boom in genre cinema, best exemplified in comedy-horror films such as Sam Raimi's 1987 *Evil Dead 2 – Dead by Dawn* and Peter Jackson's 1992 *Braindead*. In other words, despite the graphic violence on display during the final scenes of the segment, "Julia's Love" clearly occupies a liminal position between the paradigms of splatter and comedy in which Julia becomes the final girl that Carol Clover discusses in her book *Men, Women, and Chain Saws*.

The second segment, "The Purity," is already much harder to digest. Reducing the fun splatter elements, the story—set in 1957 and thus regressing to an even more conservative time and place, a small rural town—adds a rape scene to the mix before it moves on to instances of ritualistic murder and vigilantism. The overall tone is much darker, referencing the more transgressive horror films that emerged after George A. Romero's controversial game-changer *The Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and Tobe Hooper's 1974 *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. More in line with Meir Zarchi's 1978 rape-and-revenge film *I Spit on Your Grave* or Charles Kaufman's notorious 1980 *Mother's Day*—both of which have been banned by the German authorities—than *Halloween* or Sean S. Cunningham's mainstream slasher *Friday the 13th* (1980), "The Purity" adopts an aesthetic of depravity. Still marred by the amateurish handiwork and lack of budget, it nonetheless exudes a very different, more cynical feel than "Julia's Love." "The Purity" is thus stage three in *The Burning Moon*'s evolution, establishing, as it were, a pattern of constant one-upping that reaches its apex shortly after.

The descent into hell that comprises the final 15 minutes of *The Burning Moon*—minus the short coda that reveals Peter's murder of his sister and his suicide—takes the strategy of escalation to its logical conclusion. With virtually no connection to the narrative—with the exception of the torture victim being the killer of Justus—Ittenbach strips the sequence bare of any narrative element. In other words, *The Burning Moon* becomes almost pure form, a display of special effect showmanship that distills the cynical essence of splatter cinema down to its core. Visually sutured to both "bedtime" stories through the insertion of bluish laser-line effects that signal an arrival in hell, the sequence is a spitfire barrage of post-slasher horror tropes. The representation of the Inferno that precedes the torture—with its shambling and mutilated bodies and scenes of eternal suffering—is powerful, especially when one takes into account the financial limitations of the production. Compared to the silliness of "Julia's Love" in particular, the torture sequence lacks any redeeming denouement or comic relief. While still vaguely informed by the seminal horror titles of the late 80s—Clive Barker's 1987 *Hellraiser* and its 1988 sequel *Hellbound* (directed by Tony Randel) are cited directly with Asian torture shockers such as T. F. Mou's 1988 *Men behind the Sun* lurking in the background—this is more than Ittenbach's German, no-budget reimagining. Rather, the over-the-top violence and crudeness of the material—reinforced through a weird sound design that takes recourse to the synthesizer bombast of 80s action cinema at odds with the sluggish pace of the film and its amateurish look—makes it impossible to take Ittenbach's critique at face value, yet the tongue-in-cheek attitude on display in *The Burning Moon* suddenly gives way to such bursts of unrestrained, nihilistic violence that it becomes difficult to overlook Ittenbach's strategy of speeding through the history of horror as

a critique of the constraints on German horror directors that have prevented them from honing their skills gradually.

The Present and Future of German Horror Film

The Burning Moon is arguably the last hurrah of German underground horror, or, depending on the perspective, its death knell. As some experts have pointed out, it implicitly acknowledges that it belongs to a dying breed and delivers the final punches while going down before the horror genre finally returns to the big screen.[17] In the years following *The Burning Moon*, German mainstream horror staged a comeback: Stefan Ruzowitzky's influential 2000 box-office hit *Anatomie* is usually seen as the key text of this paradigm shift. Since then, the German speaking countries have produced a wide variety of genre films, but hardly anything that comes close the shock value of *NekRomantik 2* and *The Burning Moon*. In 2002, shortly after the mass shooting in Erfurt executed at a local high school by a single shooter, the laws regulating the protection of minors were revised in an attempt to streamline and standardize the applicable laws and also to take into account the changed role of the Internet. Interestingly, the rulings of the FSK have since then become more lenient. Some older films have been taken off the *Index* and made available again to the general public, while others have been given a lower rating, usually allowing minors to watch these titles at the age of 16 and older whereas before one had to be at least 18. More and more new genre releases are available without cuts. While this can be attributed to a change in *zeitgeist* and the growing persistence of distributors, the development also signals a shift in the status of genre filmmaking. While *The Burning Moon* remains banned in Germany, *NekRomantik* 1 and 2 have re-entered the Region B market only recently via expensive collector's editions. The genre writ large has been put back on the cultural map. However, a vast majority of the output belongs to the moderate Hollywood-like spectrum, running counter to Buttgereit's philosophy that horror should make people feel uncomfortable while to a certain extent supporting Ittenbach's argument that the extreme representation of violence is the necessary result of the absence of a healthy middle ground. It will be interesting to see when and if Germany national cinema will produce a postmodern horror film or tackle current problems such as the 2016 immigration crisis in graphic genre fare, as the French New Terror Wave did from 2003 to approximately 2008.

Notes

1. Steffen Hantke, for example, writes that German film scholars often express "the prevailing critical opinion that there is no such thing as German horror cinema after 1945," an assumption that, according to Hantke, needs an immediate corrective (vii).

2. *Article 5* of the Basic Law postulates in *Paragraph 1*: "Every person shall have the right freely to express and disseminate his opinions in speech, writing and pictures, and to inform himself without hindrance from generally accessible sources. Freedom of the press and freedom of reporting by means of broadcasts and films shall be guaranteed. There shall be no censorship." *Paragraph 2* then adds: "These rights shall find their limits in the provisions of general laws, in provisions for the protection of young persons, and in the right to personal honour" (ibid). Finally, the Basic Law declares in *Absatz 3* "Arts and sciences, research and teaching shall be free. The freedom of teaching shall not release any person from allegiance to the constitution." (ibid). Several fundamental principles clash here; freedom of speech and the status of the artwork vs. the protection of minors and the individual's right to a dignified life as specified under the Basic Law. See: www.bundestag.de/blob/284870/ce0d03414872b427e57fccb703634dcd/basic_law-data.pdf

3. § 131 StGB states that distributing media "die Gewalttätigkeiten gegen Menschen in grausamer und unmenschlicher Weise schildern oder die zum Rassenhaß aufstacheln" ["which depict violence against human beings in gruesome and inhumane fashion or incite racial hatred"] are punishable by up to a year in prison or a fine. The ratified version changed the term "Menschen" ["human beings"] to "Menschenähnliche" ["human-like beings"] and in general rephrased the paragraph in stricter terms.

4. The public interest in the increased availability of graphic materials spiked in 1984 and eventually resulted in the aforementioned revision of the *Jugendschutz*; the so-called "lex video," which led to the fact that "Juristen […] sich […] erhebliche Gedanken um den schmalen Pfad zwischen Meinungs- bzw. Kunstfreiheit auf der einen und Strafgesetzen auf der anderen vorallem beim Film gemacht [haben]" ["lawyers thought a lot about the thin line between freedom of expression and art on the one hand and the criminal code on the other, in particular with regard to movies"] (Seim, 43).

5. For a detailed account see Riepe's essay "Maßnahmen gegen die Gewalt: Der Tanz der Teufel und die Würde des Menschen."

6. As Julia Knight writes with a particular focus on the history of New German Cinema, political interference into the filmmaking process "reached an unprecedented peak in the mid to late 1970s. As terrorist activity had escalated during the 1970s, it resulted in increasing intolerance of dissident viewpoints" (480). She continues to explain that "film funding agencies became even more conservative, avoiding any projects that could be construed as politically radical, controversial or socially critical" (480).

7. Sabine Hake, for example, describes Buttgereit as combining "horror, gore, perversion, and bad taste in low-budget horror films" through which he "acquired a small but international underground following mainly through video releases" (208).

8. Mikel J. Koven defines Buttgereit's cinema as "highly subjective" and links it to Pier Paolo Pasolini's theory of a Cinema of Poetry in which Pasolini claimed that "if the objective of Hollywood continuity filmmaking was never to let the camera's presence

be felt, then the cinema of poetry must demand the opposite" (188). Throughout his work, the director includes a variety of modernist techniques; as he often does, he uses "self-affirmative references to the medium" that demand our attention (Kerekes 69).

9. See, for example, the two-hour long discussion on censorship in West Germany with Christian Bartsch, Dr. Roland Seim, and Dr. Stefan Höltgen, which is part of the bonus material on Turbine's 2012 release of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Here Buttgereit states that he feels the urge to "face-palm himself" whenever *NekRomantik* gets reduced to the concentration camp trope.

10. This approach does not come as a surprise given the director's artistic and personal background. Born in 1963 in West Berlin, Buttgereit started experimenting with video and film at an early age. Making a name for himself in the West Berlin sub-culture scenes—from Punk to experimental Super-8 art—Buttgereit shot often funny yet non-normative short films while also directing music documentaries.

11. While the FSK is indeed a part of the film industry, the moniker *freiwillig* (voluntarily) is misleading. The actual submission of a title is a voluntary decision on the part of the artists and/or distributors, but in not submitting the movie to the FSK board, the director, producer, and/or distributor may become subject to charges if legal troubles were to arise after the release of an unrated version.

12. A graphic novel sequel to *NekRomantik 2* was released in 2016 to supplement the films.

13. On the English audio-commentary provided by the director and some of the actors for the US DVD release by Barrel Entertainment, Buttgereit confirms that he is deliberately playing with audience expectations.

14. In an interview with Shade Rupe, Buttgereit admits: "If you watch *NekRomantik 2*, you will see that it's again not giving the people what they want, right? (laughs) It's torturing them with a lot of arthouse fun" (22).

15. Koven writes that Buttgereit's films—like Pasolini's, objects of controversy—presuppose "a distanced engagement with the social act of watching a film and the questions such an act raises about our pleasure" (189).

16. As Claus Bienfait states in his entertaining if heavily biased 1984 documentary *Mama Papa Zombie* in regard to the alleged rise in media related violence: "Das Problem ist nicht auf die sozialen Brennpunkte der Ballunsgzentren beschränkt. Es ist nicht minder akut in der Provinz, auf dem flachen Land und hinter idyllischen Kleinstadtfassaden" ["The problem is not limited to the social hot spots in urban areas. It is no less pressing in the boondocks, the countryside, and the idyllic small towns"] (Min. 13:20-13:45). Bienfait insinuates that the cinematic violence is endemic to the living room of the seemingly well-adjusted nuclear family. Slicing open the quasi-mythical *Heile Welt* (idyllic world), Ittenbach, too, exposes a ubiquitous interest in the extreme and morbid that can neither be admitted nor expressed publicly.

17. As the filmmaker and journalist Markus Hagen writes, "Heute folgt der deutsche (Horror-) Amateurfilm nur noch bekannten Mustern. Er versucht das zu liefern, was andere echte Filme mit besseren Mitteln folgerichtig viel besser liefern können und

macht sich dadurch obsolet" ["Today, the German no-budget (horror-)film only follows established patterns. It attempts to do what other real films with higher production values can clearly do much better and thus renders itself obsolete"] (15).

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Abstract

This essay re-reads two German low-budget horror movies, Jörg Buttgereit's *NekRomantik 2* (1991) and Olaf Ittenbach's *The Burning Moon* (1992). I argue that both titles—amateurish and obscure as they may initially appear—explicitly comment on the difficult state of non-normative film-making (in particular with regard to horror cinema) in a country where, according to Germany's Basic Law, "there shall be no censorship." Largely overlooked in studies on German national cinema, Buttgereit and Ittenbach's films reflect Germany's complex relation to the practice of media control after 1945, including—but not limited to—the depiction of fictionalized violence. Not only have *NekRomantik 2* and *The Burning Moon* been banned in their native country, they already anticipate the state's intervention and inscribe the discourse into the texts themselves.

Urban Fantasy: A Literature of the Unseen

Stefan Ekman

What is urban fantasy? The genre is as popular among readers as it is unexplored by scholars. Yet, opinions about what urban fantasy is, or should be, are legion, offered by readers, writers, critics, and various professionals of the book market. This article is not intended to add another definition. Instead, it will examine the nature of urban fantasy by interrogating that wide range of opinions and construct a broader generic understanding from them.

First, I offer a brief overview of the historical roots that have been suggested for urban fantasy, followed by a discussion about how to circumvent some of the problems with genre definitions. I then aggregate the claims, suggestions, and observations from eleven different accounts of urban fantasy, analyzing their varied views on four main areas: worlds and settings, cities and urbanity, central characters, and the sources of fantastic elements. Finally, I discuss how three major threads in the accounts reveal the genre's central, thematic concern with what I call "the Unseen" (though that term is not generally used in the texts that I analyze), and I trace some major constituents of this theme and address a few of its expressions. Before turning to this analysis, however, I need to consider the status of urban fantasy as a genre.

As Brit Mandelo and others have suggested, it makes sense to refer to urban fantasy as a genre in its own right rather than see it as a subgenre to fantasy. That urban fantasy is at least a generic hybrid is often pointed out (for instance by McLennon, Holmes, and Mandelo); its root genres are not only fantasy but Gothic horror and romance, and it can also draw on mystery, science fiction, and crime fiction. How much, and what, each root contributes to the works of particular urban fantasists—indeed, to particular texts—varies greatly. It has been proposed that "'[u]rban fantasy' is almost as wide a term as 'fantasy' or 'science fiction' for how much space it can cover thematically" (Mandelo). In the face of such generic width and hybridity, two observations can be made: first, it is difficult to view urban fantasy in terms of a "fuzzy set"

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in the way that Brian Attebery fruitfully analyzes the fantasy genre (*Strategies* 12–17). There are no prototypal urban fantasy texts, as each combination of roots creates its own set of central works. Second, calling urban fantasy a "subgenre" would not only belittle it, it would raise the issue of to what the form would be subordinated: would it be to fantasy, to horror, to romance, to crime fiction, or to any other possible genre? For these reasons, I will refer to urban fantasy as a genre in my discussion. (I invite readers with strong views on the subject to read "subgenre" where it says "genre" below.)

Determining what specific date or writer marks the appearance of a particular type of literature is always fraught with difficulties and entails a certain amount of arbitrariness. The beginnings of urban fantasy have been assigned to various points in time and connected to different originators. In his entry in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997), John Clute traces the history of urban fantasy from the edifices of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) to contemporary urban fantasists. To him, the mid-19th century writers Charles Dickens and Eugène Sue are literary progenitors, but he refrains from giving a specific date for when the genre began. Alexander C. Irvine proposes an even longer heritage for the fantastic city, tracing its roots "in utopian and quest literature all the way back to the Ur of Gilgamesh" (202). Helen Young similarly acknowledges a long history for one sort of urban fantasy, back to Plato's *Republic* and Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) (141).

Young and many others also see another sort of urban fantasy as a more recent phenomenon. Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James claim that Edith Nesbit "created what we now think of as urban fantasy" in the early 20th century (25–26), clearly seeing the genre as firmly rooted in fantasy history. Writer Jeannie Holmes suggests that Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) indicated the beginning of the genre (and mentions Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* [1818], Bram Stoker's *Dracula* [1897], and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" [1842] among its possible precursors). It is more common to locate the origin of the form at some point in the 1980s, whether in the early (McLennon; Di Filippo), early to mid (Irvine 200), mid to late (Beagle 10), or late 1980s and early 1990s (Young 141; Donohue). These six texts are also in some agreement about the literary progenitors of urban fantasy, naming Charles de Lint, Emma Bull, and Terry Windling as well as Mercedes Lackey, Tim Powers, Will Shetterly, and Neil Gaiman. Already from the various choices of beginnings, the hybridity of the genre is clear: the Victorian tale of the magic city, the Gothic roots, and the meeting between folktales and modernity are all present.

Mendlesohn and James as well as Clute make it clear that they consider the form to predate the term *urban fantasy*. In a recent review, Paul Di Filippo claims the term to "receive wide usage […] around the start of the 1980s" (Di Filippo). Searching the large collection of texts that is Google Books (using the

Ngram Viewer), the earliest reference to "urban fantasy" as a particular type of literature that I could find comes from a 1978 issue of *The Magazine of Science Fiction and Fantasy*. In the Books section, Algis Budrys refers to Fritz Leiber: "when we speak so glibly now of 'urban fantasy', we pay passing homage to the man who practically invented it … in a 1941 story called 'Smoke Ghost'" (119). Leiber is certainly a perfectly valid candidate for a progenitor of urban fantasy, because of stories such as "Smoke Ghost" and also through his stories set in the city of Lankhmar, in Nehwon, the secondary world that is home to Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser. He is no more than yet another candidate, however, nor is the Google dataset evidence of *the* first use of *urban fantasy* as a label for a particular type of fiction. The *Ngram Viewer* also shows how the term "urban fantasy" is used with increasing frequency from the late 1970s to 2008, the final year for which data are offered. The genre may have appeared under that name at some point in the seventies, with roots that go much further back, but there is little doubt that its popularity has increased over the past three decades.[1]

This increased usage mirrors a growing popularity as well as a broader application of the term to different kinds of texts. This broader application is also observed by Leigh M. McLennon in her "Defining Urban Fantasy and Paranormal Romance: Crossing Boundaries of Genre, Media, Self and Other in New Supernatural Worlds." Di Filippo describes the wider application of the term *urban fantasy* as usurpation, but his point remains the same as McLennon's: the term can cover different kinds of works today than it once did. Assuming that the term was first applied only to a small number of writers and their very particular way of writing, this seems not only reasonable but indeed inevitable given the great number of new writers who are trying their hand at developing the genre (and publishers who develop the label for marketing reasons). Today, there are so many texts published as urban fantasy that critics have begun to subdivide them, for instance into two (Irvine 200; Donohue) or three (Beagle 10) subcategories. Alternatively, arguments have been made for urban fantasy being the same thing, or belonging to the same spectrum, as paranormal romance (e.g., McLennon). Clearly there is need to discuss how the urban fantasy genre can be defined.

Formulating a comprehensive definition of urban fantasy is far from easy, and it may not even be necessary. An analysis of how various people define a particular group of literary texts can in itself reveal something about those texts. My intention here is *not* to produce a new definition of urban fantasy, nor to select one and proclaim that it alone is correct or best suited to my purpose. I profess no comprehensive knowledge of the vast corpus of urban fantasy fiction: any discussion about the nature of the genre based only on my own reading would by necessity be idiosyncratic and limited. Moreover, Attebery points out how "genre criticism is rife with boundary disputes and

definition wars" (*Strategies* 11) and McLennon's article provides a good example of how this is very much the case also when it comes to the definitions of urban fantasy. At the end of the day, however, it makes little difference whether a particular text *belongs* to one genre or the other. To paraphrase Attebery, "[t]he interesting question about any given story is not whether or not it is [urban fantasy or paranormal romance], but rather what happens when we read it as one of those things" (*Stories* 38; Attebery made his point about fantasy, science fiction, and "realistic novels"). As I believe that there are valuable insights to be gleaned from all the many definitions, I will do my best not simply to dig another trench.

Many—and there really are a great number of them—different definitions are not as problematic as one may be led to believe. Instead, they call to mind Ursula K. Le Guin's words, from her introduction to the English edition of Jorge Luis Borges et al's *Antologia de la Literatura Fantástica* (1940):

> Because ghosts inhabit, or haunt, one part of the vast domain of fantastic literature, both oral and written, people familiar with that corner of it call the whole thing Ghost Stories, or Horror Tales; just as others call it Fairyland after the part of it they know or love best, and others call it Science Fiction, and others call it Stuff and Nonsense. (Le Guin 10–11)

Le Guin's point is not only well made but, I would argue, well worth making. Rather than entering the "boundary disputes and definition wars," I start from the assumption that people who define or describe urban fantasy know a great deal about the genre; they just approach it from different perspectives—describing different corners, in Le Guin's words. These perspectives take various bodies of texts as their respective points of departure, look at different selections of traits and features, and examine longer or shorter time periods. Much as the fractured view of a bug's compound eyes can be reconciled into one complex image, the many perspectives on urban fantasy can be aggregated to discover some of the genre's underlying characteristics.

Aggregating several definitions and descriptions—accounts—of urban fantasy provides a better opportunity to understand its nature and its concerns than does any single defining venture. The accounts vary in how wide or narrow their definitions of urban fantasy are, and in whether they approach urban fantasy within "a rigid pattern of setting, character and plot" (Attebery, *Strategies* 9), that is, as a literary formula; or see it as a genre, "a set of artistic limitations and potentials" (Cawelti 7). To bring the various perspectives together, I assume that each account contains a number of ideas relevant to the nature of urban fantasy and that, taken together, these ideas will provide a broader understanding of the genre than would examining only a single account—or indeed an arbitrary selection of fiction. I will then use the aggregate to explore typical characteristics of urban fantasy further.

I use eleven accounts—both definitions and descriptions of urban fantasy—to create my aggregate. Six are scholarly sources (Clute, Ringel, Mendlesohn and James, Irvine, McLennon, and Young; originally published between 1996 and 2015), selected by virtue of being written about the genre for a scholarly audience. Although other scholars have occasionally approached urban fantasy, these six texts consider the genre in some depth and in relation to other forms of speculative fiction. Four of the remaining five are accounts by people who, in one way or other, operate in the urban fantasy "market": producers and purveyors of urban fantasy (published 2008 to 2012). They have been selected partly because of the variety of intended readers: professional librarians (Donohue), potential writers of urban fantasy (Holmes), knowledgeable readers/fans (Mandelo), and curious members of the public (Waller and Ormes). Their views are not unique, but provide good examples of particular types of ubiquitous opinions.

To these ten textual sources, I have added a final "account" (from 2015), itself a compound of multiple expressions of the nature of urban fantasy, in the form of a large set of cover art. When searching for images with the search term *"urban fantasy" cover*, the Google search engine returns hundreds of book covers. To provide detailed analysis of each one of them is beyond the scope of this article, but I have allowed my impressions of the totality of cover art examples to provide one of the perspectives on the nature of urban fantasy. From the eleven accounts, I have aggregated their views on settings, including both what kind of world the story is set in and whether a metropolitan setting is required; on typical features of central characters; and on fantastic elements and where they come from.

Settings and Worlds

Both primary and secondary worlds can provide settings for urban fantasy. The earliest critical source I have been able to find on the nature of the genre is Clute's "urban fantasy" entry in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*. This entry, together with the entry for "city," was published in *Paradoxa* (2:1) in 1996, and in the encyclopedia the following year. To Clute, urban fantasies "are normally texts where fantasy and the mundane world intersect and interweave throughout a tale which is significantly *about* a real city" ("Urban Fantasy" *Encyclopedia* 975). He allows for the possibility of locating an urban-fantasy story in a city in a secondary world, but stresses that in such case, the city must be "an environment," not just a backdrop.

Other accounts take different positions on the primary/secondary world issue. In *A Short History of Fantasy* (2009), Mendlesohn and James equate urban fantasy with "low fantasy" (26), a term defined by Kenneth Zahorski and Robert Boyer as fantasy "set in the conventional here and now" (56), that is, in a primary world. Other accounts take a similar position: McLennon

includes a primary-world setting with fantastic elements on her list of seven prominent urban-fantasy elements. In a seminar on urban fantasy in 2012, Karin Waller and Nene Ormes (who work for Sweden's largest chain of SF book stores; Ormes is also a writer of urban fantasy) explicitly exclude stories that are not set in the "here and now" from the genre, but acknowledge that other definitions include such stories.

Other accounts take a more moderate position, proposing that the world is clearly recognizable as ours, although possibly in the near future (Mandelo; Holmes). Often, this could be read as an alternative present: according to writer and critic Brit Mandelo, there is a major subdivision in urban fantasy between stories set in a modern, recognizable world, and stories set in a world that has become aware of the supernatural. (I will address this point further below.)

Faye Ringel's contribution to *This Year's Work in Medievalism* for 1995 is one of the first scholarly texts to look more broadly at the form; she makes no explicit point about whether the urban-fantasy world is primary or secondary, and although the majority of her example texts are set in primary worlds, she also includes the secondary world of *The Iron Dragon's Daughter* (1994) by Michael Swanwick ("Bright" 180–81). To Irvine, urban fantasy can be set in either a primary or a secondary world. His chapter in the *Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* (2012) also offers a broad analysis of the form, and to him urban fantasy consists of two main strains, which he sees as opposite ends of a literary axis rather than as binary oppositions. One strain contains a more or less recognizable, contemporary city which is revealed to be in contact with Faerie; the other strain centers on a city which "creates its own rules, independent of existing canons of folklore" (200–201). The latter strain does not expressly have to be set in a secondary world, but Irvine's examples—such as New Crobuzon in *Perdido Street Station* and Ambergris in *Shriek*—all are. (Young agrees with Irvine on this point, but her interest lies with the former strain.)

City and Urbanity?

To what extent an urban-fantasy setting has to be urban is also an issue where views diverge. The opinions range from an emphasis on the urban (Clute; Ringel, "Bright"; Irvine) to any contemporary, primary-world location. To Waller and Ormes, urban fantasy does not have to be set in a metropolis but can be set in a town, in rural areas, or on a journey, as long as it is our contemporary world. Young similarly accepts urban fantasy without cities. In the chapter on urban fantasy in *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature: Habits of Whiteness* (2016), she argues that the kind of urban fantasy she discusses, which she refers to as Suburban Fantasy "to delineate it within the broader sub-genre" (141), does not need a metropolitan setting. *Suburban*, according to Young,

should be understood both as literally suburban, in that the setting can be on the fringes of a metropolis; and as *sub-urban*, with the fantastic intruding from beneath as well as from the past. In Suburban Fantasy, (urban) modernity is confronted by that which has been pushed out of sight or out of mind. To Young, the "urban" in urban fantasy is a cultural feature or mind-set rather than a place: the stories explore situations in which modernity's suppressed history re-surfaces (141–42). This broad approach to the urban-fantasy setting is reflected in the book covers that I explored. On those covers, the urban landscape does not come across as dominant: the scenes portrayed are just as often set in forest locations or undefined locales. The impression is not of a genre where the metropolitan environment is central; instead, other characteristics of the books are brought to the fore.

The metropolitan setting is largely assumed, however. The urban or city locations are mentioned but neither emphasized nor downplayed by Mendlesohn and James as well as by Mandelo. In a *Library Journal* piece from 2008, Nanette Wargo Donohue writes with the intention of aiding libraries in developing urban-fantasy collections. Although she distinguishes between *traditional* and *contemporary* urban fantasy, the difference in setting between them is slight. In traditional urban fantasy, "the locales are modern urban environments," whereas works of the contemporary type are set in "grittier urban landscapes"—a possible reference to the urban landscape developed in the modern urban-Gothic tradition. Holmes, in a 2010 blog post meant to detail the "Rules" of urban fantasy (if only to encourage writers to break them),[2] establishes that the "setting is a large city such as Los Angeles, New Orleans, or St. Louis." The "urban" in urban fantasy is largely left unquestioned or unaddressed by these writers, although Mandelo accepts that stories which largely follow Clute's definition—they are set in identifiable, primary-world cities and the urban landscape plays a central role—make up "one subset of urban fantasy, and one of the oldest parts of the genre" (Mandelo, comment 2).

Clute, Ringel, and Irvine all emphasize the role of the city setting in urban fantasy, but in different ways. Ringel's view is that urban fantasy "juxtaposes medieval tropes and characters with urban settings" ("Bright" 175). Although Irvine sees the form as a continuum between two strains, both strains are dependent on a city environment. In one strain, the narrative redeploys tropes and characters of older fairy tales and folklore, forcing them into collision with a contemporary urban milieu. In the second strain, the city is "a *genius loci*, animating the narrative and determining its fantastic nature" (201). At the extreme are "stories of the fantastic city," according to Irvine, "distinguishable from real or almost-real cities in which fantastic events occur" (201). Clute takes a different position. "A city is a *place*; urban fantasy is a *mode*," he declares ("Urban Fantasy" *Encyclopedia* 975), and in *The Greenwood Encyclo-*

pedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy (2005), he insists that "stories merely about irruptions of supernatural forces within a city […] do not qualify" as urban fantasy (852). There is a sense that not just any city will do, either: the density or intensity rather than size of the city is important. Clute argues that the form has its primary origin in the edifice, which is "more than a house and less than a city" ("Edifice" 309). And although neither says so explicitly, both Clute and Irvine give the impression (in the stories "of the fantastic city") that the city itself is one of the main characters in an urban fantasy.

Distinctive Characters

Regardless of whether the city is a central character or not, a wide variety of human and parahuman characters are suggested as distinctive for urban fantasy in the eleven accounts. This variety includes strong female protagonists, who are explicitly mentioned by five of the accounts. Judging from the book covers, the overwhelming majority of protagonists in urban fantasy today are women. (And a gender-based critique of these "cover-girls" with their bare midriffs, deep cleavages, and contorted poses would be interesting but is unfortunately beyond the scope of this article.) Most of them have long, dark or red hair, wield some sort of weapon, and their demeanor is largely one of confidence and boldness. The "tough female protagonists" (Donohue) of urban fantasy are pointed out as characteristic for the genre by Donahue, Holmes, and Mandelo. Ringel observes the presence of female questors but indicates that this has to do with feminist authors ("Bright" 177). McLennon describes how the female monster-hunter or investigator with supernatural abilities is among the prominent generic elements in the combined urban fantasy/paranormal romance genre.

The investigator, detective, monster-hunter or supernatural problem-solver is described as a typical character for the genre. Mandelo combines character types and plot structures when she suggests that "[s]ome of these books are about heroines running around with dashing vampires and broody werewolves stomping evil and having romances. Some of them are police procedurals, some of them are humorous detective stories, and some of them are dark twisty emotional dramas." While Mandelo only implies the presence of investigator characters by noting the crime-story plots, Young observes that the "detective" figure is common to urban fantasy. She adds it to Irvine's list of prominent character types—artists, musicians, and scholars (Irvine 200)—observing how they all "create meaning from chaos and disorder" and participate in making the unknown known (Young 142).

Mandelo's "dashing vampires and broody werewolves" raises another issue: the appearance of the non-human in urban fantasy. Particular types of non-human or parahuman beings populate the worlds of urban fantasy. They appear as protagonist and antagonist, as allies, threats, or general citizens.

Often, urban fantasy is subdivided by whether these fantastic characters have stepped out of (predominantly British) folktales or (Gothic) horror stories, and they are considered important in determining urban fantasy's lineage and generic nature.

Two particular kinds of parahuman characters have entered urban fantasy from dark fantasy and horror fiction. Mendlesohn and James parenthetically (and facetiously) remark that the constantly changing definition of urban fantasy "currently seems to require werewolves" (26). Holmes emphasizes dark fantasy and horror as literary precursors or early forms, mentioning not only works by Rice, Stoker, and Poe but also Laurell K. Hamilton's first Anita Blake book (*Guilty Pleasures* [1993]). Donohue's *contemporary urban fantasy* "plays on themes drawn from popular culture, including horror movies, TV shows like cult classic *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), and lore about such paranormal creatures as vampires and werewolves." Waller and Ormes similarly observe how common such beings are, and although monsters rarely appear on the book covers, those that do appear include a few wolves and werewolves (along with one or two scaly creatures and occasional winged characters). There is no denying that vampires and werewolves have taken up an important place among the urban-fantasy *dramatis personae*.

Other non-human characters are borrowed from more traditional fantasy matter with particular focus on European folklore. Donohue describes what she calls *traditional urban fantasy*, which she sees as influenced by folklore and fairy tales, as does Irvine in his discussion of the urban fantasy strain "in which *urban* is a descriptor applied to *fantasy*" (200–201). Windling's *Borderland* (1986), Bull's *War for the Oaks* (1987), and de Lint's Newford stories ("That Explains Poland" [1988] is among the first of these) are cited as early examples by both as well as by Waller and Ormes. Denizens of Faerie are apparently common in at least some areas of the genre.

Fantastic Elements

A final major area in the eleven accounts concerns how the fantastic elements are portrayed and from where they originate. In her "basic narrative paradigm" of urban fantasy, McLennon claims that the story "occurs in a world in which the boundaries between reality and the supernatural fantastic have been destabilized or re-ordered entirely." This combination of mundane and fantastic appears to be central to most if not all of the accounts I have examined, although most express it in more concrete terms.

To Clute, the relation between mundane and fantastic is a crucial factor in deciding whether a text is urban fantasy or not. He proposes that the "intersecting and interweaving" of the supernatural and the mundane is a hallmark of the form ("Urban Fantasy" *Encyclopedia* 975) and explicitly excludes "stories merely about irruptions of supernatural forces within a city" ("Urban Fantasy" *Greenwood* 852).

In this regard, Clute is at one extreme of a spectrum which has Mendlesohn and James representing the other. They suggest that the genre "can be understood as magic entering into and disrupting the urban environment" (26), a description that suggests that urban fantasy could best be understood as a metropolitan version of Mendlesohn's *intrusion fantasy* (Mendlesohn 115ff.). They share this "irruptive" position with many of the other accounts, although some, like Irvine and Young, acknowledge the entire spectrum. According to Irvine, one end of the urban-fantasy spectrum is more irruptive while the other features stories in which the fantastic elements "derive from the nature and history of the city" (201).

A more common concern than *how* the fantastic elements enter the environment is *where* these elements come from. Ringel considers the fantastic elements to be the "trappings of medievalism—magic, elves, swords, quests, folk ballads" ("Bright" 175). Irvine sets tropes taken from "older fairytales and folklore" against fantastic elements created in conjunction with "the nature and history of the city" (201). Donohue opposes urban fantasy that is "highly influenced by folklore and fairy tales" to urban fantasy "which plays on themes drawn from popular culture, including horror movies", including "such paranormal creatures as vampires and werewolves." Several accounts even exclude narratives where the fantastic elements derive from the city rather than from existing sources, particularly if the city is part of a secondary world (Waller and Ormes are quite explicit about this). The preponderance of vampires and werewolves in the accounts could be an indication that horror is currently the dominant source of fantastic elements, as suggested by Holmes's emphasis on dark-fantasy and horror precursors. The cover art points in the same direction: the overall atmosphere, in terms of color scheme, subject, and environment, is generally one of (Gothic) horror story rather than fairy tales; the women are ready to deal with whatever unseen threat there may be in the dark, shadowy, or moonlit environments, whose very vagueness is threatening—anything can lurk in the darkness.

Other possible sources of fantastic elements are also suggested or implied. Like McLennon and Mandelo, Holmes underscores the genre's hybridity, explaining how the urban-fantasy story "can have elements pulled from other genres such as science fiction, mystery, horror, and romance […] with varying degrees of emphasis placed on each of these genre elements." It is clearly possible to combine urban fantasy with fantastic elements from a great many genres, though fairy tales, horror, and the urban environment itself appear to offer the most prevalent sources.

The way the supernatural and mundane in urban fantasy relate to each other is addressed by two accounts in particular. Although these are similar in how they subdivide urban fantasy, they differ in that Mandelo bases her categories in the fictive worlds while Waller and Ormes mainly look at the

characters' relation to the supernatural. Mandelo subdivides the genre into stories set in a modern, recognizable world, and stories set in a world which is aware of the supernatural. Waller and Ormes are more nuanced in their categorizing. They address what they see as common ways protagonists relate to the supernatural: there are protagonists to whom the supernatural comes as a surprise; protagonists who are familiar with the supernatural from popular culture, even if they do not necessarily believe in it; and protagonists who know about the supernatural, either because they are part of a hidden supernatural domain or because the world as a whole is aware of the supernatural. A parallel to this last way is the magical secondary-world setting—Irvine includes China Miéville's New Crobuzon and Jeff VanderMeer's Ambergris as two of several examples—but such stories are not considered urban fantasy by Waller and Ormes and therefore not included their categories.

The world which has become aware of the supernatural calls into question the idea that urban fantasy should take place in our modern, identifiable world, although no account explores this. The urban-fantasy story could be set in an alternative history or in the near future; supernatural forces have always been around, or the world has gone through some form of revelation, awakening, or reintroduction of them. Examples include Charlaine Harris's Southern Vampire Mysteries (2001–13), in which vampires have gone public after the invention of artificial blood; Kim Harrison's Hollows series (2004–13), in which the near-extinction of humans in a pandemic prompts parahuman beings to step in and keep society running; and Liz Williams's Detective Inspector Chen series (2005–15), in which contact between Earth, Heaven, and Hell is possible for everyone and celestial and demonic interventions are everyday occurrences. The world aware of the supernatural, for all that it may resemble the actual world, is a different place—it is a world which, at its extreme, could be considered a secondary world. In this secondary world, the fantastic elements are not an irruption but a commonplace. Here, the mundane is not intersected by and interwoven with the supernatural but is supplanted by it.

Urban fantasy, in other words, can be a great many things. Aggregated, these eleven accounts offer a broad view of what urban fantasy is. It can be set in a secondary world metropolis which is itself a central feature of the story, a setting integral to the goings-on that can be considered a main character; or in a modern primary world which may or may not have become aware of the supernatural or mythological beings and events that dwell in it. This latter kind of setting is not necessarily urban, but it is modern and its environment is thus defined by the presence, somewhere, of cities.

The protagonist can be a social outsider; or can belong to a group that in some way creates order out of chaos or makes the unknown known (artists, musicians, scholars, investigators); or has the physical, mental, or magical

skills to take on supernatural threats (this describes most tough female protagonists). The protagonists and their allies can belong to the fantastic domain or not, be born into it or recently have discovered their powers.

The fantastic can derive from existing myths and folklore, as well as from beings well-established in Gothic horror stories, or it can arise from the urban environment itself. The existence of the fantastic can be known to the entire world or to the protagonist, or can be a shocking discovery that becomes familiar over the course of the story or series. It can combine elements from a wide range of literary genres, among which fantasy, horror, and romance are most frequently mentioned but other genres include science fiction, crime fiction, and adventure stories.

A Literature of the Unseen

Regardless of what urban-fantasy type or formula is described, however, a number of strands—tropes, character types, settings, and genre elements—interweave, indicating a thematic concern of the genre. Dark, labyrinthine, or subterranean settings that obscure our view; social outcasts we consciously look away from; and fantastical beings that hide out of sight combine to produce a strong focus on that which in some sense or other is not seen: the Unseen. The variation among the eleven accounts suggests that no strand is ubiquitous, but each attempt at pinning down urban fantasy includes at least a few examples of the Unseen, which interact with and amplify each other in the stories. My aggregation of the eleven accounts indicates three major threads, each consisting of some minor strands, that contribute to urban fantasy's concern with the Unseen. One thread involves the juxtaposition of the fantastic and urbanity or modernity in a primary-world setting or in a setting that emphasizes notions of the urban and modern in a secondary world. The use of generic elements from Gothic horror in combination with milieus that are hidden from mundane society constitutes a second thread. In a third are found protagonists who belong to or can move among marginalized social groups. These three threads will be analyzed further in the paragraphs below.

The thread in which modern urbanity is in some way confronted with the fantastic highlights the genre's most noticeable characteristics. A recurring assumption in the accounts is that urban fantasy should or can be set in the primary world, a literary approximation of our own contemporary, modern world. And although the fantastic elements may be familiar to the point-of-view characters, they are largely unfamiliar to society at large. By introducing the supernatural into accounts of modern settings, the text becomes suffused with ideas of keeping something hidden, out of sight, Unseen. Gutter wizards, urban vampires, subway cults, and city fairies keep out of sight of the general population. The protagonists who become aware of them perceive them as disruptive to their world view; or, if they are part of the magical reality, do

their best to keep hidden and secret. The combination of primary-world setting and intrusion fantasy structure requires a measure of secrecy and keeping out of sight unless the writer specifically wishes to deal with the disruptive effects of supernatural intrusion on a society at large. None of the accounts I have examined suggests that explorations of such supernatural intrusion on a social scale are particularly common to the genre, although settings in which this change has already taken place are mentioned by some. Explorations of what happens when modernity is confronted with magic are kept on a personal level, the Unseen revealed only to a few. To a large extent the accounts suggest that urban fantasy introduces the fantastic as part of a "secret history" (Ringel, "Secret"), an undertow of supernatural events unknown to society's mainstream. Keeping the Unseen in its various forms out of sight is a ubiquitous theme, partly because of the genre's juxtaposition of modernity and the fantastic.

The second thread stitches physical manifestations of the Unseen into urban fantasy settings, drawing on the Gothic tradition of darkness, winding corridors, and an architecture of concealment. In her description of "Suburban Fantasy," Young stresses the subterranean locales frequent in urban fantasy (142). The intrusion comes from underground, resides in the tunnels under a city, or hides in forgotten or abandoned places. Such settings, out of the public eye, are also part of the genre's Gothic heritage. The dark labyrinths of Gothic literature have been explored by numerous scholars and their transformation into urban environments has been described by Robert Mighall (ch. 2). These environments do not simply happen to be out of sight; they are *designed* to keep things out of view, to be places that hide rather than places to hide in. This Gothic obscurity can be found in many of the covers yielded by Google, where a distinct atmosphere is created by features such as decaying buildings, graveyards, gargoyles, and nighttime mists. The prominent Gothic component of urban fantasy thus emphasizes the thematic concern with the Unseen, by creating a milieu dominated by concealment, obscurity, and places where things can hide.

This thread has among its strands a number of creatures drawn from supernatural horror fiction, beings that have their roots in a literary tradition more closely related to Gothic fiction than fairy tales. A creature particularly mentioned in many accounts of the genre is the vampire—as protagonist, ally, or antagonist. A long literary tradition treats the vampire as outsider, hiding among humans but never fitting in, and in contemporary vampire fiction, this is one of the most important motifs (Höglund 75, 398). In her thorough exploration of the vampire's literary history, Anna Höglund pays considerable attention to this motif, in particular in relation to what she refers to as the "human vampire" (*humanvampyren*), as opposed to the "monstrous vampire" (*monstervampyren*). This kind of vampire, which began its development with

authors such as Fred Saberhagen and Rice in the 1970s, straddles the divide between the human world and the world of the vampire or monster, not fully belonging to either (337). Höglund describes how (male) human vampires create a haven not only for their own kind but for other social outsiders (397–98). Moreover, Martin Wood claims that the image of the vampire as part of a community rather than as a loner also began with Rice (60), and I would suggest that the idea of a hidden vampire "society" has become increasingly common since then. In the White Wolf role-playing game setting *The World of Darkness* (1991–2004), vampires are social creatures, but their societies are concealed within those of humanity, protected by a conspiracy that has provided this trope with a fitting name: the Masquerade. The notion that vampires would hide among their prey in plain sight is widespread in urban fantasy and reinforces the theme of something that walks Unseen in our midst. Nor are vampires the only fantastic beings that Masquerade as humans; shapeshifters and fairy creatures also move Unseen among the mundane citizens of urban-fantasy stories. In urban fantasy the Unseen is not just staying out of sight, it is hiding right in front of people's eyes.

The third thread involves that which is Unseen because it is ignored rather than concealed. Not only magical creatures are unseen by the general population—the truly marginalized members of society are also portrayed as unseeable, or even invisible. Unlike stories that focus on the Masquerade and thus show us something mainstream society is not *allowed* to see, these stories focus on the outcast and marginalized, showing us what we do not *want* to see. The cast, often including the protagonists, of urban fantasy can be drawn from people beyond or on the margins of society. Supernatural domains are constructed from social spaces with which the reader is unfamiliar: the metaphorical invisibility bestowed upon the homeless by ignoring them in the actual world is turned into magical invisibility in, for instance, Megan Lindholm's *Wizard of the Pigeons* (1986) and Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (1996) (Ekman, "Down, Out and Invisible"). De Lint terms this edited version of reality "consensus reality," including the way people refuse to see the incomprehensible (supernatural) as well as the socially undesirable.[3] Neither fantastical nor social marginalization belongs to consensual reality in de Lint's stories, but both are placed in a world out of both sight and mind (Ekman, *Here Be Dragons* 141–54). Ringel describes the homeless in particular as "the custodians of magic, saviors of the cities in which they dwell as outcasts" ("Bright" 178). Street people from society's margins and counter-cultures often populate urban fantasy, along with characters who have license to move between margin and center: liminal characters such as the artists, musicians, writers, and, above all, investigators mentioned by Irvine and Young.

The investigator character, along with a crime-fiction type plot and other elements from the crime genre, offers a way to show the Unseen. Whether pri-

vate eyes, police officers, or journalists, the investigators who are confronted with the intrusive fantastic have their reasons to move in the hidden environments, talk to unseeable social outsiders, and thus discover the Masquerading beings. Their search for the truth and a way to neutralize the intrusion becomes the driving force in the plot in the same way that the quest drives the quest narrative. In a modern landscape, the investigator provides an obvious eye through which the reader can see the Unseen.

These are not the only threads used to create a thematic concern with the Unseen in urban fantasy, but they are the most prominent ones in the accounts that I examined, and in my fractured compound-eye view of the genre they stand out clearly. Together, they reveal a genre concerned with displaying the Unseen in a way that epic fantasy, with its long journeys, majestic settings, and cast of heroes, wizards, and kings, is not. Regardless of what corner of the urban-fantasy genre is described, the Unseen is present—and presented—in some way, shape, or form; and this Unseen is largely related to a social Other, to the less savory aspects of modern/urban life: criminality, homelessness, addiction, prostitution, and physical and sexual abuse are rife in urban fantasy, either at the center of the story or as prominent parts of its milieu. Herein lies the soul of urban fantasy, whether the intrusion is dealt with by male scholars or tough females; whether the setting is London or New York, Ambergris or New Crobuzon; and whether urban vampires, modern fairies, or mysteries from the depth of history and topology arise to disrupt mundane normality. Urban fantasy is a genre of the Unseen, and it offers a way for us to discover—and discuss—it.

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Notes

1. N-gram results should always be taken with a grain of salt, but the steady increase in relative frequency over the past four decades is noticeably different from frequency changes for other similar genre designations: epic fantasy has two clear spikes around

1980 and 2005 with a deep trough in-between, and paranormal romance climbs dramatically from about 2000 (to give but two examples).

2. Holmes strongly encourages a departure from the formula that she outlines. Having listed "the Rules," she points out ways in which a selection of them can be, and have been, broken. To her, urban fantasy is only a publishing label, and her argument, although very concrete, fits well with the idea of a genre as a group of works held together by similarities to some prototypal work, as suggested by Attebery, or, in Gary K. Wolfe's words, to a "central ideological lynchpin" (Attebery *Strategies* 12–14; Wolfe 24–25). Her position raises the question at what point a work of fiction ceases to fall under the urban-fantasy label, however; can a text remain urban fantasy even if all rules are broken?

3. The term has been used by many before him, but not necessarily including the editing of reality in the concept. Perhaps most pertinent to fantasy scholarship is Kathryn Hume's definition of fantasy as "any departure from consensus reality" (21).

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Abstract

This article analyzes the nature of urban fantasy by aggregating the claims, suggestions, and observations made by several different accounts of what urban fantasy is. These accounts comprise six scholarly sources and four sources written by people who are producers and purveyors of urban fantasy. An eleventh "account" is made up of the impressions conveyed by a vast number of book covers identified through Google Image Search. These eleven accounts are analyzed with regard to their views on worlds and settings, cities and urbanity, central characters, and the sources of fantastic elements. Finally, the article presents how three major threads in the accounts reveal that urban fantasy has a central, thematic concern with the Unseen. This Unseen is largely related to a social Other that portrays unpleasant aspects of urban life, such as criminality, homelessness, addiction, prostitution, and physical and sexual abuse.

Within the Door: Portal-Quest Fantasy in Gaiman and Miéville

Daniel Baker

> [L]anguages do not *exclude* each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways…
>
> Mikhail Bakhtin

Fantasy fiction is an evolving literary mode. Indeed, as the world changes and new crises and traumas manifest, the methods for comprehending them follow suit. For China Miéville, the gestalt-shifting trauma that drives Weird Fiction (or Radical Fantasy), often the territory he is said to inhabit, is a response to "the First World War, where mass carnage perpetrated by the most modern states made claims of a 'rational' modern system a tasteless joke" ("Weird" 513). Similarly concerned with fantasy's historical associations, William Burling suggests that modernist and postmodernist fantasies contextualize a palpable "unease with the rapidly changing capitalist world order […]" (329), and "a world more or less acclimated to the omnipresence of technology and commodity exchange" (329) respectively. What both Burling and Miéville succinctly reiterate is the extent to which fantasy is a literature intrinsically situated at intersections: the intersection of history and culture; the intersection of ideas; the intersection of literary traditions; and the intersection between worlds.[1] And insofar as fantasy[2] generally juxtaposes the possible and impossible, this paper is concerned with interrogating and re-envisioning one of its most visited intersections: the portal.

From Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) to David Mitchell's *Slade House* (2015), portals, both literal and figurative, perforate the categorical membrane separating real from unreal, accommodating travel from the everyday into the variegated landscapes of so many wonderlands. That many of these wonderlands have led into an aesthetic cul-de-sac (in)famously attacked by Darko Suvin and Fredric Jameson is no fault of the underlying functions of the portal as a structural device. Consequently, it may be revivified, but only after stripping back some of its more problematic elements. Neil

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Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (1996) and *American Gods* (2001) and China Miéville's *The City and the City* (2009) and *King Rat* (1998) are potent examples of a subversive (or potentially progressive) model for fantasy. That is, they eschew its conventional tendency for conservatively monophonic, closed narrative loops, instead producing a subjectivity that offers a radical alterity counter to the status quo. These atypical, self-reflexive, satirical fantasies express how writers position readers (not unlike their protagonists) in alternative conceptual realms, disturbing the everyday realities often taken for granted. By producing a counternarrative to the traditional portal-quest structures, Gaiman and Miéville are two vital figures in a continuing push to reorient fantasy toward a radical reconceptualization of the portal and its uses via a self-aware methodology of iteration, satire, and suspicion.

Anywhere but Nowhere, Everywhere but Here

Farah Mendlesohn suggests that from "1977 onward, quest fantasies […] came to dominate the bookshelves of many bookstores, to the degree that in many minds, it was thought of as the default form of fantasy" (43). Arguably, this domination was in no small way a direct offshoot of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–55), discovered and popularized in late 1960s North America.[3] *LotR* appealed to an audience shocked and incensed by the increasingly violent horrors of modernity, and sympathetic to nostalgic golden-age pastoralism, heroic sacrifice, and a moral philosophy designed to "cleanse" our vision in order to intellectually "escape the evil ugliness and evil around us" (James, "Tolkien" 66). And while this sentiment and Edward James's summation are somewhat reductive, they are not without merit when considered against the effect that Tolkien's epic still has on fantasy—an effect amplified by formulaic reiteration.

Effectively, Tolkien's paradigmatic work was harvested, diluted, stripped down, and its basic seeds sown repeatedly into the multi-volume epics of the late 1970s through to the early 2000s.[4] Here one version of fantasy came to define the formula for many subsequent fantasies. The formula itself becomes a cultural artifact. Its transmission is embedded in a group of products that, as John Cawelti says of formulas in general, "successfully articulate a pattern of fantasy that is at least acceptable to if not preferred by the cultural groups who enjoy them" (34), and the desire to consume this "pattern" suggests a predisposition for a set of tropes that fulfill a set of desires. However, might a formula's repeated enunciation also shape the desires these fantasies address?

Writers like Miéville, Jameson, Moorcock, and Suvin have explored this question,[5] couching their individual interventions within a suspicion of the seemingly uncritical adoption of Tolkienesque aesthetics. In these texts, society labors under the yoke of a fallen world, gazing back to a utopian golden age, where the defeat of evil does not see a new system of good created. Here,

to speak of fantasy is not to speak of the battle between good and evil, to be governed by an ethical binary, to accompany a noble hero on his quest to return a world beset by darkness to the light—it is to speak of tales that encode the inconsistencies, contradictions, and failings of society in a closed narrative loop. Problematically, if the past is only encountered as a nostalgic dream, then the socio-political limits of success are already established. There is no future beyond the past. Singular and cyclical, the narrative terminates at the status quo.

That said, the portal itself may serve as an effective imaginative tool because, as Brian Attebery succinctly announced, the "impossible changes everything in the text that contains it" (20). By its very existence, then, a doorway to another world is an engaging perceptual device. The sudden imposition of a disturbing (maybe even distorting) peephole can offer fresh perspectives, taking the reader from a familiar setting to an unfamiliar terrain, separating two (or more) worlds while simultaneously bridging them. Thus, we arrive at and in and through Gaiman's *Neverwhere.*

At its core, the text is built around portal-quest structures: an ordinary man, Richard Mayhew, journeys into the magical land of London Below, navigates strange locales, meets its denizens, and becomes embroiled in a quest replete with clues, creatures, and the wondrous accoutrements synonymous with fantasy. *Neverwhere*, like many fantasies, proceeds along a path of increasing wonder and escalating tension. In the portal-quest fantasy, the "position of the reader […] is one of companion-audience, tied to the protagonist, and dependent upon the protagonist for explanation and decoding" (Mendlesohn 1). We see, hear, and know what they do, and they know nothing beyond what figures of narrative authority tell them.[6] On the surface, there may be little to distinguish Gaiman's portal-quest from other examples. Below the surface, however, in the slippery ideological space between signifier and signified, something is different. The focus is changed—it looks through and beyond the portal.

Richard is the epitome of normal—a young businessman with an apartment, fiancée, and potential—though something of an outsider.[7] Having moved from Scotland to England for work, Richard sinks into the routines of metropolitan life; his time spent between his work in securities trading and his time with his fiancée, Jessica, visiting museums and galleries. And while "three years in London had not changed Richard […] it had changed the way he perceived the city" (Gaiman, *Neverwhere* 9). In Richard's mind, London is London. For the reader, however, London is both London and the symbolic representation of an acclimated capitalist gestalt: a dense juxtaposition of archaic architecture, glassy modernity, and rough, red brick overlaid in schizophrenic swatches. Experienced from within, it is as contradictory and

incompressible as the complex constellation of relationships governing modern capitalism.

Door, the last scion of a magical family with the ability to open doors and locks, escapes the murderers of her parents, appearing before Richard and Jessica, injured and alone. While Jessica is peculiarly detached from the bleeding, delirious woman, Richard chooses to help. Where Jessica views this choice as evidence that "Richard had no priorities" (Gaiman, *Neverwhere* 25), the savvy reader understands that his priorities are simply not hers. To Jessica, helping a girl, becoming involved with the police, does not make sense when she is late for an important corporate dinner. Hence, Richard's choice exists in a world outside of her experience, a world she dismisses and ignores. Jessica's intensely individualistic perspective crystallizes as a caricature of the London norm, just as Richard's choice propels him toward a more formulaic transition into another world. Strikingly, the image of Richard carrying Door back to the relative safety of his apartment is the first concatenative step through a series of portals. Richard carries his portal with him.

Consequently, when Richard actually transitions into the text's fantastical world through a more utilitarian portal, the reader is primed for a slightly different take on the traditional portal crossing. Dropping into the sewers, Richard's initial journey is directed downwards. In "On the Nature of Portals in Fantasy Literature" (2014), Marius Conkan outlines the paradigmatic portal transition in Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* as a process of "wonder" "obtained through overlapping two distinct features of the wardrobe: the first nature is the rational one, characterizing an object of domestic utility, while the other attribute is magical and irrational" (107). Arguably, the wardrobe works linearly—the characters step through the portal into another world. The movement is inherently parallel, where the two realities of the narrative are analogically and/or allegorically linked. The distinction that Richard moves downwards rather than across is important as it captures *Neverwhere*'s interest in exploring and critiquing the structures holding up reality in general and fantasy specifically—it simultaneously burrows in and undercuts. Just as a sewer system, hidden underground, supports the city above, London Below supports London Above, and those who do not fit into its ideological boundaries—the waifs and beggars and homeless—are displaced, forgotten.[8]

Understandably, Richard's introduction to London Below is defined by bewilderment. Separated from Door, he does not know where he is or what he is doing, only that he is trying to find her, trying to make sense of his altered social and spatial circumstances. In this, the Floating Market—an interstitial nexus of cultures, trade, and information—serves as a condensed form of the traditional movement of the hero from a humble beginning into and through wider, stranger lands. Where he was initially submerged in difference, Richard

imbibes it now, "drinking it in" (Gaiman, *Neverwhere* 109)—the haggling, the music, the food, the people. Richard is not unlike a tourist, agog amidst stalls hawking myriad weapons, literal garbage, various foodstuffs, "Lovely fresh dreams," and "First-class nightmares" (110). Surrounded by singing, competing languages, people, and wares, Richard's kaleidoscopic experience of the market—"It was loud, and brash, and insane, and it was, in many ways, quite wonderful" (109)—is a short, sharp expression of what Mendlesohn describes as the "sequenced adventures [and] journeys of transition" of portal-quests (3). However, instead of an exotic, magical locale, the Floating Market is held in the most mundane of places, Harrods, a place with which Richard is familiar from his life in London Above. In essence, he is both an inhabitant immersed in a familiar world and a tourist overwhelmed by his experience in an exotic world. For the reader familiar with the typical settings of fantasy, the market is a familiar, expected part of the generic conventions. As Cawelti notes, "[s]tandard conventions establish a common ground between writers and audiences. Without at least some form of standardization, artistic communication would not be possible" (8–9). *Neverwhere* reproduces the basic structural elements of portal-quests almost like a checklist (a companion adventure, a quest with requisite McGuffin, strange characters, a looming dark presence, etc.), but does so alongside an immersive narrative where, for Door, nothing is strange or new in this world.

At the same time as Richard is coming to grips with a London he never imagined, Door is attempting to hire a mercenary to act as a bodyguard. Importantly, she is doing so in the same market. However, as the point of view shifts to Door, the native of London Below, from Richard, the text loses its air of bemused wonder and adopts a sense of business as usual. There is nothing odd about "The Fop With No Name [who looks] somewhat like an early eighteenth century rake" (Gaiman *Neverwhere* 115), nor about "Ruislip, the Fop's opponent, [who looks] like the kind of dream one might have if one fell asleep watching sumo wrestling [...] with a Bob Marley record playing in the background" (115). Door does not ask what is going on or whether she is dreaming; nor does she think that the subsequent duel is impossible—it just is what it is. Where Richard's narrative follows the basic pattern of the portal-quest, Door's tale is inherently immersive. In the same chapter, Richard wanders through a world he recognizes in form (Harrods), but not content (fantastical Floating Market), while Door considers the relative merits of several bodyguards. The reader must slip from the role of reader-protagonist (tourist) to reader-inhabitant, marveling at the fantasy while accepting its lived and lived-in reality. Aided by the extratextual intrusion of Gaiman's pop-cultural descriptors, the conjunction requires that the reader recognize not only that Harrods can be fantastical but that the most fantastical of events can

be equally commonplace. Indeed, it is not until the two characters are reunited that Door registers Richard's presence as an unbelievable event, something that breaks her immersion,[9] indelibly altering her own understanding of her reality. In other words, Richard's guideless encounter with alterity and Door's discrete, parallel narrative graft a new immersive glossary, so to speak, onto the expected rhetorical construction of the portal-quest fantasy, altering it from within. To an extent, therefore, the taxonomic borders that Mendlesohn surveys become inherently porous.

Fittingly, it is through the seemingly constrictive configuration of the generic portal that *Neverwhere* aims at such emancipation. Conkan suggests that "in the moment in which an ordinary object is turned […] into a portal, the internal laws of the fantasy world are put into action" (109). While it may be more accurate to argue that it is the laws of the portal-quest narrative that are activated and not those of the fantasy world, for *Neverwhere* these laws are designed not only to poke fun at the names, places, and conventions taken for granted, but also to question them. If London Below is "inhabited by the people that fell through the cracks" (Gaiman, *Neverwhere* 126), their subsequent invisibility in London Above allows Gaiman to hint at radical possibilities. "I swapped some stuff for it. That's how things work down here. We swap stuff" (99), explains a girl as she leads Richard to the market. It is a throwaway line, but one that offers an alternative constellation of economic conditions: waste is valued and reused; labor is negotiated between individuals; and a barter system replaces money. Even if such practices have been driven to the fringes or largely out of existence by late-stage capitalism, making them appear fantastical, the fact that the alternate worlds of fantasy allow their expression only illustrates its power to think and rethink why this is so and whether there may be alternatives. Thus, escapism is not fanciful or lazy; it is the artistic impetus to seriously (re)consider reality, and while Sandor Klapcsik might suggest that in the rhetorical strategy of liminal fantasy "reality and the fantastic world overlap in a playful or 'blasé' manner, indicating the run-of-the-mill, unremarkable nature of fantastic events" (195), it draws attention to how categories like "unremarkable," "fantastic," and "consensus reality" are fabricated. There is nothing blasé about this strategy; satire is a serious business. It is, as Bould argues, "the very *fantasy* of fantasy as a mode that, at least potentially, gives it space for a hard-headed critical consciousness of capitalist subjectivity" (83–84).

Gaiman's blend of portal-quest logic and liminal satire creates a fluid space between two worlds or, more aptly, a porosity in the perceptual partition breached by the portal. Hardcoded into Richard's adventure is the desire to return home. What he discovers, however, is that this option no longer exists. Earlier, Richard asks an inhabitant of London Below if she ever wished she

could return home. She replies, "You can't. It's one or the other. Nobody ever gets both" (88). The two worlds created by the portal remain separate. However, the contradiction of London is that it is all Londons and no Londons. In accepting London Below as just another facet of the urban, mundane tasks like hailing a taxi, using an ATM, and returning to work—the things denied to Richard—become amazing, near-miraculous actions. Richard's physical movement between two worlds thus underscores the dialogical movement implicit in the adventuring out and returning home that drives fantasy. Bakhtin writes:

> The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers […] (276)

That is, via the intersection of seemingly discrete realities, the interaction of supposedly contradictory or exclusive worldviews, the portal, now a swinging door, concretizes those "seemingly" and "supposedly" qualifications. Richard has been promoted while in London Below and given a bigger apartment. It is as if he has landed in a better life, which is as much of a fantasy as is a quest to save the world. Indeed, that better life seems less real to him than the London Below that he has seemingly been denied.

But Richard's existential perception has been indelibly tinted. There is London Above and there is London Below, but Gaiman continually steers the text toward eliding the difference. Possible/impossible, magical/mundane, real/unreal are binaries defined by context, and Gaiman's satirical liminality reveals the contextual parameters of their extratextual reality and homeostatic inclinations. Refusing to conform to the binary distinctions that govern everyday existence, Richard makes his own doorway with a will to do so and a piece of chalk (371).

Thus, Miéville's proposal that "changing the not-real allows one to think differently about the real" ("Editorial" 46) rings true insofar as the fantastic text jars its characters' perceptual apparatus to effect a reexamination of their and the reader's ideological preconceptions. In much the same way that Bakhtin suggests that "languages do not *exclude* each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways" (291), the portal fantasy merges two discrete, conceptual landscapes via the hero's quest. As such, fantasy is not "crucial because it dramatizes the difference between thought and reality" (Watson 223), but because it suggests there is no difference—one flows into the other and vice versa, "leaving nothing behind them; not even a doorway" (Gaiman, *Neverwhere* 372). When Richard first carried Door and found that she was "surprisingly light" (25), one possible implication is that doorways,

thresholds, and portals are always empty. If so, the choice to help her and cross that intangible line might represent a choice that every individual potentially carries. *Neverwhere,* then, simply becomes a euphemism for Always There.

Those Cities Unseen

If *Neverwhere* acts as new paradigm for self-reflexive portal-quest fantasy, *The City and the City* could be conceived as a cognitive map that makes explicit the implicit ideological action of the portal. That is, it seems to be a quasi-fantastic text about the functions of the fantastic, demonstrating a trend in Miéville's fiction, outlined by Burling, which "offers innovative formal devices for representing the collective social and political action currently lacking under contemporary hegemonic capitalism" (338). And while *The City and the City* is not, strictly speaking, a fantasy (let alone a portal-quest fantasy), its rhetorical strategies share many similarities with *Neverwhere*, Miéville's explicitly fantastical work, and the genre at large.

Picture a city like London: you see the skyscrapers, the marble façades; you hear the traffic. This is the everyday image of the city. However, it is only half the picture; it is only half the city. Invariably, there is another city, half-glimpsed, fleeting and spectral, populated by the ignored: overflowing garbage surreptitiously sidestepped, the smell of sewage, outstretched hands asking for a dollar. This is the cognitive space pried open in *The City and the City*:

> In Besźel the area was pretty unpeopled, but not elsewhere across the border, and I had to unseeing dodge many smart young businessmen and -women. Their voices were muted to me, random noise […] we stood together in a near-deserted part of Besźel city, surrounded by a busy, unheard throng. (54)

This passage highlights the text's discursive strategy and its fantastic element. Besźel is an Eastern European city-state languishing under the economic downturn of a post-Soviet vacuum. Its neighbor, Ul Qoma, benefiting from Western investment, is, by comparison, salubrious and modern. Their border is strictly regulated, and so far, the set-up is normal enough. However, both city-states occupy the same physical space: they are two cities in one. Overlapping and inseparable, the two cities are only divided by the practices of their respective citizens. Walking in Besźel necessitates the unseeing of Ul Qoma; you can be surrounded by people but, existing in the other city, they are "muted," "across the border," an "unheard throng." The fantasy of *The City and the City* is not that Miéville fabricates two cohabitating city-states; it is that their irrational, cognitive separation is the norm. That is, the habitual act is made consciously explicit, foregrounding and normalizing the cognitive dissonance that allows the simultaneous function of seeing/unseeing.

In a way, foregrounding this perceptual practice functions as the text's first portal for the reader, akin to the moment of stepping from the familiar into the unfamiliar. What is internally normal for the inhabitants of the text is jarringly abnormal for the reader. We infer that the text is interested in making us see what is usually ignored. The initial shock of unseeing, of crosshatched streets, forces the reader to buy into the text's world-building efforts: the whole system falls over without tacit acceptance.

Perhaps Linda Hutcheon's metafictional preoccupation helps sketch how this particular imposition might work. Like a suspension of disbelief, the acceptance of a given fantasy's unreality highlights that "the reader is made aware of the fact that he too, in reading, is actively creating a fictional universe" (Hutcheon 10). This is not to say that the reader is given free creative rein. Rather, the self-reflexive intensity in asking the reader to go along with a set of irrational rules acts as a conspiratorial wink. The paradox of accepting a fantasy draped over the conventional skeleton of a murder mystery while at the same time being made aware of its constitutive elements allows writer and reader to move through a story and that story's ideological discourse, and to do so without sacrificing one for the other.

In this case, the two cities, and how they are encountered, sketch possible adjustments to the reader's understanding of the construction of reality. The murder and its subsequent investigation become windows, transparent portals, through which the two cities are explored, opened up, and, in the end, judged. With Miéville's unsettling interrogation of capitalism's architectural space, *The City and the City* is an appealing vehicle to trace how people, "as material creatures existing, thinking and reflecting in space, think themselves through that space, and through what they do with it" (Miéville, "Conspiracy" 16). If we assume that an urban subjectivity contains some form of unseeing, the representation of Besźel and Ul Qoma is a snapshot of that perceptual process given life. There is nothing preventing someone in Besźel from seeing Ul Qoma other than the social taboo, the border law, the ingrained ideology as "a system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or social group" (Althusser, *Ideology* 33). Even Breach, a clandestine border force, for the most part functions more as a bogeyman than tangible presence.[10]

Borlú's investigation uncovers that Geary may have been killed in Ul Qoma and dumped in Besźel. In response to Besź-wide posters, Borlú is contacted by an informer. The problem: the caller is in Ul Qoma, responding to a poster that he should not have seen. Miéville's strategy is to equate this with violence: "The information was an allergen in Besźel—the mere fact of it in my head was a kind of trauma. I was complicit" (Miéville, *City* 45). The illegal crossing of a cognitive threshold crystallizes the rules for the reader as clearly (if not more so) as do the explanations imparted by the wizard analogs of fantasy. And yet this trauma is necessary to push the plot forward. It is the

moment that Borlú is given a choice: to cross or not to cross a legal threshold. While the reader has already passed through one portal, Borlú must choose to pass through his own—a choice with far-reaching consequences.

If we recall that "all words and forms are populated by intentions" (Bakhtin 293), Borlú's complicity, rather than subverting the narrative, directs it along lines the reader expects. After this transgression, Borlú stumbles into a shadowy conspiracy. Paranoid confessions relate the existence of Orciny, the third city, responsible for Geary's murder. Its description is pure thriller: "Orciny's the secret city. It runs things" (Miéville, *City* 61). Having accepted the mental conditions splitting two cities that share the same physical space, the fantastic insinuation of a clandestine city between them is a short stretch.[11]

Mendlesohn suggests that in most "portal fantasies, the process of the novel requires the protagonist to become ever more comfortable with the fantasyland that she has entered" (55). *The City and the City* suggests that this is inherently naïve, if not dangerous. The existence of Orciny seems increasingly plausible via the author's leveraging of this process, exercising the signifying practices of fantasy, while foregrounding the manipulation of such practices. "It was a fairy tale" (61), is Borlú's first response to hearing that Geary was involved with Orciny. It seems ridiculous and childish, a ghost story or conspiracy theory used to whitewash unexplained occurrences and imbalanced power relations. Miéville elaborates, providing an almost prologue-like account of the third city (redolent of Gandalf's fireside history lesson at the start of *The Fellowship of the Ring)*. Orciny's "beginning was a shadow in history, an unknown—records effaced and vanished for a century either side" (Miéville, *City* 61), the city itself "ensconced, secreted between the two brasher city-states," a "community of imaginary overlords, exiles perhaps, in most stories machinating and making things so, ruling with a subtle and absolute grip" (62). That history has become a "fairy tale," intangible like a "shadow," speaks to a simple yet potent idea: fairy tales do not appear out of a void; shadows must be cast by some object. As such, the existence of a "community of imaginary overlords" might sound ridiculous, but it cannot be discounted. And the very fact that the information is suspect only serves to make it more appealing, more plausible, doubly couched in the language of both the truth-fixated paranoia of the detective fiction and the portal-quest's recovery of the past. But Orciny is a lie.

The exacting fiction of Bowden, the disgruntled scholar, the third city is a fabrication used by an American multinational to exploit the archaeological resources of the precursor to the two cities. Like history, Orciny is constructed from fragments and misunderstood documents; it is a false image used to achieve particular ends. Borlú is led into believing a story—a way of perceiving the world—that doesn't exist, that is generated by greed and self-interest. Not unlike the authors of fantasy, Bowden "could construct the evidence"

and build a reality out of "planted sources," "partisan texts," and "messages" (Miéville, *City* 358), leading Borlú, Geary, and the two cities down a well-trodden path. And as Gaiman does with *Neverwhere*'s Tube map, Miéville sets up genre expectations via the sequential uncovering of clues[12] that lead into a dark, magical, increasingly dangerous reality, only to rip them away, exposing the exploitative forces of Western capitalism at the core of the text's violence. *The City and the City* serves as an example of the kind of fictional world that might satisfy Suvin's desire for a fantasy that acts "as a general epistemological subversion of encrusted habits of thinking and perceiving" (233). While characterizing the accretion of generic tropes (and their consumption) as "encrusted habits" may be extreme, Suvin's choice of words calls for a resuscitation of fantasy as a subversive, transgressive, even progressive literary mode. Miéville's examination of the cognitive process of seeing and unseeing is this desire's artistic corollary. However, the fantastic conceit (unseeing as social practice) in *The City and the City* and its subversion of reader expectations interrogate the ideological structures usually taken for granted—it makes these invisible things visible.[13] Tapping into the potential that all fantasy possesses, the text invites us to think about thinking—to consider how our thinking is governed, regulated, limited, and manipulated.

At the same time, we should be careful attributing to this visibility any revolutionary impact. The puppet may see the strings, but it doesn't follow that it can cut them. Those who move illegally between Ul Qoma and Besźel are in Breach—both a place and an agency policing the invisible border. Effectively, they exist in the interstice, which is to say, a place beyond and therefore outside the jurisdiction of either state. They are erased from both societies, never seen again, made non-existent—the system doesn't tolerate outsiders. In other words, Breach does not act like a regular police force but like an immune system. Those who transgress are removed in order to maintain the cities' perceptual hygiene.

Having seen the truth, Borlú isn't freed, but ensnared. Enlisted by Breach, he now polices and maintains the invisible border because there is no other role he can fulfill. Geary's murder sparks an investigation whose conclusion closes any prospective porosity in the cities' protective membrane, implying that "transgressions, presupposing the laws or norms or taboos against which they function, thereby end up precisely reconfirming such laws" (Jameson 68). This reinforces the Althusserian notion that ideology is lived, one is born into it, and it infuses every choice, every action. Unseeing functions because Breach is seldom needed. People police themselves because they believe in the separation of the cities, because they believe that it is necessary for their existence. Therefore, while Richard Mayhew might conclude that we are not in both (real and unreal) worlds, we are in neither, *The City and the City* suggests that "You're not in neither: you're in both" (Miéville, *City* 304).

Between Gods and Rats

This paper concludes with a comparative glimpse at Gaiman's *American Gods* and Miéville's *King Rat,* two important texts that mirror each other thematically, structurally, and in the composition of their mythopoeia.[14] Miéville and Gaiman are nothing if not concerned with how their worlds work. They build worlds, just as the world they inhabit is built, and their fictional realities are no less real or irrational than the one in which you or I observe that football is a religion and religion is a big business. Both writers revel in the irrational, interrogating the narrative strategies used to obfuscate, instrumentalize, and/or integrate the everyday.

Linda Hutcheon suggests that the function of metafictional activity is to make conscious the unconscious production and consumption of texts, where the writer becomes the self-aware creator of a "sign-system," while the "activity of the reader is […] one of learning and constructing a new sign-system, a new set of verbal relations" (14). Substantively, this repositioning of roles translates into "a new and strange kind of code written almost in hieroglyphs and analogous in process to primitive myth or fairy tales" (Hutcheon 14). This is important for fantasy because its narrative tropes have been encrypted with predetermined meaning: once the reader encounters a wizard, a knight protector, a blacksmith, a farm boy, or a magical land, then a specific set of images, associations, and functions manifest.

Ably traced by Mendlesohn and Moorcock, the specifics of this process—its history, its iterations, its discourse—need only be evoked here to better define Gaiman's and Miéville's metafictional content.[15] By explicitly drawing attention to the fictionality of his fantasy (a genre that usually subsists on a tacit writer/reader agreement stipulating that the fantasy be considered, to an extent, in the same manner as the real world), Gaiman draws attention to the genre's fictionality. In doing so he conjures up a learned set of codes and sign-systems. Similarly, Miéville's use of King Rat's first-person opening squeezes what the character represents onto every page, just as King Rat squeezes "between buildings through spaces you can't even see" (*King Rat* 3). While *King Rat* is Saul's story, it is, as the title suggests, all about King Rat—what he is, what he can do and what he cannot. Consequently, Wednesday and King Rat are able to superimpose their own fantasies over the reader's learned knowledge. In other words, where the reader familiar with the language of fantasy is familiar with a particular meaning for a particular hieroglyph, *American Gods* and *King Rat* may offer different translations.

In the former, granted an early release from prison upon the death of his wife, Shadow encounters Wednesday (the American persona of Odin) who enlists him in a war between old gods and new. Shadow is effectively uncoupled from his past and freed from the claustrophobic confines that define

his present. Ostensibly, for the reader, he is the portal-quest hero jettisoned from the terrestrial world into the cosmic world, and, for both Shadow and the reader, Wednesday is a ready guide, "the archetypal wise old man who has taken the confused protagonist under his wing" (Carroll 318). Extolling the virtues of the old gods, Wednesday divides the narrative with an ethical binary: the old gods are good, the new gods evil. He narrates his reality in the form of epic conflict, seamlessly taking the lead, expecting others to follow. A natural storyteller, Wednesday is not only Odin's avatar but also Gaiman's, and both weave a narrative that their listeners want to believe. The old gods are underdogs, they have dignity, they have deep roots in America's past. By contrast, the new gods (media, internet, railroads, etc.) are brash, invasive, and conceited. There is something performative at work here, a method of formulaic representation. The reader senses the quest developing, the proponents arranging themselves appropriately.

A similar performance takes place in *King Rat*. Saul is arrested for his father's murder and locked in a police cell, bereaved, alone, and frightened. The cell door opens and King Rat springs Saul from his predicament, enlisting him for an undisclosed task. Confused, often interrupted, Saul is more or less mute during their initial exchange, allowing King Rat to control the dialogue. There is a tangible patter to his speech, a frenetic haste that hints at the stage magician buried in every storyteller. Words are used to direct, misdirect, and beguile. Miéville, leveraging the authority entrenched in the formulaic language of the wise guide, is quick to center this authority on words, on the act of speaking as an act of violence. King Rat's words, Miéville writes, "impaled Saul with his grandiloquent and preposterous declamations, taking his breath away and rendering him dumb" (*King Rat* 36). The image is arresting—a lance of words though Saul's chest that renders him speechless (i.e., powerless or verbally inert), moving him in whatever direction King Rat chooses.

Bakhtin suggests that such a "performance" of wordplay is able to "infect with its own intention certain aspects of language […] imposing on them specific semantic nuances" (290). Arguably, many works of fantasy have historically acted as formulaic transmitters whose tropes infect both individual texts and wider uses of the fantastic. Wednesday is both an indicator of the "infection" and an exemplar of the logic of its transmission, and while derivative plots with hapless heroes, guided by wizards to cathartically conservative conclusions may be symptomatic of a literary language co-opted by a cynical idealism, vaccines are often engineered from the disease.[16]

Like Gandalf (or Belgarath, Kelsier, and Wolfstar, among other wise guides familiar to readers of fantasy), Wednesday and King Rat construct singular narratives to position their listeners toward willing acceptance and action. They define the brewing conflicts and how they will play out; they simplify such conflicts, and make their more destructive outcomes palatable if not

desirable.[17] Unlike the genre's paradigmatic wise guides, however, Wednesday is repeatedly said to be unworthy of trust, someone who should be questioned. That he is not, that he is able to manipulate the other characters, attests to both the seductive pull of singular narratives and their inherent danger. Siobhan Carroll suggests that *American Gods* leverages the "easy acquiescence to the premises of the fiction in which they wish to participate, whether the fiction in question is that of a novel or that of a nation" (318). By pairing genre strategy with nationalist rhetoric, Carroll neatly encapsulates what Gaiman achieves in Wednesday as a manipulator: the romantic image of the wise guide of fiction with the historical reality of a xenophobic demagogue. The righteous prompt toward glorious sacrifice in order to defeat all-conquering evil is gradually unmasked as the cold logic of manipulation. Wednesday's "con"—the fabrication of the central conflict to farm the power of prayer—clarifies the destructive potential of unblinking adherence to a single, limiting ideology.[18] In many ways, he is an effective representation of Bakhtin's claim that language is "populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others" (294). The majority of the narrative isn't Shadow's but Wednesday's; everything Shadow sees and knows is regulated by Wednesday.

In a similar fashion, Saul feels his life subordinated to the compelling reality that King Rat offers, as if "his life was in thrall to another hex, a power which had crept into his police cell and claimed him" (Miéville, *King Rat* 120). The suggestion that Saul is being possessed by King Rat hints at the baleful power of the wise guide, the seductive transmitter of an all-encompassing worldview. For Saul, this seduction is predicated along the same lines as most fantasies: power. Overweight, unambitious, drifting, Saul is offered the power to dramatically shape the narrative. He goes from being a nobody to being the somebody, opening him to suggestion.

Harry Potter is told he is a wizard, Neo is told he is the One, and Saul is told he is part rat. While Miéville draws water from the same formulaic well, he transmutes the functional content from the magical to the abject. Not long after King Rat impales Saul with declamations, he rustles up dinner from bin bags, pulling out "half a fruitcake, flattened and embedded with sawdust. Chicken bones and crushed chocolate, the remnants of sweetcorn and rice, fish-heads and stale chips" (Miéville, *King Rat* 56). To a human, this is garbage, abject and inedible; for Saul's burgeoning rathood, it is a mouth-watering feast. King Rat offers up this meal along with his impaling words, his worldview as food, as material that will sustain Saul and give him power. It is a canny metaphorical move, signaling Saul's willing acceptance of King Rat's perspective. After eating the garbage, Saul describes the feeling of "molecules scurrying out of his gut, carrying strange energy from the ruins of other people's suppers and breakfasts," and this refuse was "changing from the inside out" (60–61). The subtext is indicative of Miéville's linguistic control, the scurrying

molecules like microscopic rats infesting Saul's body, their discarded, wasted kilojoules burned for rat-like strength, speed, and contortion. Thus, Saul digests the garbage, just as he digests King Rat's story, becoming an accomplice in the scheme to destroy the Piper.

Recognizing King Rat as his rapist father, Saul understands that "means of communication are themselves means of production" (Williams 50), and that the narrowing strategy of a singular worldview promoting a return to regressive social relations produces a lack of agency in those who consume and, in consuming, follow its dictates. Effectively, Saul was spawned by King Rat's ideological system, a weapon forged for an abhorrent purpose: murdering an exterior threat. King Rat loses the alluring raiment worn by fantasy's many Gandalfs and is exposed as a "weird old fucked-up spiritual degenerate" (Miéville, *King Rat* 283). This specific ideological lens, however, is symptomatic of a much more pervasive concern. While King Rat is a dangerous, hateful character for Saul, his coercive techniques are eclipsed by the Piper's hypnagogic tactics. In the Piper, Miéville gathers capitalism's hollowing, homogenous, destructively entropic tendencies, which manifest in the character as a "guzzling of all and sundry," and an insatiable, "congealed hunger" (167–68) that extracts and consumes everything in his path, leaving nothing behind.

Pulled straight from legend, the Piper's flute controls the minds of his listeners, turning them into somnolent zombies, powerlessly obeying his wishes. Hearing the Piper's music is to hear the flute lilting "between drum and bass, now wailing like a siren, now stuttering like Morse code" (Miéville, *King Rat* 75). It is a music that cuts through the background noise, seductively, insistently, sending messages that the listener decodes as desire.[19] The image of countless rats moving as one is repeated near the narrative's conclusion, where nightclub dancers are seduced by the Piper's tune and used to wage war against Saul and the other avatars. Taking the disorder of individual dancers and replacing it with the order of a single, gigantic line dance addresses the Piper's goals with incisive clarity. This image of vacant-eyed Junglists, "drenched in blood, stamping on dying rats" (391) captures the destructive force of the Piper's desire to bend everything to his will—to take the separate, the disparate, the different, the alter, and make it inert. Subtler than the violence, though, is the vector through which the violence flows: Jungle music.[20] With capitalism, Raymond Williams believes, "[m]any new practices will be reached for, and if possible incorporated, or else extirpated with extraordinary vigour" (43). King Rat and his ilk stand to be extirpated because they constitute an anachronistic, mythical, feudal model of socio-economic thought that, while historically contiguous with emergent capitalism, has been superseded. However, just like fantasy fiction, what is popular is of commercial interest, and paradigmatic elements are siphoned off, repackaged, and repeated. Fittingly, the very music that brings disaffected, disenfranchised youth together

in a celebratory protest against the homogeneity of gentrified generic pop is absorbed by the avatar of these forces. There is no difference between the Piper's colonizing, paralyzing, illusory music and the Piper using his flute like a club to smash in the skulls of anybody unlucky enough to get in his way. Whether by word or music, both the Piper and King Rat tell stories of the world, attempting to silence difference and dissent with the overwhelming volume of their respective performances or enunciations. The danger posed by this practice and that of figures of narrative authority like them is one of narrowing discourse. King Rat wants to claim what is his; the Piper wants to dominate, control, and colonize what he is not.

Wednesday's control of Shadow's worldview and the destructive endgame of hegemonic control is only half of Gaiman's story (a very large, often tangential story in the case of *American Gods*), and both texts naturally accommodate more than one perspective. Every god encountered within *American Gods* is the manifestation of a different tribe's ritualized system of relating to the world. Each is and has its own story, its own viewpoint, and its own people. They are shaped by human purpose and experience, but they are also shapers. Each can be imagined as a discrete language (even though they may share common roots) that "may all be taken as particular points of view about the world" (Bakhtin 291–92). In this way, the various conflicts peppered through *American Gods* take on further significance. Words like reality, impossibility, god, good, evil, and death are both battlegrounds and their prizes. Gaiman uses traditional fantasy conventions as the provocation for an answering alternative. Thus, there is a real, more critical dialogue taking place between the possible and impossible, within the text and between author and reader, regarding the genre's function, if not its potential.

Shadow begins his story literally imprisoned. As he steps over the real/unreal threshold, however, these walls quickly become ideological. Identity, in the text, is defined in terms of adherence to appearance, to the constriction of image, to limitation. Loki claims, "It's about being you, but the you that people believe in. It's about being the concentrated, magnified, essence of you" (Gaiman, *American Gods* 479), that you "become bigger, cooler, than human. You crystallise" (479). But the crystallized identity, like the established genre, is stagnant. The crystallized worldview narrows and excludes; it shouts in one voice, drowning out the new, the dissenting, the alternative. Discovering Wednesday's machinations "frees him [Shadow] from following the predetermined actions of the quest plot, and grants him, at the end of the novel, a kind of radical freedom" (Carroll 324). This freedom manifests as the dialogue allowed by the portal as a discourse of both intersection and transition:

> Shadow could not decide whether he was looking at a moon the size of a dollar, a foot above his head; or whether he was looking at a moon the size of

> the Pacific Ocean, many thousands of miles away. Nor whether there was any difference between the two ideas. Perhaps it was all a matter of perspective. Perhaps it was all a matter of point of view. (Gaiman, *American Gods* 513)

Shadow learns that he stands between worlds. As Wednesday's son, he is part human, part god—he is either/and/or/neither. Just as the casting off of his previous mundane life allows Shadow the scope to perceive the moon as both tiny and colossal, the reader wrestles with the fact that there is something human in divinities and something divine in humanity. Burling detects something similar in Miéville who, he argues "[s]trongly advocates for an enlarged definition of what it means to be human: one freed from what can only be considered as the ideological assumptions congenial to and serving the interests of capitalism (340). "You're rat and human, more and less than each," (Miéville, *King Rat* 168), King Rat says to Saul. At first, this combination makes Saul believe he has irretrievably slipped into a different world, a magical world. However, his resistance to and eventual defeat of the Piper reconceptualizes the duality. It is not through the transition from human (possible) to rat (impossible) that Saul is equipped to succeed, but through the understanding that "he didn't live in a different world. He lived where he wanted" (289). Like Shadow, he is not one or the other; he is both at once because he chooses to be. His recognition of King Rat's impotency and the Piper's cultural deafness is the conceptual hinge upon which the narrative's ultimately progressive trajectory pivots. Given the opportunity to succeed his father, enthroning himself as the new rat king, Saul chooses to abdicate his responsibility onto all his would-be subjects. "You were led by a monarch for years, and he brought you to disaster. Then years of anarchy, fear, searching for a new ruler, the fear isolating you" (419–20), he says, potentially opening up the space for an empowering revolution: the revolution of "Citizen Rat" (420).

There, Here, and Back Again

By connecting two (or more) worlds, the portal acts as both reflection and alterity, a duality offering commentary on extratextual reality and its imagined alternatives, not divided but in conversation—a conversation transforming both categories. Perhaps this conversation has been largely hijacked by a single, loud, repetitive voice whose language of ring-bearers, wizard-guides, dark lords, and orc hordes has co-opted significant fantastical territory. The popularity of *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit*, and the Harry Potter series, not to mention their ever-expanding epic and young adult (re)iterations, speaks to the potency and appeal of the genre's trappings. That fantasy is so easily populated by conservative traces is not an indictment of the form, but an illustration of its dynamic applications.

Weaving possible into impossible, the portal can be used to uncritically escape reality as readily as interrogate it. By mapping confluences of mythological and mundane, seen and unseen, both Gaiman and Miéville examine the boundaries of the possible, revealing and estranging the ideological nature of perceived reality.[21]

Neverwhere takes the everyday Richard Mayhew and launches him into the wonder and magic of London Below. However, by removing the monolithic authority of the wise guide, creating a parallel liminality with Door, and dissolving the boundaries the portal presupposes, Gaiman adds his voice to an emergent aesthetic model for the genre to follow. *The City and the City*'s portal is itself. By foregrounding the act of unseeing, it focuses on how we perceive and ignore the world around us. In other words, it makes the act of experiencing reality a strange, fantastical process. Placing the reader within this process turns the portal into a peephole through which the structures that create and support ideology are made visible.

Shadow and Saul move from the real to the unreal, discovering that these words are just words. However, they are words that define worlds; categories dependent on and framing perspective, they impose boundaries. Wednesday is a god, but he is also a criminal. King Rat is the mercurial embodiment of all rats, but he is also a rapist. Shadow is a man, but he is also divine. Saul is weapon, but he is also a revolutionary. The portal embraces these contradictions, reconstituting their opposing values into a coherent whole. Allegorically, we might infer that gods are ideas and ideas are real. However, we can also suggest that everyday life—our lives, our histories, our potentialities—is truly impossible if not magical.

Using genre as a familiar language, these texts explore the seductive pull of well-worn narrative pathways. Convention becomes the crutch that Gaiman and Miéville kick out from under the reader. In the resulting shock, a space is opened to consider embedded reading habits, our desires and how they are met by certain structures of narrative, and the extent to which our subjective experience of reality is fundamentally a created phenomenon. This space is the potential power of the portal. By piercing the membrane, by opening the threshold, these fantasies navigate the paradox of dissolving everyday subjectivity while making concrete the structures that support it. Herein, the portal is both hole and frame, rejection and connection, chasm and bridge.

Notes

1. Here we might include, but not limit ourselves to, such work as Christine Brooke-Rose's *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic* (1981) and "Historical Genres/Theoretical Genres: A Discussion of Todorov

on the Fantastic" (1976); Lance Olsen's *Ellipse of Uncertainty: An Introduction to Postmodern Fantasy* (1987) and "Zombies and Academics: The Reader's Role in Fantasy" (1986); Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981); Brian Attebery's *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992) and "Fantasy and Narrative Transaction" (1991); and Kathryn Hume's *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (1984).

2. For the purposes of this argument, this oft-debated term signifies a popularly enshrined genre that combines the formulaic elements of what Farah Mendlesohn calls portal-quest fantasy with the Tolkienesque archetypes, creatures, landscapes, and moral metaphysics termed epic fantasy by Michael Moorcock. And while others have classified the texts that I discuss in this paper as urban fantasy or even not as fantasy at all, it is important to note that they do make use of the portal and other elements of the portal-quest.

3. Without diving into the ocean that is Tolkien scholarship, we might quickly suggest that the work of J. R. R. Tolkien has not only inspired millions of words across the genre, but also positive and negative reaction across academia. Indeed, whatever might be made of the conciliatory gaze of "On Fairy-stories" (1947), Tolkien's own theorizing speaks to an engagement with the idea that fantasy, rather than simply being a literature of vacuous escape, attaches itself to reality in very meaningful ways. And while Miéville may dream about an alternate history in which Mervyn Peake became the popularly enshrined writer of fantasy, the fact remains that for all his detractors, Tolkien's influence has brought fantasy front and center to a continuing debate around the uses, forms, merits, and problems, past and future, of contemporary fantasy.

4. The tip of this particular iceberg includes, but is not limited to, Stephen R. Donaldson's *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant* (1977–2013), David Eddings's *The Belgariad* (1982–1984) and *The Mallorean* (1987–1991), Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* (1990–2013), Sara Douglass's *The Axis Trilogy* (1995–1996) and *The Wayfarer Redemption* (1997–1999), and Raymond E. Feist's *The Riftwar Cycle* (1982–2013).

5. Colloquially, we might say that where there is smoke there is fire, and these writers are mentioned to hint at a certain theoretical climate concerning genre fantasy, epic fantasy, and fantasy fiction in general. For the purposes of this paper, the individual intricacies of their positions cannot be thoroughly represented. However, Michael Moorcock's *Wizardry and Wild Romance* (2004), Darko Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979), Fredric Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005), and China Miéville's "Editorial Introduction" to *Historical Materialism* 10.4 (2002) and "Afterword" for *Red Planets* (2009) best represent themselves.

6. This is why Bilbo has Gandalf, and Harry his McGonagalls, Dumbledores, Weasleys, Lupins, and Blacks. It is why the hero of the typical portal-quest fantasy is a relatively blank slate onto which vaunted powers and moral import can be inscribed, allowing the ubiquitous farmhand, the blacksmith's apprentice, bored petit bourgeois, under staircase exile, the normal a spurious import in his or her world's historical conflict.

The true fantasy in this fantasy is that such agents are given the means to profoundly change not only their circumstances, but their world's circumstances.

7. Arguably, portal-quest fantasy is permeated by a desire for the ordinary individual to take part in shaping his or her reality, and they can only do so through the discovery, embrace, and development of extraordinary powers via an acceptance of history as fact. This history, which is invariably their history, is recounted and recovered: a single, simplified narrative related and accepted in order for the "hero to maintain his own position-as-reader" (Mendlesohn 15).

8. It is at this moment within the text, when Richard (and the reader) has been displaced into a world he doesn't understand, that the figure of a guide might appear to codify the unfolding landscape. And while literal guides do appear (a waif, a vampiric seductress), their role is not to explain or to clarify, but to further confuse. Pulled deeper into London Below, Richard, bereft of the generic language of authoritative exposition, cannot grasp the import of what is occurring around him.

9. An argument could be mounted to suggest that every portal-quest fantasy is simultaneously an intrusion fantasy for the inhabitants of the world visited by the protagonist. What is the adherence to prophecy and antediluvian preoccupation for one is the most extreme perturbation (social rupture, war, etc.) for the other.

10. Evoking the elements of a detective fiction, Miéville accomplishes world-building akin to that of the portal fantasy. Investigating the death of Mahalia Geary, Inspector Borlú acts as both the protagonist and guide into the cities. Through him—meeting informants, scouring the streets, dealing with superiors—the text is gradually decoded, following Mendlesohn's assertion that "quest fantasy works by familiarisation, creating a world through the layering of detail, and making that detail comprehensible" (9). However, Miéville goes beyond simple world-building and the familiarity that the text requires is how to *think* the cities.

11. Geary was an archaeology student studying at a dig site dated to before the two cities split. Artifacts discovered there possess strange powers, and the history of the cities is discussed as rumor and legend. The reader assumes that Orciny is real, and that it is tied to a powerful precursor civilisation of the past, a civilisation powered with potentially eldritch technologies.

12. The case (his quest) forces Borlú across a legal/social threshold into a world of intrigue, politics, murder, history, and magical forces. Out of his depth, he is guided by those with knowledge—academics, historians, informants, etc.—learning on the run, chasing information to make sense of what confronts him, until he begins to accept Orciny because its story seemingly fits the evidence. At this point, Borlú is like genre fantasy's protagonist/reader, receiving and acting upon information gathered from various sources that are treated, to an extent, as figures that guide his quest. Borlú straddles police procedural and portal-quest fantasy. For more on the figure of the detective in the fantasies of Gaiman and Miéville, see Stefan Ekman's article on urban fantasy (in this issue) and Helen Young's chapter in *Race and Popular Culture*.

13. Like the Suvinian novum that permeates the critical sf text, Miéville's unseeing is "a trickery effected by the author […] through the text" (Miéville, "Afterword" 238). Indeed, in his afterword for *Red Planets* (2009), Miéville cuts across Suvin's more exclusionary predisposition with the suggestion that the very nature of genre fantasy (and genre sf for that matter) must necessarily push its frontiers toward crystallization so that "both the boundaries and their breaching might continue both to enable and constrain creativity and innovation in fantastic fiction" (Miéville "Afterword" 244). It remains to be seen, however, whether the very narrative structures that "domesticate" portal fantasy, as Miéville puts it, possess an ideological plasticity or must be fractured if not shattered to achieve a rapprochement with critical theory. For an excellent summation of this specific debate see Rhys Willams's "Recognizing Cognition: On Suvin, Miéville, and the Utopian Impulse in the Contemporary Fantastic" in *Science Fiction Studies* 41 (2014).

14. Returning momentarily to Burling's definitional efforts, these texts confirm the suggestion that "[r]adical fantasy via its historical integrity, however, counters the epistemological pathology of our era by offering a functional, imaginative "other world" model, a cognitive map, for grasping the irrational totality of life under capital (336).

15. The metafictional play at work within the dialogical action of the portal. As the portal becomes a means through which the perceptual apparatus of the protagonist (and reader) are tested and transformed, it necessarily draws attention to itself as a perceptual device. Alice went through the looking-glass, the Pevensies went through the wardrobe, Harry Potter went through a wall to Platform 9 ¾—the portal is made a visible, tangible threshold whose crossing is a moment of remark, consequence, and recognition.

16. Shadow claims that "I feel […] like I'm in a world with its own sense of logic. Its own rules. Like when you're in a dream and you know there are rules you mustn't break, but you don't know what they are or what they mean" (Gaiman, *American Gods* 100). His confusion is understandable. Shadow is suddenly in contact with ancient divinities warring with capitalist godheads, and Wednesday is a liar, a self-confessed "two-bit con artist" (51).

17. King Rat is not simply *a* rat, but *the* rat. King Rat's battle also mirrors Wednesday's in that he and his atavistic friends, Anansi (spider deity) and Loplop (bird deity), are embroiled in a fight against the all-evil Piper, the legendary figure whose tortuous exploits in Hamelin saw an army of rats drowned. Importantly, this tormentor/tormented binary is delivered by King Rat as history, a history that the reader knows as legend. Miéville's project critically engages with the idea that history or, more accurately, the shaping of history is a dangerous enterprise.

18. In no place is this clearer than in the town of Lakeside. Apparently unaffected by economic downturn, Lakeside is the epitome of wholesome, small-town America. However, we learn that this is only made possible because Hinzelmann (a kobold)

has been ritually "sacrificing" young girls (virgins) each winter to maintain the town. Reaping the benefits from this protection, Lakeside turns a blind-eye to the disappearances. Thus, we see the terrible price of unquestioning acceptance—ignoring murder for self-interested prosperity.

19. Recalling his experience of this music, King Rat says, "My pegs are dancing, they want the music, that food […] I feel my mind go slack" (160), suggesting that the Piper encodes his listeners with gratification kept just out of reach. Left wanting, grasping for food, for sexual release, for the satiation of primal pleasure, they lose themselves to his spell, a spell able to grip an entire species. When the Piper plays for King Rat, he plays for all the rats, and they dance to his tune as one, their "[t]ails swaying like metronomes" 160)—robotic, synchronized, and ordered.

20. To defeat the rats, spiders, birds, humanity, and Saul, the Piper needs to play for more than one listener at a time. Jungle, a multi-racial, Post-Thatcher intersection of underground rave, reggae bass, electronic samplers, and breakbeat rhythms, offers the Piper the means to play his tune to one, and another, and all at once, overlaying his monosemic cypher onto the counter-cultural discordance of synthetized drum and bass. Co-opting Natasha, a Junglist DJ, the Piper gains access to a cultural product outside of his hegemonic influence and begins incorporating it into his own music. At first the mingling of Natasha's Jungle and the Piper's flute seem incongruous. The auditory arm of mass-cultural transmission never breaks through, remaining unintelligible, unconnected, on the cusp of recognition but kept in a state of flux. It is the epitome of fragmentation, speaking to the revolutionary vitality of sampling this, chopping that, using the regular and transforming it, before sending it underground into the shifting waters of cool.

21. Here we encounter the tension between Tolkien's conciliarity use of this term and Rosemary Jackson's frustration with what she deems the frivolous trappings of the marvelous tale. Tolkien's desire to recover a "clear view" in "On Fairy-stories" is, for him, focus on the elision of a "drab blur of triteness or familiarity" (52). It is a means not to engage with reality to effect any change, but, like his analogous prisoner, talk about something else. And while the blanket attack on escapism might have missed some it its critical importance, Tolkien's stance, no doubt, is inimical to Jackson's ultimately and aggressively deconstructive project.

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Abstract

This paper argues that the portal-quest fantasies written by Neil Gaiman and China Miéville — contemporary figures in the field interested in navigating its creative scope and established tropes — reorient this sub-genre towards a radical reconceptualization of the portal and its uses via a self-aware methodology of iteration, satire, and suspicion. Taking up Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (1996) and *American Gods* (2001) and Miéville's *The City and the City* (2009) and *King Rat* (1998), it explores the form's predilection for closed narrative loops, while offering a counter narrative that interrogates the status quo via critical figures like Farah Mendlesohn, China Miéville, Mikhail Bakhtin, Raymond Williams, and John Cawelti. Significantly, this paper suggests that, via self-conscious world-building, portal fantasies allow reader and writer the opportunity to inhabit those spaces *between* textual, ideological, generic, metaphorical, irrational, fantastic worlds.

From the Marketplace to the Classroom: A Teratological Trio

Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock

McNally, David. *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires and Global Capitalism*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012. 296 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9781608462339. $28.00.

Levina, Marina, and Diem-My T. Bui, eds. *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. 323 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9781441178398. $39.95.

Blake, Brandy Ball, and L. Andrew Cooper, eds. *Monsters.* Southlake, TX: Fountainhead Press, 2012. 250 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9781598714838. $47.00.

Bugs Bunny perhaps puts it best in the 1952 Loony Tunes classic "Water, Water Every Hare" while dressing the hair of Gossamer, the large, red, tennis-shoed monstrosity after his brain at the behest of a mad scientist, with dynamite: "In my business you meet so many *interesting* people … but the most *interesting* ones are the monsters." Although the sweet talk is a ruse designed to distract his confused client, the generalization nevertheless holds true: monsters are always interesting, if not usually people. Monsters indeed are inevitably the most interesting—and, one should add, threatening—of "people" because they are types of puzzles that demand solutions. They are things that should not be, but nevertheless are, and their existence therefore raises vexing questions about humanity's understanding of and place in the universe. In this way, they are symptoms of deeper, more profound distress.

Three recent publications take up the puzzle that monsters present and explore the ways in which they offer culturally specific embodiments of human anxieties and desires. While David McNally offers a Marxist analysis of monsters as reflections of human anxieties over capitalist alienation and exploitation, Marina Levina and Diem-My T. Bui introduce a range of different

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interpretations and approaches in their edited volume. And Brandy Blake Ball and L. Andrew Cooper package monsters for consumption by undergraduate composition students in a reader that I tested in my own classes.

David McNally's thesis and approach in *Monsters of the Market* are straight-forward: the monstrosity of capitalist commodification finds expression in horror stories, and he turns to tales of "body-snatching, vampirism, organ-theft, and zombie economics" to demonstrate how they "comprise multiple imaginings of the risks to bodily integrity that inhere in a society in which individual survival requires selling our life-energies to people on the market" (3). In order to develop this thesis, McNally ranges widely both in time and space, moving from popular opposition to anatomists in early-modern England to contemporary zombie and vampire tales of Sub-Saharan Africa, all by way of Marx whose *Capital* he reads as, "a mystery-narrative that seeks out the hidden spaces in which bodies are injured and maimed by capital" (4). In addition to close readings of authors including Mary Shelley, Charles Dickens, Shakespeare, and Ben Okri, this at-times unwieldy study includes detailed historical context and explication of Marxist economic theory.

Monsters of the Market consists of an introduction, three chapters, and a brief conclusion, followed by an extensive twenty-page list of references. The introduction both frames the study and suggests its importance: market forces, both invisible and "fantastically real," intensify anxieties about the integrity of the body and generate horrifying images of accumulation and exploitation. The literature of the fantastic then presents the potential for what McNally refers to as "dialectical optics," a method of seeing the unseen, as it offers a kind of "grotesque realism" that denaturalizes the strange and bewildering world of market forces (7). There is thus an ethical impulse at work in attending to these stories that demonstrate the ways in which "human bodies are systematically ground up by the gears of global capitalism" (172). Critical theory, in "alliance" with the fantastic, can help develop ways of seeing the unseen "monstrous dislocations at the heart of commodified existence" (7-8).

Chapter one, "Dissecting the Labouring Body: *Frankenstein*, Political Anatomy and the Rise of Capitalism," is itself a 94-page monster of a chapter (complete with 284 footnotes!) that addresses, among other things, early-modern public dissections of the commodified bodies of criminals and paupers, popular resistance to the practice, social tensions related to the enclosure movement and the rise of agrarian capitalism, and corresponding "new idioms of monstrosity" (46) that developed in response to fractures in social relations (62). Along the way, McNally considers paintings of dissections by Rembrandt and William Hogarth, representations of mobs by Shakespeare and Dickens, and, centrally, Mary Shelley's famous novel in which she maps "macro-relations onto the micro-dynamics among individuals" (89). In McNally's estimation, *Frankenstein* is at heart a story of class relations and of the "*terror*

of a split society" (88): "What the book criticises is not so much the pursuit of science as the dangers of intellectual, artistic and scientific production in a society fraught with possessive individualism" (91). Connected to this is hostility of the poor toward anatomy—the dissection of the bodies of the poor and criminal. "*Frankenstein*," asserts McNally, grasps and enacts the "horrors of corporeal commodification that daily haunted working-class people" (97) and its lesson is that the ruling class will reap what it sows: "The rage of the proletariat will ultimately consume everything" (105).

Following this broad and lengthy first chapter, McNally focuses intently on Marx's "confrontation with monstrosity" (114) in the book's middle chapter, "Marx's Nightmare: Vampire-Capital and the Nightmare World of Late Capitalism." The many monsters and monstrous images that overflow Marx's *Capital* are, McNally reminds the reader, not just provocative metaphors but also "markers of the real terrors of modern social life" (115). Marx's metaphors, literary references, and gothic imagery are then explicated as "strategies for theorising the doublings and transpositions that occur in a world governed by capital" (120). In order to develop this point, this chapter offers a detailed explanation of commodities, commodity fetishism, and Marx's formula for capital, as well as an "Enron case study" that exemplifies "the obscure practices of neoliberal speculative finance" and new forms of contemporary "hyper-fetishism" (163). While much of this chapter reads like a textbook on Marxist economics, McNally's larger point that "the monetisation of a society typically ushers in frightening and disorienting confusions between persons and things, as money becomes animated with powers of life and death and persons increasingly sell themselves as if they were things" (150) is a crucial one and segues into his final chapter on Sub-Saharan tales vampires and zombies.

Chapter 3, "African Vampires in the Age of Globalisation," covers less-familiar ground as McNally turns his attention to tales of witches, vampires, and zombies, as well as related stories of corporeal fragmentation, that function as Sub-Saharan "fables of modernity" (184) comprising "complex, multilayered readers of the changing circumstances of social life in the age of globalising capitalism" (185). Such stories, McNally observes, are primarily urban and flourish where older patterns of kinship and forms of rural economy have eroded as they seek "to apprehend and evaluate the social practices and social ontology of capitalism—the acquisitive, accumulative, individualist modes of behaviour and the unique processes of abstraction and disembodiment characteristic of an economy organised by value-relations and money" (186). In this chapter, as in the first, close reading of particular texts takes a back-seat to detailed contextualization—at the center of this chapter is the articulation of nine political "themes" that "comprise axes of experience that inform the regional imaginary" (214). These include the legacy of colonial violence, the forced imposition of monetized relations, and "neoliberalism,

structural adjustment and mass-impoverishment" (219). When McNally does turn his attention to the literature, his focus is squarely on Nigerian poet and novelist Ben Okri, who employs the "idioms of African witchcraft" to portray "the blood lust, ritual killing, and trial war that animates postcolonial capitalism" (232). Okri's strategy in *The Famished Road* (1991) and elsewhere includes de-familiarizing urban markets, thus rendering them as bizarre and dangerous (237).

McNally ends his study on a hopeful note by asserting that, because zombies are the "*living* dead," they possess "the capacity to awaken, to throw off their bonds, to reclaim life amid the morbid ruins of late capitalism" (254). Relatedly, critical readers of tales of zombies and witches and vampires and other beasties who appreciate them as proletarian monsters—as "*hopeful monsters* of popular revolt from below" (251)—are equipped with a form of "night-vision that illuminates the neoliberal world of wild money" (156) and are called upon themselves to resist the transformation of people into things and to fulfill "critical theory's obligation to give voice to suffering" (115).

McNally's thesis is not particularly original—he is far from being the first to observe the way that horror stories encode anxieties about capitalist exploitation and one of the real deficiencies of his study is that nowhere among his extensive list of references are included other studies of fantastic fiction that advance similar theses. Surprisingly absent from the references, for example, are Rob Latham's *Consuming Youth: Vampires, Cyborgs, and the Culture of Consumption (2002), Annalee Newitz's Pretend We're Dead: Capitalist Monsters in American Pop Culture* (2006), Warren Montag's "'The Workshop of Filthy Creation': A Marxist Reading of *Frankenstein*" (1992), and Elsie B. Michie's "*Frankenstein* and Marx's Theories of Alienated Labor" (1990). Also missing are references to other recent studies of monsters more generally—nowhere mentioned are Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (*Monster Theory: Reading Culture* [1996]), Stephen Asma (*On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* [2009]), and Timothy Beal (*Religion and Its Monsters* [2002]), for example, and although the study ends with the discussion of "hopeful monsters," Donna Haraway's "The Promises of Monsters" (1992) is also neglected. In a study as otherwise carefully researched as this, the wholesale exclusion of studies of horror and the fantastic adopting a similar tack is difficult to explain and seems almost willful.

The study certainly would have benefitted from some pruning and reorganization as well. The 94-page first chapter in particular could easily have been broken into two parts—the first on political anatomy, the second on *Frankenstein*—and the long explanations of Marxist theory suggest that McNally isn't really quite sure who his target audience is. Relatedly, for a book that claims to focus on stories of monsters, there is surprisingly little close reading. This is most evident in the final chapter on Sub-Saharan vampire, witch, and zombie

stories that actually attends to very few in any detail. McNally mentions in passing several times stories of magic credit cards and people who turn into ATM machines, but then discusses none of them.

That said, the study argues passionately for its thesis, which is an important one. The background on political anatomy in the first chapter is fascinating, as is the attention to Sub-Saharan monster tales, even if these aren't dealt with in as much detail as this reader would like. And McNally offers an authoritative reading of Marx that is likely to be as useful to those studying Marxist theory as to those researching monsters.

Much broader in its scope is *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*, edited by Marina Levina and Diem-My T. Bui. Unlike Bloomsbury Publishing's recent edited collection, *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (2013), *Monster Culture in the 21st Century* eschews previously published material in favor of new essays solicited specifically for the collection. While outtakes from established authors in the field of monster studies such as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Stephen Asma, and Timothy Beal are thus absent from the volume, in their place is a fine selection of very current essays that reflects contemporary tastes and concerns. The modus operandi tends to be close reading and, rather than canonical Gothic novels and horror films, the texts examined include popular contemporary programs such as *The Walking Dead*, *Twilight*, and *True Blood*, as well as less expected texts, such as zombie walk brides, video games, "Frankenstein derivatives," *Lost*, and exploited Congolese citizens.

The collection consists of a brief introduction, followed by nineteen chapters loosely grouped into three parts focusing on issues of identity, technology, and "territory." Each section includes six relatively short chapters (most around 15 pages including notes), with one "odd man out" chapter following the introduction and preceding the first part. All of the essays have been carefully edited so that an argument is clearly presented in the opening pages and then findings are recapitulated in the conclusion, thus making many of them particularly useful for students.

Part One, "Monstrous Identities," addresses vampires, extraterrestrials, zombies, psychopaths, and werewolves, and focuses on confrontations between self and other in *Twilight*, *District 9*, *Avatar*, *The Walking Dead*, *Monster*, *True Blood*, and a number of more recent werewolf narratives. Leading off this section is Florian Grandena's "Heading toward the Past': The *Twilight* Vampire Figure as Surveillance Metaphor," which sees in Edward Cullen's constant monitoring of Bella an instantiation of "hyper-modern surveillance" (41). Given Edward Snowden's leaked revelations about the American National Security Agency's spying activities, Florian's figuring of Edward Cullen as "invisible, omnipresent, and unavoidable" (43) as he polices Bella's sexuality is eerily topical. Susana Loza's "Playing Alien in Post-racial Times" shifts the

discussion from vampires and surveillance to extraterrestrials and racial otherness with her analysis of *District 9* and *Avatar*, asking what these films tell us about "the dread and the desire of the racial Other" (53) in the aftermath of the civil rights movement and apartheid. In each film, she observes that white guilt is assuaged by becoming the alien other, and both, she concludes, remain "trapped by the coils of colonial logic" (64). From aliens, the focus shifts to zombies with Kyle W. Bishop's "Battling Monsters and Becoming Monstrous: Human Devolution in *The Walking Dead*," which cogently advances its persuasive, if not especially novel, thesis that recent zombie narratives, as exemplified by *The Walking Dead*, are really about the monstrousness of human beings rather than the ostensible monsters they battle for survival. Such tales, concludes Bishop, "do important cultural work by providing audiences with ethical guideposts and a sober warning against atavistic barbarism" (74).

Doing less useful cultural work, according to Megan Foley in "The *Monster* in the Mirror: Reflecting and Deflecting the Mobility of Gendered Violence Onscreen," is Patty Jenkins's 2003 film *Monster* starring Charlize Theron. Examining both the film and the case on which it was based, Foley concludes that the former participates in a deep investment in a fantasized ideal of the American family. More progressive than *Monster* as developed in Peter Odell Campbell's "Intersectionality Bites: Metaphors of Race and Sexuality in HBO's *True Blood*" is the popular cable TV program, whose vampires "offer a complex representation of multiple intersecting identities, oppressions, and politics" (105). Campbell, in a conclusion that jars to a certain extent with that of Loza's essay on *District 9* and *Avatar*, proposes that *True Blood* reflects a "newly prevalent 'post-racial' ideal of queer and queer of color politics in U.S. public life" (108). Given this assertion, the absence of any discussion of the character of Lafayette is particularly curious. Rounding out part one is Rosalind Sibielski's "Gendering the Monster Within: Biological Essentialism, Sexual Difference, and Changing Symbolic Functions of the Monster in Popular Werewolf Texts." Sibielski's analysis of the gendered representation of vampires in recent narratives is both straightforward and compelling: "sexual difference is so deeply engrained that even monstrosity is governed by it" (117).

Monster Culture in the 21st Century's second part reflects the zombie-centrism of our current cultural moment, with three of its six chapters focused on the shambling ranks of the undead, and, in general, this section casts its net more broadly than the first's focus on fiction and film. This expanded engagement is signaled by the section's lead-off essay, "Abject Posthumanism: Neoliberalism, Biopolitics, and Zombies," by Sherryl Vint. Citing Žižek and Agamben among others, and invoking *28 Days Later*, *The Walking Dead*, and the lesser-known Argentine *Fase 7*, Vint asserts that recent zombie narratives "epitomize the crisis of subjectivity today" (137) and "challenge us to think life

beyond the anthropocentrism of the liberal subject" (128). With connections to Vint's discussion of zombies and labor, Jeffrey W. Mantz's "On the Frontlines of the Zombie War in the Congo: Digital Technology, the Trade in Conflict Minerals, and Zombification" takes as its subject both the consequences of the eastern Congo's abundance of minerals used in digital technology and the kinds of alienation such technologies foster in users. While both uses of zombie here are metaphoric, Mantz's assertion that "[w]hat we regard as extraordinary and 'post-apocalyptic' in contemporary film and literature … is simply ordinary in the case of eastern Congo" (178) is chilling. Less heavy-hitting than either Vint's or Mantz's essays is the third essay on zombies in the cluster, Michele White's "Killing Whiteness: The Critical Positioning of Zombie Walk Brides in Internet Settings." White's claim that "people enact undead roles as a means of exploring different forms of consciousness, embodiment, identity, and relationships" (209) is hard to dispute, but perhaps too general to be particularly useful.

The other essays in part two address Cylons, clones, and video game monsters. In "Monstrous Technologies and the Telepathology of Everyday Life," Jeremy Biles looks to the more recent *Battle Star Galactica*'s Cylons to unpack not just cultural ambivalence regarding contemporary technologies, but also the "surprising religious dimensions" (148) of the dual polarity of the desire to conquer death and the dread of being replaced by machines. Roy Osamu Kamada's "Monstrous Citizenships: Coercion, Submission, and the Possibilities of Resistance in *Never Let Me Go* and *Cloud Atlas*" focuses on the clone in these films as a "specification manifestation of postmodern monstrosity" (164). And Jaroslav Švelch considers the ways in which video games make monsters knowable and conquerable in "Monsters by Numbers: Controlling Monstrosity in Video Games."

The volume's third part, "Monstrous Territories," offers two more essays on zombies, and chapters on terrorists, *Lost*, and financial "Frankenstein" derivatives, before closing with an essay on *Twilight*, thus bookending the volume with chapters on vampires. Michael Drake's "Zombinations: Reading the Undead as Debt and Guilt in the National Imaginary" uses John Ajvide Lindqvist's *Handling the Undead* to frame a discussion of the "*ressentiment* of the living for the undead, who represent the socially marginal, those unable to consume independently" (234). That *ressentiment* is turned back on mainstream American culture in the figure of the terrorist, as addressed by Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo and Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo in "The Monster Within: Post-9/11 Narratives of Threat and the U.S. Shifting Terrain of Terror." Their analysis of post-9/11 film suggests the ways in which vulnerability to threat now surfaces as a theme in Hollywood cinema. Cynthia J. Miller and A. Bowdoin Van Riper focus on a different sort of invasion in "The Heartland under Siege: Undead in the West." Attending to a number of zombie Westerns, they

emphasize the ways in which the undead highlight the "Code of the West" through its violation: "There is no fair play, no honorable death in the West of the undead, only cannibalism, evisceration, and mutation" (264).

Returning the volume's emphasis to narratives set in the present, Enrica Picarelli's "When Matter Becomes an Active Agent: The Incorporeal Monstrosity of Threat in *Lost*" engages with themes similar to those addressed by Bloodsworth-Lugo and Lugo-Lugo. Picarelli reads the series as reflecting post-9/11 American concerns through its ambiguity: monstrosity across the program's six seasons "evolves from being something visible, to becoming an immaterial presence of an 'unknown,' 'uncertain,' and 'unexpected' nature" (284). Shifting from fantasy TV to economics, Ryan Gillespie surveys use of monstrous and supernatural language to characterize financial capitalism and concludes that such rhetoric suggests, "a contemporary socio-economic imaginary *haunted by the specter of uncertainty*" (289). Rounding out the collection is Carolyn Harford's "Domesticating the Monstrous in a Globalizing World"—an essay devoted to *Twilight*, although the series is not mentioned in the essay's title (making it less likely to show up in bibliographic searches). Harford's interesting analysis asserts that *Twilight* inverts the plotline of *Beauty and the Beast* by having the protagonist become a monster rather than vice versa, which reflects the contemporary "de-Othering" (311) of previously stigmatized human groups.

As this overview of the contents of *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader* suggests, the volume ranges widely and is very current. As is inevitably the case with volumes such as this, personal taste and interest will dictate which essays are most useful and engaging; however, the collection as a whole offers many fresh insights and provocative assertions. There are only two sour notes struck by the collection and both come at the very beginning of the volume. The first is Marina Levina and Diem-My T. Bui's barely perfunctory "Introduction: Toward a Comprehensive Monster Theory in the 21st Century." In thirteen pages (two of which are taken up by endnotes), Levina and Bui briefly outline three theoretical approaches to monsters—psychoanalytical, representational, and ontological—and then offer the usual overview of the volume's structure and inclusions. Given that the essays that follow tend to be narrowly focused, the editors miss an important opportunity to contextualize their study and survey in a more general way the work that has been done on monsters. Not only are authors who have published important studies on monsters such as Asma and Beal missing from the volume, they are not even represented in the index. So much work has clearly gone into this excellent reader that the absence of a more fully developed introduction—perhaps with a list of suggestions for future reading for students—stands out as a missed opportunity.

The other sour note is the stand-alone essay that follows the introduction and precedes Part One: Amit S. Rai's "Ontology and Monstrosity." That the editors didn't quite know what to do with this complex meditation on monsters is indicated by the fact that it has no place in the tri-partite framework of the collection, and its lack of focus contrasts greatly with the clarity of the essays that follow. Sentences like the following appear nowhere else in the collection: "In other words, the practical notion of the virtual considers the question of monstrous ontology in terms of potentialities enfolding capacities and tendencies in a time-slip of the indeterminate future meeting a pure past, all at once" (16). One wonders if the editors were gun-shy when it came to editing Rai's essay. In any event, the contribution seems entirely out of place in the collection. My reservations about the introduction and the first chapter aside, *Monster Culture in the 21st Century* is an ambitious and diverse collection that could easily be assigned in part or in whole for undergraduate and graduate seminars dealing with monstrosity.

Turning from a title that could be used in the classroom to one specifically designed for that purpose, Brandy Ball Blake and L. Andrew Cooper's concisely titled *Monsters* is both a serviceable undergraduate reader and a missed opportunity. The relatively slim collection consists primarily of two types of readings: excerpts from primary texts and critical analyses of monstrosity that either speak directly to the primary texts or can be used in a more general way to evaluate them. The mostly short but well-selected excerpts are from (in this order—the non-chronological ordering is not explained) Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Brooks's *World War Z*, Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Carter's "The Company of Wolves," and Stoker's *Dracula*. The thirteen secondary texts are a bit of a grab-bag. The editors include an excerpt from Freud's essay on the uncanny, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's complete "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" (1996) essay, excerpts from both Judith Halberstam's *Skin Shows: An Introduction to Gothic Monstrosity* (1995) and Gerald Jones's *Killing Monsters: Why Children Need Fantasy, Super Heroes, and Make-Believe Violence* (2003), a canonical secondary essay on *Frankenstein* by Anne K. Mellor ("*Frankenstein*: A Feminist Critique of Science" [1987]), an essay on race in the *Twilight* series by Natalie Wilson from her book *Seduced by Twilight* (2011), and then, curiously (since the logic of their inclusion remains unclear), seven chapter contributions of their own (excluding their brief introduction), that deal with zombies, *An American Werewolf in London*, horror fiction and homophobia, *Candyman*, evil dolls, serial killers, and slasher films respectively. Each chapter is then followed by a page or two of discussion ideas, variously categorized as "explore," "invent," "collaborate," or "compose," that ask students to personalize and develop their responses further. The reader concludes with five well-designed suggestions for "major assignments" dealing with the definition of monsters, the "monstering" of social or political others,

representation of monsters in different media, monsters in fiction vs. nonfiction, and the significance of violence in monster texts.

I tried out the reader with two sections of undergraduate sophomore composition loosely organized around the theme of monsters in the fall of 2014 and found that it mostly worked well for that purpose. The excerpts from the primary texts—such as the scenes in which Jonathan Harker plays damsel in distress and gives himself over to Dracula's three vampire brides and when Victor abandons his creation and then dreams of his Elizabeth transforming into his dead mother—even taken out of context provide much discussion fodder. Furthermore, the secondary texts introducing key ideas such as Cohen's emphasis on the monster as an "embodiment of a certain cultural moment" (12) and Freud's notion of the uncanny provide productive frameworks through which to consider the primary texts. While many of my students found some of the secondary works challenging, that difficulty was productive as students really had to apply themselves to summarize or paraphrase the texts clearly.

Less successful overall were the secondary essays—interestingly, primarily the ones by the editors—that neither directly attended to the primary texts included nor introduced a key concept, but rather offered close analysis of primary texts outside of the average contemporary undergraduate's frame of reference. This includes the essays by Cooper and Blake on *An American Werewolf in London*, *Candyman*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* and *Buffy*, and on the *Child's Play* and *Puppet Master* series. Few of my students knew these films or programs—sadly, most of my students no longer have *Buffy* as part of their frame of reference—and as a consequence, these essays were not nearly as impactful as they might have been. Much more productive was Wilson's "Civilized Vampires Versus Savage Werewolves: Race and Ethnicity in the *Twilight Series*." All of my students had at least some familiarity with *Twilight* and this therefore allowed for a much more vigorous conversation about rather racial attitudes embedded within the text matter.

This observation concerning the amount of attention spent on texts less likely to be familiar to contemporary undergraduates dovetails with my primary complaint about the volume: the questionable decision on the part of the editors to include seven essays of their own—often the weakest in the volume and at times dealing with dated texts—when a wealth of secondary literature on monsters more theoretically novel or more relevant to the interests of contemporary students is readily available or could have been solicited. Not only could scholars such as (again) Asma, W. Scott Poole, Noël Carroll, Newitz, Beal—perhaps even Kristeva on abjection—been included to offer a fuller "toolkit" of ideas, but how about essays on videogames or *True Blood* or *The Walking Dead* or even on monsters in *Scooby Doo* rather than ones on *Candyman* and the *Puppet Master* series? If it was a question of a small press (Fountainhead Press) balking at the difficulty and expense of obtaining permissions

for reprinting, new material certainly could have been solicited specifically for the volume.

Despite this complaint, the *Monsters* reader is certainly serviceable for an undergraduate composition course and clearly conveys the central idea that monsters give shape to widely shared cultural anxieties and desires. My students were able to utilize this insight, together with other concepts introduced in the volume, to develop their own ideas on papers ranging from analyses of zombies in *The Walking Dead* to mermaids to villains in *The Powerpuff Girls*. The idea for this reader is a good one; what I would like to see is an expanded version with more attention to contemporary films, novels, and media of which undergraduates are more likely to be aware.

From the marketplace to the classroom, these three publications—together with others such as Asma's *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears*, W. Scott Poole's 2011 *Monsters in America: Our Historical Obsession with the Hideous and the Haunting*, Asa Mittman and Peter Dendle's 2013 *Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, my own 2014 *Ashgate Encyclopedia of Literary and Cinematic Monsters*, and a host of more focused studies and collections on zombies, vampires, and other creatures of the night—make clear that monsters remain the most interesting of people. McNally's study and the readers from Levina and Bui and Blake and Cooper each take up the puzzle that monsters present from different angles. McNally's will appeal primarily to graduate students and those with specific research interests in Marxism and culture—although his chapter on Mary Shelley is a significant contribution to analyses of *Frankenstein*. Levina and Bui offer a diverse reader that undergraduates and educated laypersons are likely to find accessible for the most part. As is the nature of such readers, however, researchers are more likely to mine the volume for specific entries on particular monsters than to read it cover-to-cover. And Blake and Cooper provide a useful reader to prompt undergraduates to consider the cultural construction of monstrosity.

Reviews

Sederholm, Carl H. and Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, eds. *The Age of Lovecraft.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016. 256 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8166-9925-4. $24.95

Sederholm and Weinstock present the reader interested in the work of Lovecraft with a collection of essays that, as they indicate in their introduction, considers the philosophical content of his stories principally in connection with speculative realism, as well as his perspective that annihilates any human claim of superiority on the planet. They emphasize that the collection also acknowledges the need to consider the author's racism in addition to his exaggerated and artificial style in order to understand his pertinence to our times. With the resulting approach, they offer a book that explores the reasons why the author from Providence remains and has become even more popular in the last decades. As an example of this continuity, they identify the many chapters, monographs, and books on the author that have recently been published. As a mark of his ongoing presence, they also consider the global expansion of the Cthulhu Mythos, not only in the fiction of writers from Lovecraft's time but still today, in comics, visual arts, music, film and TV, as well as in internet communities, apparel and accessories.

The volume begins and ends with contributions by two writers highly influenced by Lovecraft's work: Ramsey Campbell's "Foreword" and an interview with China Miéville which closes the book. Campbell states that Lovecraft's heritage goes beyond the already mentioned Cthulhu Mythos although many readers identify them as a main characteristic of his stories. Campbell accepts that he was one of those who contributed to Mythos' expansion, thus deviating attention from the fact that Lovecraft's main legacy is the "search for a perfect weird tale" (ix). In his closing interview, Miéville comments on his first contact with Lovecraft as a product of role-playing games and explains that the writer belongs to his own age, although a combination of factors has led to his current popularity which has been prompted by his imaginative power to transmit his own sense of the posthuman condition.

As for the eleven essays framed by this pair of contributions, the first four pieces directly address the connection of Lovecraft's fiction with speculative realism. First of all, James Kneale's "Goulish Dialogues" focuses on the use of allusion in the writer's stories and its connection with Graham Harman's text

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Weird Realism (2012). According to Kneale, one of Harman's most attractive contributions is the emphasis on Lovecraft's style and its relationship with the fictional content, an area that still offers a lot of possibilities for critical studies. In the second text, "Lovecraft's Things," co-editor Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock studies the function of strange objects, mainly spaces, portraits and forbidden books, among others, as sources of forbidden knowledge. In his view, this connection evidences the limits of what being human means inside the ontological confusion between subject and object that characterizes the Gothic and which makes humans become just one more artifact among the many resources in the inventory of Lovecraft's fiction. These two essays are followed by Isabella van Elferen's "Hyper-Cacophony," a study of music and songs in Lovecraft's stories, a means by which he stresses the fact that the characters and beings faced by his protagonists belong to spheres out of our human context. Van Elferen mainly relies on Quentin Meillassoux's and Harman's ideas on speculative realism to back her proposal. After these three insightful texts that confirm the wide possibilities for the study of style and objects in the work of Lovecraft, this introductory group closes with Brian Johnson's "Prehistories of Posthumanism," which reads Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) and *Prometheus* (2012) films as reinterpretations of Lovecraft's proposal of a cosmic indifferentism according to which humanity is a mere accident of experiments undergone by other races as depicted in *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936). The text ends up being a much larger discussion of how both films react to this indifferentism and thus minimizes the attention given to the study of Lovecraft's own view on the subject.

The following group of chapters focuses on the role of bodies in the author's fiction. Jed Mayer opens the section with "Race, Species, and Others," an exploration of how it would feel to experience the view of another being through mental displacement as it occurs in "The Shadow out of Time" (1936). However, the text becomes too ambitious since the brief discussion of the role of races and species in Lovecraft's fiction and non-fiction in the author's introduction would provide enough material for another essay. Something similar happens with the discussion (present near the end of the essay) of the presence of tentacles in some of Lovecraft's stories. The next piece is probably the richest in the book inasmuch as it calls for the opening of a new perspective in the scope of Lovecraft's studies. Volume co-editor Carl H. Sederholm presents a study of the documented possible roots of Lovecraft's lack of interest in sexuality which can be traced as originating from his father's death from syphilis to his having been brought up under a strict Victorian education in "H. P. Lovecraft's Reluctant Sexuality." After this, Sederholm questions why renowned critics of Lovecraft's work like Joshi and Houellebecq give little importance to the absence of the topic of sex in the writer's fiction

while many of his stories deal with the procreation of monstrous beings. Sederholm's main focus centers on the role of Lavinia in "The Dunwich Horror" (1929) He presents her as an example that, despite his disgust for sex, the writer could not deny the need for both sexes to breed life. The author of this essay intentionally mentions that the female side is the abjected bringer of evil in this story in order to leave this topic open for exploration by others in order to deepen academic discussions of sex in the work of Lovecraft. Finally, David Simmons's essay, "H. P. Lovecraft and Real Person Fiction," closes the section with a revision of the presence of Lovecraft as an RPF (Real Person Fiction) character in recent American graphic novels as an example of the change in the author's cultural position in the last decades. Although the proposal is interesting, the text fails to make a deeper study on the subject and just concentrates on making a list of appearances of HPL as an RFP.

The four final chapters focus on Lovecraft's influence on contemporary writers and explores to what extent our times can be considered an Age of Lovecraft at all. The section starts with Jessica George's "A Polychrome Study" of Neil Gaiman's tale "A Study in Emerald" (2003) as a rewriting of Lovecraft's Mythos and Conan Doyle's world. George's main point relies on identifying the hybridity of identities that, according to her, occurs during the writing and reading processes. For her, this process is a key characteristic that appears in both Lovecraft's fiction and Gaiman's tale which thus becomes a richer work and more than a mere pastiche of styles. After that, in his examination of "Suspicion, Pattern Recognition, and Paranoia," David Punter identifies the presence of apophemia in Lovecraft's fiction as a repetition of the abnormal that characterizes the writer's work as a product of modernity and as an example of the presence of repetitions in the Gothic which confirm that the past cannot be avoided. After him, Patricia MacCormack follows with "Lovecraft's Cosmic Ethics," an essay that proposes that the author's horror is based not on content but on manipulation of perspective and the suggestions of connectivities among organic and inorganic things in his fiction which renders bodies as unstable things making the monster and the human collapse together into the same content. This text becomes the connection with both Kneale's emphasis on Lovecraft's style included at the beginning of the collection, as well as Weinstock's perspective on the relationship between objects and viewers. MacCormack points out that the collapse also affects the concepts of science, dreams and sexuality, leading to the ultimate collapse she identifies in Lovecraft's work: that of language itself. The essays close with W. Scott Poole's "Lovecraft, Witch Cults, and Philosophers," a call to take Lovecraft's references to racial differences and secret cults as serious sources of study that proposals like Harman's *Weird Realism* have failed to consider. This final piece confirms two things reinforced by every essay in the collection

to the next one: both the confirmation that we live in an age where Lovecraft is definitely present and the fact that there are some recurrent topics in his fiction that have not been analyzed in depth.

ANTONIO ALCALÁ

Carrington, André M. *Speculative Blackness: The Future of Race in Science Fiction*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2016. 282 pp. Paper. ISBN 978-0816678969. $25.00.

Here is how André M. Carrington describes the crux of *Speculative Blackness: The Future of Race in Science Fiction*: "This is a book about what speculative fiction, in the many ways we encounter and embody it, has to say about what it means to be Black. It is also about how placing Blackness at the center of discussions about speculative fiction augments our understanding of what the genre might be and what it might do. … I … hope to encourage SF readers and critics to acknowledge that race matters in speculative fiction; whether we realize it or not, our engagement with the genre entails a variety of complex relationships with Blackness" (Carrington 1-2). He articulates the integral reciprocity between Blackness and speculative fiction by coining two terms: "the Whiteness of science fiction" and "the speculative fiction of blackness." The former term "names both the overrepresentation of white people among the ranks of SF authors and the overrepresentation of white people's experiences within SF texts" (Carrington 16); the latter term "describe[s] how black authors and artists take part in an intellectual tradition that encompasses print literature while also enacting racial identification and performing critiques of racial ideology in ways that the disciplinary conventions I have assayed in this book can hardly imagine" (Carrington 241). When these terms collide, hegemonic White science fiction norms are newly relegated to the terra incognito of being positioned as strangers in strange science fiction lands. This disruption produces a hitherto unimaginable racial awareness based upheaval, which results in new cultural production.

This newness in regard to expanding the definition of science fiction—an example of metafictional cognitive estrangement—is explored in six chapters: Chapter one (called "Josh Brandon's Blues Inventing the Black Fan"), which focuses on the fictitious science fiction fan Carl Brandon, articulates "how members of science fiction fan communities at formative moments in the history of the genre experimented with identities structured by race, ethnicity, gender, and professional status through the tools of amateur publishing" (Carrington 28). Chapters two and three (respectively called "Space Race Woman Lieutenant Uhura beyond the Bridge" and "The Immortal Storm Permutations of Race in Marvel Comics") are devoted to black women. These chapters focus on how "the actor Nichelle Nichols and the fictitious [*X-Men*] character Storm, became central to the contending currents of cultural politics in the Cold War era" (Carrington 29). Chapter four (called "Controversy and Crossover in Milestone Media's *Icon*"), continuing the discussion of comics, centers on the superhero series *Icon*. The fifth chapter (called "The Golden Ghetto

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and Glittering Parentheses The Once and Future Benjamin Sisko") explores *Star Trek*'s *Deep Space Nine*. In the last chapter (called "Dreaming in Color Racial Revisions in Fan Fiction"), Carrington turns to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the Harry Potter series to explain how on-line fan fiction "reconfigures the relationship between race, nation, and genre conventions" (Carrington 29).

Carrington emphasizes that cultural production has a viable impact upon people's engagement with the real world: "cultural production can propagate ideas with profound implications for the intellectual, emotional, and economic lives of individuals and social groups. … Culture forms the basis of many people's livelihood and influences their quality of life, and it is the material out of which many people fashion very meaningful understandings of the conditions in which they live" (Carrington 8, 12). The point is that cultural lives matter and it is important to understand how race applies to cultural matters. Carrington brings race and speculative fiction to bear upon this observation: "I hope to stoke the reader's interest in the possibility that speculative fiction might also provide some resources out of which we can envision Black people in a more just relationship to the production of popular culture" (Carrington 21). Readers are certainly "stoked" because they encounter an energetic and innovative articulation of revision in terms of what speculative fiction is about and what characterizes Blackness.

Each chapter juxtaposes speculative fiction cultural production and Blackness in order to make a point about real world impact. Fake fan Carl Brandon's Blackness generated enhanced speculative fiction fan community (Carrington 63-64). Nichelle Nichols playing Uhura is still unrecognized for being instrumental to nothing less than the utopian attributes of *Star Trek* and NASA (Carrington 69). X-Men protagonist Ororo stands for "potentially transformative questions about the politics of representation" (Carrington 116). The Milestone Media flagship title *Icon* affects how futuristic superhero comics "and the historically constrained politics" (Carrington 118) of Black urban American culture are represented. The *Deep Space Nine* episode called "Far beyond the Stars" epitomizes how science fiction was adversely impacted by excluding the value of Black creativity (Carrington 162-163). Carrington calls the episode "a self-conscious engagement with accounts of mid-twentieth-century racial discrimination outside the SF genre" (Carrington 172); this science fictional version of racial discrimination is very real indeed. Our understanding of racial and national identities and theories of desire that infuse fan fiction studies "mutually benefit from an archive grounded in the reimagined media histories of people of color" (Carrington 195). The real-world concerns that dominate each chapter position *Speculative Blackness* as an Earth-shattering corrective to a situation in which speculative fiction cultural production, by ignoring Blackness, cuts off its nose to spite its face.

A pragmatic approach that emphasizes reciprocity between the real world and speculative fiction forms the main emphasis of *Speculative Blackness.* Or, in Carrington's words: "we might only comprehend what it means to be a robot, an alien, or a ghost by learning about what it means to be Black. Taking a critical eye to the way in which we categorize works on the basis of telling differences helps us to apprehend the internal logic of cultural production. Yet it also enables us to articulate what cultural production means in relation to other facets of our everyday lives and social experiences. … [G]enre is not only important to itself but to the world it mediates as well" (Carrington 240). Speculative fiction and race matter—and they matter more pragmatically when they are positioned together. This "can do" juxtaposition is at the heart of *Speculative Blackness*: "I am also constantly looking forward to what Blackness can do, with the aid of speculative fiction, to transform cultural politics" (Carrington 241). Carrington links speculative fiction to race to generate insights about racial reality.

By insisting that race impacts speculative fiction cultural production and vice versa, Carrington creates a speculative fiction production based theory about cultural praxis. *Speculative Blackness* describes a needed new Blackness-infused reading practice that explodes the New Criticism's lack of a real world participatory social change rubric. Carrington describes his new reading practice as follows: *Speculative Blackness* "entails transforming the modes of reading that we bring to SF texts and breaking down the boundaries that circumscribe science fiction, fantasy, utopia, horror, and supernatural works within the larger field of cultural production. We must always be willing to reconsider what speculative fiction is to maintain its relevance to literary, paraliterary, and popular mediations of race matters and other social concerns" (Carrington 238). Black science fiction is the most exciting twenty-first century literary production. Carrington's new reading practice is exactly what is needed now. I am "stoked!" Carrington says that his work is integral to the future as well as the present. "In future studies of race and genre, I hope cultural critics will find it useful to refer to this book as the point of departure for revisionist interventions of their own" (Carrington 238). By locating his book in an imagined academic future—science fictionalizing his book—Carrington is himself juxtaposing speculative fiction production and race studies in an important and engaging book, which has appeared just in time to fill a gaping scholarly void.

Marleen S. Barr

Uther, Hans-Jörg (ed.), *Handbuch zu den "Kinder- und Hausmärchen" der Brüder Grimm. Entstehung—Wirkung—Interpretation*. 2. vollständig überarbeitete Auflage [Handbook of the Grimm Brothers' 'Children's and House Tales.' Development—Effects—Interpretation. 2nd Complete Revised Edition]. Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013. xv + 623 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-3-11-031743-5. €29.95, US $42.00.

The title page claims that this is a "completely revised" second edition of a book first published in 2008 under the same title and by the same publisher (xvi, 644 pp.). I have been unable to locate any English-language review of the 2008 edition, so I will treat this as the first such review, and will comment on the extent of the revisions.

This edition, like its 2008 source, contains commentaries on all 200 of the tales included in the so-called "Great Edition" (1857, the last edition before the brothers' deaths) of the Grimms' tales, as well as the ten "Childrens' Legends" and the 34 tales published in earlier editions but excluded in 1857. Its brief "Foreword," dated November 7, 2007, is repeated in the 2008 edition, with a five-line addition (viii). The "Foreword" in both editions notes that this "Handbook" is derived from the author's 1996 "text-critical and annotated edition" of the Grimms' tales, which comments only on the 210 tales of the 1857 edition" (vii).

The commentaries on the individual tales have the same format in all three of these publications. They start with an abbreviated reference to the tale's entry in Uther's 2004 *The Types of International Folktales* (most recently Helsinki, 2004), followed by abbreviated references to the tale's publication in various editions, noting changes and some previous comments. They reference thematically related tales, summarize the narrative, provide interpretative comment, note illustrations, and conclude with references to more distantly related and derivative literary tales; some list illustrations of the tale in various editions. The final "Lit." section lists critical commentaries in chronological order.

Neither space nor time allow discussion of details of even a few of the tales. I have chosen, as an example to compare, the three versions of tale 57: "The Golden Bird" (136-139 in the 2013 editions), a tale that I know and have used repeatedly in teaching folklore classes. The three versions do *not* share the same print image format (8.5 x 14 mm [1996], 11 x 17.5 mm [2008 and 2013]), but the font used in the 2013 version is smaller. Most of the text of the 1996 commentary is repeated almost verbatim in the 2008 and 2013 versions, but the latter two are expanded by a discussion of psychological interpretations of the tale; otherwise those two have only insignificant small variations in the text. The "Lit." section, however, is updated in each version: four items added in 2008, five in 2013.

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Uther's commentary on "The Golden Bird" is mostly historical and comparative, beginning with its "strong similarity" (136) to a tale, "The Faithful Fox," published by Christoph Günther in 1787, and to a medieval Dutch romance, *Walewein*. The narrative of the tale is interpreted in relationship to its typological relationships to other folk materials. One of the reasons for my interest in "The Golden Bird" is that it represents the most extensive parallels to the analytical schema argued by the Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp in his *Morphology of the Folktale* (English tr. 1971)—a connection that would have been relevant to a majority of the Grimms' tales; but Uther infrequently cites English- (or Russian) scholarship.

The individual commentaries are followed by a general study, "On the History of the Childrens' and House Tales," lacking in the 1996 edition and somewhat revised from the 2008 edition. Its sections cover the early history of the collection, the Brothers Grimm's search for texts, the brothers and their competitors, the textual history of the collection, the ordering of the texts, the problem of genre, tendencies in revisions, customs and ethics, education, illustrations (see next paragraph), and influence. As the subtitles show, it is a thorough treatment, mainly of the publication history; only in the individual story comments does one find significant discussion of interpretive scholarship, and throughout Uther depends almost entirely on German and sometimes European scholarship.

The volume includes 39 illustrations, many of them full-page, mostly though not exclusively from 19th-century editions. The most familiar tales illustrated are "Cinderella," "Hansel and Gretel," "Rapunzel," "Rumpelstiltskin," and "Snow White"—all of these tales are from the 1857 edition. Illustrations from the familiar tales "Bluebeard," "The Pea Test" (better known as "The Princess and the Pea"), and "Puss in Boots" are from the "Excluded Tales." A facsimile of a manuscript page from "Brier Rose" (better known as "Sleeping Beauty") is included in the "History" section.

The extensive "Bibliographie" shows the clearest evidence of revision: 66 of its 942 entries date from 2008 to 2013, and so are new to this second edition. Thirty-four of those entries are Uther's own publications, including five from 2008-2013, one of them in English (as is his 2004 updating of the classic Aarne-Thompson *The Types of International Folk Tales*). Some 10% (90) of the entries are in English; nine are by the very active SUNY Stony Brook professor Ruth Bottigheimer, seven by retired University of Minnesota professor Jack Zipes, six by the influential folklorist Alan Dundes, who died in 2005, and six by the UCLA professor Christine Geiger Goldberg. (Uther rarely includes the given names of the scholars he lists.)

The book concludes with several indices: a concordance of types and motifs, a directory of sources, contributors, and transmitters (of the tales themselves), an alphabetical list of the tale titles (in German), and an index

of names, topics, works, and places. Overall, it is an excellent reference work, unfortunately accessible only to readers of German. Nothing like it exists in English. The closest to it is *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, translated and with an introduction by Jack Zipes (1987); the translation includes 242 of the 244 tales discussed by Uther and has very brief notes on sources.

BRUCE A. BEATIE

Braudy, Leo. *Haunted: On Ghosts, Witches, Vampires, Zombies, and Other Monsters of the Natural and Supernatural Worlds*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. 336 pp. Hardcover. ISBN 978-0300203806. $30.00.

In *Haunted: On Ghosts, Witches, Vampires, Zombies, and Other Monsters of the Natural and Supernatural Worlds*, Leo Braudy is driven by two impulses: "The first is to connect elements in a culture without recourse to a hierarchy of high and low, the 'soft' aesthetic values versus the 'hard' political and economic ones. The second is to explore how emotions themselves can have a history" (ix-x). The main emotion under consideration is fear—one Braudy suspects should have been vanquished by the Enlightenment and other modes of reason that worked to usurp the irrational. In large part, then, his project charts the transformation from the invisible fear fostered by religious experience to the visible fear of the modern, industrial world, and each half of the book deals with one side of this schism.

In his first two chapters, "Shaping Fear" and "Between Hope and Fear: Horror and Religion," Braudy outlines the relationship between religion and fear, suggesting that both operate under "the assumption that there is an invisible spiritual world that parallels, underlies, and infuses the visible physical world" (34). This pre-industrial world, literally and intellectually unilluminated, allowed for the promiscuity of these kinds of fear. The canonization of purgatory in the thirteenth century "left the dead who were without an obvious destination below or above to come back and protest that they were no longer being properly remembered" (56), while the birth of the modern newspaper provided structure for "widespread and often groundless fears" (17). After the Protestant Reformation, religious fear in England was often directed at Catholicism. King James I, not immune to such irrationality, published an account in 1591 of what he believed to be his attempted assassination by witches.

In his third chapter, "Terror, Horror, and the Cult of Nature," Braudy marks the shift from religious to natural fear. "As the world of experimental science expanded," he writes, "an inevitable tension arose between the Christian emphasis on the fallibilities of sight … and the importance of sight and observation in scientific assumption" (85). The impulse toward curiosity was now rewarded rather than condemned, no longer treated as a "prideful turning away from God" (84). For Braudy, the major break between religious and post-industrial fear comes with *Frankenstein* (1818), the first horror fiction to feature a monster that is man-made, as he explains in chapter 4, "*Frankenstein*, Robots, and Androids: Horror and the Manufactured Monster." Anxieties about teleology and the will of God are transposed into anxieties about society, modernity, and the future. The monster, a consummate outsider, reveals our arbitrary and contradictory construction of difference, while its ability to

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mimic the human suggests a heretofore unacknowledged bi-directionality—in other words, if the mechanical can be human, does that make the human mechanical?

In chapters 5 and 6, "The Detective's Reason" and "Jekyll and Hyde: The Monster from Within," Braudy diverts his attention from fear and turns to the detective. He views this type of character as paralleling the monster in his (and, occasionally, her) outsider status. But, though the detective always teeters on the edge of criminality, he is an embodiment of order while the monster is that of disorder. Thus, detective fiction is "the historical moment when literature, in the wake of Enlightenment rationality and Romantic subjectivity, begins to make its own claim on truth telling" (146).

In his final two chapters, "Dracula and the Haunted Present" and "Horror in the Age of Visual Reproduction," Braudy frames Bram Stoker's novel in the post-Elizabethan concern for understanding ruins: "horror can serve as a form of cultural compensation that dramatizes the difficulty of a modern world of whatever form has in dealing with threats that draw their power from the past" (207). Dracula, then, is an "ancient adversary," one who creates an anti-Christianity that has perverted its rituals and symbolism to offer an alternative promise of life after death (222). Braundy ends *Haunted* by following vampires—along with the rest of his monsters—into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, noting that radio emphasized the "awesome ineffability of the demonic" by allowing its listeners to imagine the horrors depicted through sound (234), while film tended to follow Guillermo del Toro's notion that the Gothic teaches us to "understand otherness" (244), and figures such as Dracula became sympathetic stand-ins for people living on the margins of society.

While there is much to recommend it, there are two major problems with *Haunted*. The first is Braudy's sloppy reading of the texts under consideration, and the second is that the book recycles old arguments without contributing anything new to the field. Take, for instance, a claim he makes about Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886): "sexuality hardly comes up in the novel … [and] the physical body is virtually absent" (189). It is odd that Braudy does not cite Valdine Clemens' *The Return of the Repressed* (1999) in his text or endnotes, not just because her book is a monumental work on the genre but also because her own scope—from *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) to *Alien* (1979)—roughly matches his own. Moreover, her chapter on Stevenson, which deals largely with his relationship to Darwin, demonstrates the profound carelessness of Braudy's reading. For example, whereas Braundy remarks that sexuality is absent from Stevenson's novel, Clemens points to Mr. Utterson's twice imagined "visual tableau" in which Hyde's visits to Jekyll at night summon strong associations with sexual assault (133). She then places the passage in the context of public school homosexuality

and rape and remarks on "the density of sexual punning" in the novel (133). We have only to turn a few pages in Clemens to find, again with meticulous attention to Stevenson's language, how his description of Hyde as "dwarfish" and "ape-like," with a "stumping" walk and a "doubled up" appearance, echoes *The Descent of Man* (1871). Clemens' keen observations contradict Braudy's claim that "the physical body is virtually absent."

Though I could also rely on Clemens to debunk Braudy's description of *Dracula*'s Mina Harker as a "New Woman"—Clemens does, after all, point out that Mina is "literally 'sent to bed' twice by the men" (172)—this time I will defer to Mina herself, the only character in the novel to use the phrase "New Women" but even then only to mock their attempts to reverse traditional gender roles with regard to marriage proposals. Granted, Mina does assume more responsibility in the defeat of the monster than some of her female predecessors, but to so cavalierly assert her fellowship with *fin de siècle* feminists without at least acknowledging her consistent willingness to play in the angel in the house is to seriously disregard many of the gender dynamics of *Dracula* (1897).

Now, Braudy might be forgiven for this were he bringing anything new to the table. But *Haunted* spends most of its time rehashing old arguments: that horror fiction provides the boundaries within which we can address and control our fears, that pre-modern fear is intimately linked to religion, that the birth of the modern monster coincides with the industrial revolution, and that the detective puts the assumptions of the Enlightenment to work. Occasionally, Braundy offers tidbits of potential fresh thinking: that birther conspiracies about Barack Obama "draw upon folk tales of the changeling" (18) or that it is "[n]o wonder perhaps that one new characteristic of the zombie introduced in the post 9/11 era has been their speed" (107). But even if the latter were true—which it is not, as quick-moving zombies appeared in several movies that were in production prior to 9/11, including *28 Days Later* (2002), *Resident Evil* (2003), and *Dawn of the Dead* (2004)—his positions are rarely substantiated through analysis of textual or historical evidence.

Moreover, as the book progresses, Braudy appears to forget his driving purpose: for example, while the relationship between detectives and monsters is suggestive, he never clearly establishes what this has to do with his ostensible theme of fear. Meanwhile, a five-page description of English etymological debts to Celtic and Norse, though interesting, ends with this bizarre justification: "the literature of horror owes a special debt to the Irish" (215). Even his methods are suspect, as when he asserts that any claim that the supernatural elements of *Jekyll and Hyde* are "about" something specific "condescends to the authors, who are assumed to be unaware of the implications of their own stories" (198), or when he brandishes the absence of Napoleon's name from *Frankenstein* as "unmistakable" proof that Shelley intended "Victor's aspira-

tions to … reflect the ambitions of the early nineteenth centaury's supreme 'man of destiny'" (130).

There is no doubt that more histories of emotions can and should be written, or that the snobbish distinction between high and low can prevent the production of serious scholarship on horror fiction. Unfortunately, *Haunted* is not the book to provide the former or topple the latter. In fact, it ultimately does nothing more than reinforce the belief that work on horror does not adhere to the same rigorous standards as those in more "respectable" fields.

Aaron Botwick

Morehead, John W., ed. *The Supernatural Cinema of Guillermo del Toro: Critical Essays*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015. 216 pp. Softcover. ISBN 978-0-7864-9595-5. $35.00.

John W. Morehead's collection of critical essays presents a wide array of views on the works of Mexican-Spanish film director Guillermo del Toro. From essays that analyze del Toro's cinematic oeuvre in terms of his life to studies on the influence of Lovecraft on del Toro's work to Nietzschean interpretations of *Pan's Labyrinth*, the contributors fill a gap in current scholarship regarding, as Morehead puts it, "one of the most prolific artists at present" (7). It is remarkable that the editor has been able to assemble such collection from people in both academia and the film industry. Hence, even though some of the essays do not read like typical scholarly journals articles because of their atypical structure and tone, they add an important component to understanding del Toro's work.

The collection opens with a moving Foreword by actor Doug Jones, in which he relates the personal impact of playing so many significant characters in del Toro's films—including his role as the Fauno in *Pan's Labyrinth.* The volume then presents eleven essays, from which four main themes emerge regarding del Toro's cinematic work: his Catholic upbringing, the recuperation of historical memory as fundamental in his films' scripts, the relationship between his films and Greek mythology, and the importance of his financial and production challenges to the movie studios.

Beginning with del Toro's family background and the recuperation of historical memory, many of the authors refer to his upbringing in Mexico and ways in which his childhood may have influenced his films. In her essay "The Child Transformed by Monsters: The Monstrous Beauty of Childhood Trauma," Jessica Balanzategui makes the case for childhood trauma as a crucial element affecting how del Toro's films are produced as well as understood. Citing interviews and del Toro's own statements, Balanzategui sees "traumatic childhood" as "a fertile source of inspiration and creative vitality for his films" (76). Although the author does not refer to specific traumas in the director's life, she cites del Toro's statement that films such as *Pan's Labyrinth* and *The Devil's Backbone* "are based on things that happened to me" (77). These are experiences that the director is able to transform and present to the viewer in a way that connects and creates empathy. Whereas fantasy is often viewed as a way to escape from reality, Balanzategui argues that, with del Toro, fantasy becomes "a powerful way to face trauma's affront to normality and coherent meaning" (77). This is evident, for example, in *Pan's Labyrinth*: the realities of the Spanish Civil War come into the narrative via apparitions that appear to the protagonist Ofelia, a pre-teen girl. Fantasy manifests as an ability that children can use to cope with a reality that does not always make sense. For

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Balanzategui, del Toro is able to use "his own childhood traumas and the power of such trauma to spark new ways of perceiving reality which stand in contrast to rigid, accepted—adult—structures of meaning" (90).

The ability of children to connect and use fantasy to deal with reality also appears in the essay "Where the Wild Things Are: Monsters and Children," in which Alexandra West argues that fantasy "offers filmmakers the opportunity to ask questions surrounding the nature of humanity and of the world we live in" (130). West focuses on how the monster, in its relationship with the child, can be both a friend and an enemy, and notes that, "del Toro's films often show that the monsters are not truly monstrous, humans are" (138-9). West concludes by stating, "del Toro is a true storyteller … because he understands the power of stories" (144). In both Balanzategui and West, there is a resonance between del Toro's own experiences and historical memory. For West, this interaction between the director's own life and his movies become alive in films such as *Mimic* and *The Devil's Backbone*, where del Toro's childhood fascination for ghosts translates into filmic creations. The filmmaker is then a storyteller not only of his stories but also of others' and, therefore, his films have the potential to influence the viewer by revealing an unseen aspect of reality.

This combination of del Toro as a storyteller and an historian translates also into the role of the director as a visionary of the social imaginary, which creates problems for his cinematic productions. According to several of the essays in this volume, del Toro's films have been influenced not only by Greek mythology but also by the writings of H. P. Lovecraft and Lord Dunsany. For instance, Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr., in "At the Mountains of Mexico: The Echoes and Intertexts of Lovecraft and Dunsany," argues that del Toro adapts and blends both authors into the historical and social context of his films; for example, Wetmore argues that *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* forms an intertext "with Dunsany's work, especially "The King of Elfland's Daughter" (23). Thus, Wetmore sees del Toro as a "sceptical believer who would love to learn these fantastic beings are real and the world posited by Lovecraft and Dunsany behind our own was true, but knows in his heart they are not" (24). For Wetmore, del Toro's layers of stories prove Dunsany's influence as his "characters often discover the magical world, realize it is a part of our own, and move freely between them" (38).

The relationship between del Toro's films and other mythologies is further explored by Jack Collins's essay, "The Birth of Fantasy: A Nietzschean Reading of *Pan's Labyrinth*." Collins identifies similarities between Nietzsche's reading of Greek mythology and del Toro's. As in the title of the philosopher's classic *The Birth of Tragedy*, Collins finds traces of Nietzsche's interpretation of the Apollo and the Dionysius dichotomy in the way that del Toro treats the fantastic world in respect to the "real." Fantasy, rather than serving as an

escape, "is rejected in favour of a model where fantasy and reality stand in tension without either taking precedence" (168). Ofelia, again, appears as the figure who defeats the apparent division between fantasy and reality by taking from both the Apollonian and the Dionysian: she intersects between the Fauno, as the untamed Dionysian element, and her mother, a symbol Apollonian civility. Del Toro positions Ofelia in the confrontation between horror and beauty in the historical context of the war.

Other essays in the volume address the ways that del Toro's approaches to filmmaking have proven to be a challenge given the way the business of cinema operates. As the screenplay writer John Kenneth Muir points out in his essay "Henry's Kids: Othered Children and Karloff's Frankenstein Monster," studios have at times rejected del Toro's projects, including his version of Frankenstein, but he continues to become increasingly influential and inspirational. In Muir's words, "del Toro's films are special, emotionally-resonant works of art" that do not follow "the vicissitudes of studio politics or economics" (116). Thus, the director's affront to reality comes not only through the viewing of his films, but also through their production.

What makes this book particularly worth reading is the variety of approaches provided by the eleven different authors, whose numbers include doctoral students, professors, actors, playwrights, film industry experts, and journalists. Despite their vastly different viewpoints as to the significant influences on del Toro, they all agree on one thing: del Toro's capacity to alter our vision and understanding of reality. And, as we witness the process of creating through the camera, the essays of this book, written in highly readable styles, serve as testimonies of future fantasies and new ways to see reality.

Jaime R. Brenes Reyes

Levy, Michael, and Farah Mendlesohn. *Children's Fantasy Literature: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 282 pp. Soft Cover. ISBN 978-1-107-61029-3. $27.99.

Literature of the fantastic has always had a rather complicated relationship with children's literature—a relationship that Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn identify in their book *Children's Fantasy Literature: An Introduction* as one of appropriation. This appropriation that occurs is not simply one-sided: children appropriate adult texts; publishers appropriate adult material for children; and, adults appropriate children's texts as well. Therefore, when dealing with the two fields—literature of the fantastic and children's literature—issues of readership age and intended audience play a significant role, particularly as the concept of childhood has shifted over the years. This is arguably the crux of Levy and Mendlesohn's historically grounded analysis as they trace and contextualize the evolution of children's fantasy literature, from its early incarnations to the present day, in a way that effectively considers the network of author, publisher, and reader. In doing so, Levy and Mendlesohn manage to provide fresh insight into the important role that children's fantasy literature has played in the English-speaking world (as they primarily examine the children's book markets in the USA and Britain) from the fifteenth century to today.

Levy and Mendlesohn's introduction, though brief, provides a comprehensive literature review that draws attention to the gap that their book is helping to fill: essentially, the need for a historical or contextual look at the progression and influence of children's fantasy literature. Although, as they state, "The study of children's literature is far more established than that of fantasy" (4), both of these areas of study are still marginalized, especially in comparison to other areas of literature. As a consequence, general scholarship in either subject, as they address, tends to fall into the mode of define and/or defend (3). Although they do offer brief definitions of both—"fantastic is the realization of the *impossible*" (3) and "children's literature is fiction read to or by children, whether or not it was originally published for children and whether or not adults have approved of children reading it" (5)—this is a trend that Levy and Mendlesohn have set out to avoid. More interested in the contexts in which children's fantasy literature is transmitted and received, they work to, as they write, "create a narrative history of the field" (5).

As a result, their work differs from previous scholarship in the field in two other important aspects: First, they provide an extremely thorough look at children's fantasy literature, moving beyond the most popular and widely discussed works to those that are less well known (such as Lewis Carroll's 1889 novel *Sylvie and Bruno*); and, second, they give equal weight and attention to a wide variety of fantasy subgenres such as urban fantasy, portal-quest fantasy,

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and paranormal romance, to name a few, as well as to the ways in which children's fantasy interacts with the Gothic tradition, horror, folklore, and myth.

Children's Fantasy Literature has nine chapters, each of which contains four or more descriptive subheadings that are also listed in the table of contents (a choice that greatly enhances the findability of material for the reader). The first chapter of the book, "How fantasy became children's literature," focuses on fairy tales, folk tales, and beast fables of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—which, contrary to popular belief, were not intended for a child audience and would not become so until several centuries later. This transition is discussed in the second chapter, "Fairies, Ghouls, and Goblins: The Realms of Victorian and Edwardian Fancy," as the authors speak to the establishment of a children's literature market, the changing perception of childhood, and the ways in which fantasy literature of this period was characterized by a sense of containment, both literally and figuratively. Also touched upon in this chapter, and extended well into chapter three ("The American Search for an American Childhood"), is the way popular society perceived the fantastic to conflict (in a hostile manner) with realism.

Chapter four, "British and Empire Fantasy between the Wars," looks to the exploratory and experimental children's fantasy literature of the inter-war period—a time in which fantasy (by way of a formal or cohesive definition) was basically nonexistent in terms of publishing, readership, and criticism. Postwar British fantasy is the subject of chapters five and six: the former giving attention to the quest fantasy, destinarianism, and the import now attributed to the child (C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* being a prime example); the latter on the use of folklore and myth and a renewed "interest in Englishness/Britishness" (123). Here, as in chapter seven, "Middle Earth, Medievalism, and Mythopoeic Fantasy," the authors begin to address the problematic Othering and orientalism that occurs when dealing with the exotic—an issue particularly prominent in the rise of second-world fantasy in the 1970s and 80s, thanks in large part to the publication of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954).

Although the first seven chapters of the book (as outlined above) do indeed address important developments in the history of children's fantasy literature—particularly serving to, as the title of the book suggests, be an "introduction" to the field—it is the last two chapters that address new, increasingly important ground. Chapter eight, "Harry Potter and Children's Fantasy since the 1990s," examines how the "demand for social realism" shaped the production of children's literature in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. As the authors observe, this demand for children's literature to include more suggestive themes and grimmer content led to the formal creation of a Young Adult market: works generally aimed at those aged fourteen and older. How-

ever, the ages assigned to particular books are often not heeded by readers—as in the case of crossover sensations like J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*. Here, the authors also address the ways in which *Harry Potter* significantly changed the children's literature market, and, while this attention to *Harry Potter* is certainly not new among children's literature scholarship, the authors do raise (and offer answers to) important questions concerning Rowling's success. This chapter also examines horror in children's literature (as in writings by R. L. Stine and Neil Gaiman, for example), and the reality that children's literature has always contained a certain darkness.

Nonetheless, young adult manages a different type of dark—one described in chapter nine, "Romancing the Teen," as "disappointment, bitterness and desolation" (211). Certainly this is evident in the later *Harry Potter* books, as well as in other young adult sensations like Suzanne Collins's *Hunger Games* trilogy. However, what is especially significant in this final chapter is the space the authors devote to discussing popular contemporary writers of paranormal romance—a subgenre which is, like the penny dreadfuls and pulp fiction they discuss in earlier chapters, often "condemned as sub-literary" (69). Therefore, while Levy and Mendlesohn's reader-oriented approach is evident throughout the book, the authors discussed here—such as Holly Black, Maggie Stiefvater, and Melissa Marr—who rarely receive any academic attention, serve to reinforce their aim. Furthermore, of the influential yet widely despised (particular in academia) *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer, Levy and Mendlesohn respectfully discuss the text in relation to teenage sexuality and dating customs. By the close of chapter nine, the reader will likely find it impossible not to feel a renewed (or possibly new) sense of the necessity of children's literature, and this arguably is the greatest strength of the text: witnessing how children's fantasy literature influences and responds to our realities.

Children's Fantasy Literature will appeal to both the general public—those simply interested in children's fantasy literature—as well as to those in academia. This is largely due to the clear, accessible writing, but also, I might add, the text manages to be informative enough for general interest as well as analytical enough for scholars.

Additionally, because Levy and Mendlesohn introduce the reader to a wide range of works of children's fantasy literature—rather than a few specific case studies—the book will be of broader applicability and interest to those from various fields, such as history or folklore. Likewise, for those who are interested in writing about more contemporary young adult authors (such as Holly Black, as mentioned above), this work helps to provide some scholarship to an otherwise undiscussed group of writers. Finally, although more attention could have been given to the role (and agency) of publishers, particularly since the authors devote so much attention to the children's market, this work gives much-needed consideration to the contexts in which this type of literature is

produced and consumed—confirming, for any who might doubt, the very real world significance of children's fantasy literature.

ANELISE FARRIS

Decker, Mark E. *Industrial Society and the Science Fiction Blockbuster: Social Critique in Films of Lucas, Scott and Cameron*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2016. 185 pp. Paper. ISBN 978-0-7864-9911-3. $35.00.

Mark E. Decker's *Industrial Society and the Science Fiction Blockbuster: Social Critique in Films of Lucas, Scott and Cameron* offers a lively engagement with three mainstream filmmakers and their major contributions to the science fiction genre. Specifically, Decker applies a critical model based on the philosophy of Herbert Marcuse to the science fiction (and some non-science fiction) films of George Lucas, Ridley Scott, and James Cameron, arguing that these films offer a consistent and useful critique of industrial society and its infatuation with technology. This critique is despite, or perhaps because of, the omnipresence of technology within these films, and indeed the science fiction genre in general. Over the course of the book, Decker systemically analyzes the auteurs, the socio-historical context of their schooling and careers, as well as the critical, academic, and financial fortunes of the films under discussion.

The book's seven chapters (including the afterword) are structured chronologically and develop the critical analysis. Decker's first chapter, "Big-Budget Science Fiction Film and Profitable Social Critique," details the potential for social critique in mainstream science fiction blockbusters, drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau and Herbert Marcuse, and outlines the chronological structure of his study. From this foundation, in his second chapter, "Creating Cleverly Subversive Science Fiction Universes," Decker introduces the development of science fiction franchises, including the generic history that these franchises draw upon and how science fiction can incorporate social critique. The following four chapters focus on the works of the individual filmmakers: "George Lucas Battles the Empire of Unfreedom in *American Graffiti* and the *Star Wars* films" discusses Lucas' films, including *THX-1138* (1971) and all *Star Wars* films released prior to 2015; "Ridley Scott Takes on Apparently Evil Corporations in *Alien*, *Blade Runner* and *Prometheus*" discusses Scott's three science fiction films with (understandably) only passing reference to the director's other work such as *Thelma and Louise* (1991) and *Gladiator* (2000). Decker devotes two chapters to distinct strands within Cameron's oeuvre: "James Cameron Reforms the Company Man in *Terminator* and *T2*" analyzes Cameron's *Terminator* films specifically, before "Cameron's Questioners: Two-Dimensional Protagonists in *Aliens*, *Titanic* and *Avatar*" discusses these films, although *The Abyss* (1989) and *True Lies* (1994) are only mentioned in passing. In the afterword, Decker discusses the more recent sf blockbuster franchises *The Matrix* (1999-2003) and *The Hunger Games* (2012-2015), arguing that social critique continues in these contemporary films.

Decker gives extensive attention to de Certeau and Marcuse, so the reader can expect a clear explanation of "how the structurally obscured transmission

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of radical critiques takes place" (10), as well as the arguments of Marcuse that inform the book as a whole. These arguments include "Eros 'as a life instinct'" (19) and "Thanatos, the destructive drive that opposes Eros" (21), "'the rule of functional rationality'," and "the performance principle" (22). Decker's understanding and utilization of Marcuse is clear and comprehensive, and a reader unfamiliar with this philosopher is likely to get a decent, if rather narrow, schooling in the application of Marcuse's arguments. Similarly, Decker has thorough knowledge and understanding of the films under discussion (although there are occasional errors in plot summations), and does a fine job of tracing commonalities between them, both within and across the different oeuvres. For example, the inclusion of *American Graffiti* (1973) in chapter 3 as well as the discussion of *Titanic* (1997) in chapter 6 may seem strange in the context of science fiction, but Decker is persuasive in his reasons for including these. Decker argues that the ostensible fetishization of technology in *American Graffiti* actually serves as a critique, while *Titanic*'s message about the hubris of faith in infallible technology is more explicit. That said, the inclusion of *Titanic* does make Decker's omission of the overtly science fictional film *The Abyss* from his main argument rather glaring, since the critical elements of *Aliens* and *Titanic* especially would appear to be present in that film as well.

As well as his critical analysis of the films' narratives, Decker provides a detailed socio-historical contextualization for the films and filmmakers under discussion. This includes budget and box office data about the films, qualifying their status as blockbusters and major returns on investment, and he also discusses their critical reception. His resources, Boxofficemojo.com and Rotten Tomatoes, along with academic critique of the films, provide useful information for placing these films in context, while his attention to critical reception identifies patterns across responses that serve to support his overall argument. This demonstrates Decker's talent for marshaling a varied range of material and assembling it as a persuasive and coherent critical framework.

The downside of Decker's consistent approach is that the structure of the book becomes repetitive, especially as each chapter rigidly provides business background, the two types of reception, then applies the Marcusian critical model before leading to the same conclusion. This is unfortunate, because Decker does have an interesting argument that he applies well, but there is little variation in his application of this argument apart from the different film narratives.

Decker's attention to narrative leads to the biggest and most frustrating flaw of the book: an almost complete absence of film analysis. While the films' plots and character development, as well as dialogue, may support the Marcusian reading and demonstrate "two-dimensional thought" (64, 71, 83-84, et al), these are only part of how filmic texts work. Without in-depth discussion of *mise-en-scene*, editing, or cinematography, or the developments in film-

making between 1971 and 2012 (of which there are many, such as the spread of digital film and the rise of 3D, especially relevant to *Avatar*), Decker's argument is hamstrung at every step. Across the book, the only attempts to engage with film as a visual medium come when Decker quotes Anne Lancashire (72) and in the afterword (181), which comes across as an afterthought. This is a severe deficiency on the part of the author.

As well as lacking textual analysis of film as film, Decker's understanding of the film industry beyond budget and box office seems superficial at best, and his acceptance of authorship is reductive, uncritically using the auteur as a means of understanding. Some discussion of auteur theory would have helped here, giving Decker a chance to explain why he takes this hotly debated method of readership at face value. Furthermore, there is speculative reasoning for the commercial success or failure of particular films, such as suggesting that "it is quite possible that [*Blade Runner*] became popular with thoughtful viewers because it is so overdetermined" (86), after that film's theatrical failure at the box office. More industrial analysis would have demonstrated that *Blade Runner* attained its cult status as a result of extensive video rentals, indicating a historical context that Decker has overlooked, while the reference to "thoughtful viewers" is rather patronizing. Instances of inadequate research pepper the book, such as failing to check the gender of critic Kim Newman (99) as well as incorrect plot details (65, 127, 184). Furthermore, there are many typos and glaringly poor sentence structure (103, 121, 125, 158, 167). These errors suggest a lack of proofreading or a serious failure in copyediting—a problem that has plagued MacFarland titles in general.

Perhaps most annoyingly, there is a peculiar sense of apology throughout the book in talking seriously about blockbusters, despite the central thesis being precisely that blockbusters have much to say that is intelligent and worthwhile. Decker's repeated qualification of his critical engagement with these films raises the question of who is he trying to convince? If he wants to argue that blockbusters can offer serious social critique, he needs to display more confidence in his argument, and actually refer to the films themselves in depth. Without this confidence and support from the texts themselves, the book is unlikely to convince the unconverted. Therefore, it may serve to reinforce the throwaway reputation of blockbusters, by not using these very texts in their own right to support the argument of their potential for social critique. This is the greatest problem with Decker's book, making it a missed opportunity for an effective contribution to blockbuster scholarship.

Vincent M. Gaine

Bethencourt, Francisco (ed.). *Utopia in Portugal, Brazil and Lusophone African Countries*. Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2015. 314 pp. E-book. ISBN 978-3-0353-0740-5. $77.95

Based on the presupposition that each time and each place have unique utopias which are able to give voice to the wishes and the fears of every culture, *Utopia in Portugal, Brazil and Lusophone African Countries* collects essays (in English) about the specifics of utopian thought and the literary genre as expressed in the Lusophone world. The book, edited by Francisco Bethencourt, addresses utopian studies in various literary, historical and social aspects of countries like Brazil, Portugal, Mozambique and Angola. Most essays are about literary works, but there are also texts about films and Brazilian native mythology, for example.

The editor's introduction, signed by Bethencourt, draws a historical overview of utopian texts, defines the elementary genre paradigms, discusses turning points in the history of utopian thought and indicates how the book fits in the broader discipline of utopian studies. In other words, it meets the expected function of an introductory text and builds up the topics to be addressed in the anthology. It also notes that the volume originated from a multidisciplinary symposium held at King's College London.

The first part of the book, called "The Long View: Myths, Literature and Politics" is about the utopian spirit in remote moments of time (when sometimes history merges with myth and both fuse with utopian narrative), in conjunction with texts and/or topics of the contemporaneity. It begins with "Utopia and History: Camões's *Os Lusíadas* and Tavares's *Uma viagem à Índia*" by Helena Carvalhão Buescu, which shows that utopian studies allow a comparative view of men's desires, yesterday and today, and discusses the conflict inherent to the poles of will and power as aesthetically addressed by literary texts. Francisco Bethencourt's "The Unstable Status of Sebastianism," which discusses the Portuguese myth of the return of King Sebastian in relation to utopian thought. The particularity of the Portuguese word *saudade* (that can be roughly translated as "to miss something or someone") and its connection with the utopia is a useful contribution to the understanding of both terms.

Still on the subject of Lusitanian mythology, in "António Vieira's Utopian Kingdom of Christ on Earth" Patrícia Vieira debates utopia and time as conceived by the Portuguese priest Antonio Vieirawho deals with the mythological category, projecting it into the future and bringing the future to the present. His conception is a *sui generis* management of the inseparable relationship between utopia and what is still in the process of being. The last essay of the first part of the book is "Colonial Utopias: Between Native Populations and Missionaries" by Andrea Daher. In its approach to Brazilian culture, the essay is part of a tradition of studies begun by historian Sergio Buarque de

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Hollanda. Daher shows how contact between native populations and Jesuit priests promoted a new cultural configuration in which elements derived from both sides connected in a unique manner. The meeting of two cultures thus tends to give rise to new utopias, she argues.

The second part of the book is called "Modern Frameworks: Cultural and Literary Developments" and focuses on reading contemporary times through the framework provided by utopian studies. The first essay, "Utopia in Brazilian Cinema: from *Black God, White Devil* to *Foreign Land*" by Lucia Nagib, discusses the search for national identity and the resulting utopian feeling in film. The search and the development of a national identity is, in fact, notable in Brazilian arts from its first manifestations. This ever-present element is renewed through the perspective suggested by the essay, which should serve as an example to much of the criticism of Brazilian art. "Elephants All the Way Down: Utopia and Dystopia in Hélia Correia's *Insânia* and José Saramago's *As intermitências da morte*" by Maria Manuel Lisboa deals with contemporary narratives that are beyond the logical and cognitive imaginary framework established by the traditional utopian literary genre, a feature that challenges analysis. Lisboa's essay accepts this challenge, discussing the unusual shape of Correia's and Saramago's apocalyptic visions.

The following essay in part two, "From Utopia to Prophecy: the Meanderings of the Heterotopia of Nation in African Literatures," by Inocência da Mata, is the first in the book to address the specificities of utopias that may emerge in the cultural manifestations of the African continent. Mata highlights the presence of critical utopia in this region, which counterpoints the search for a better future with expressions of dissatisfaction with the present. "Utopia in Angolan and Mozambican Literature" by Maria-Benedita Basto closes the second part of the book, and takes into account the paradox implicit in the use of Western concepts like utopia to think about African literature. In this train of thought, the utopian longing for an ordered place refers to the desire for an escape from the disorder brought by the colonial condition.

The third part of the book is called "Modern Frameworks: Literature and Politics," and opens with "Utopia and Science in Portuguese Communism" by José Neves. He discusses the distinctions and the possible complementarities between utopian socialists and Marxists, in addition to addressing the danger of dystopia that, like utopia, remains on the horizon. In the following text, "The Utopian Unconscious," Luís Trindade brings a valuable contribution to contemporary understandings of utopia by promoting an unprecedented critical juncture; in dialogue with Fredric Jameson's concept of the "political unconscious" Trindade proposes a new concept: the "utopian unconscious." "Everyday Forms of Utopia" by Diogo Duarte is another essay that highlights the critical role of utopia and also the presence of dystopia on the horizon, as it analyses the development of neo-Malthusian thinking and the dilution of its

utopian project. Finally, Nancy Priscilla Naro closes the volume with "From Canudos to Contestado: Disputed Utopias." Taking the short story "Umas férias" as a starting point, Naro revisits agonizing pages of Brazilian history. The privileged point of view provided by utopian studies promotes a refreshing reading of Machado de Assis's fiction (a prolific author whose work has seldom been discussed from this perspective) and of the historical events in question.

Utopia in Portugal, Brazil and Lusophone African Countries promotes a renewal of utopian theoretical and critical thought and of the cultural texts discussed in each essay. The book doesn't aim at providing an extensive analysis of utopia in Portuguese-speaking countries, but suggests paths for further study. It makes an important suggestion that art criticism and, primarily and specifically, literary criticism in the Lusophone world should pay more attention to utopian thought and its potential for enriching the understanding of these societies and their cultural artifacts. In Brazil, for example, much of the criticism ignores the fact that utopia and dystopia have prominent presence in the national literature; for example, the paradigmatic novels André Carneiro's *Piscina livre* (*Free Swimming Pool*; 1980) and *Amorquia* and Ignácio de Loyola Brandão's *Não verás país nenhum* (*And Still the Earth: An Archival Narration*; 1981), are still little studied in Brazilian universities.

This book comes as a further demonstration of the potential of utopian studies to understand and discuss artistic manifestations as a whole, but as an important intervention into the stud of utopia in the Lusophone world. Utopia, after all, is the engine of human action—present in different cultures, always in search for a future that changes according to time and space.

RAMIRO GIROLDO

Fawaz, Ramzi. *The New Mutants: Superheroes and the Radical Imagination of American Comics*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2016. 368 pp. 15 halftones with color inserts. Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4798-2308-6. $29.

American comic books and the superheroes that populate them are often derided as mere fantasies, but in his debut book, *The New Mutants: Superheroes and the Radical Imagination of American Comics*, Ramzi Fawaz argues that postwar and specifically post-Golden Age (after 1956) superhero comics were neither escapist nor power fantasies. Rather, they were world-making technologies that reimagined the possibilities of American social and political life by making outcasts, deviants, and "mutants" into heroes. Fawaz forwards feminist, queer, and cosmopolitan readings of major superhero comics, making *New Mutants* the most recent book in a lineage of scholarship on the gender, racial, and sexual politics of American superhero comics. Others include Frederick Luis Aldama's *Your Brain on Latino Comics* (2009), Adilifu Nama's *Super Black* (2011), Noah Berlatsky's *Wonder Woman* (2014), and Jos Alaniz's *Death, Disability, and the Superhero* (2014). It is therefore surprising that Fawaz fails to engage in any significant way with this growing body of scholarship, even where particularly well-traversed topics are concerned. *New Mutants* does, however, make strides in realizing how a selection of superhero comics rethought relations of difference in postwar America by embodying the methods of both liberal and radical political activisms, at the same time offering a powerful defense of fantasy as political tool.

New Mutants boasts seven chapters, plus introduction and epilogue. Fawaz's introduction frames his project as narrating how "postwar superhero comics made fantasy a political resource for recognizing and taking pleasure in social identities and collective ways of life commonly denigrated as deviant or subversive" (4). The first three chapters tackle the cosmopolitan ethics of "team" superhero comics that valued "the uncertainty of cross-cultural encounter and the possibilities afforded by ... diverse group affiliations" (16), presenting readings in chapter one of *Justice League of America* (DC, 1960–1965) and in chapters two and three of *The Fantastic Four* (Marvel, 1961–1968). Chapters four through six offer readings of comic-book storylines that, as Fawaz argues, embodied the most popular and politically radical genres of the 1970s—the space opera (Marvel, *The Silver Surfer* and *The X-Men*) in chapter four, and the urban folktale (DC, *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*; Marvel, *Captain America*) in chapter five—and the 1980s—the demon possession saga (Marvel, *The X-Men* and *The Amazing Spider-Man*) in chapter six. The seventh chapter is a study of the titular *The New Mutants* (Marvel, 1982–1991), which Fawaz reads as demonstrating how a group of superteens confronted the social stigma of the very differences (mutancy) that made them special, i.e., superpowered. What Fawaz's book explores, ultimately, is how superhero

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comics dealt with "difference" as a social and political problem, not always to be solved and often as the basis of exciting gender, racial, and queer world-making projects that reflected the era's shifting political trajectories. The epilogue offers some final reflections on the neoliberalization of superheroic difference, or its transformation into "diversity" in the current moment as comic-book publishers use the inclusion of "diverse" characters to sell more comics, therefore lacking, according to Fawaz, the grappling with difference that made postwar comics so radically imaginative.

The introduction is an obvious place to begin because it is there that Fawaz advances what is likely to be *New Mutant*'s greatest contribution: the concept of "popular fantasy." Mapping commonalities across psychoanalytic, genre studies, and Marxist approaches to fantasy, and redressing particularly negative critiques (e.g., fantasy as false consciousness or mystification of real conditions of exploitation), Fawaz characterizes fantasy as a subversive mode of communication "that can work as an imaginative resource for resisting" and altering "norms that constrain one's world" (26). Fawaz modifies this basic understanding of fantasy to describe the concurrent phenomenon of fantasy's mass entertainment uses and its often radical political valences, thus identifying popular fantasy with the queer-feminist concept of "world making" or "worlding." For Fawaz, popular fantasy denotes "expressions of fantasy that suture together current social and political realities with impossible happenings to produce figures that describe and legitimate nascent cultural desires and modes of social belonging that appear impossible ... within the terms of dominant political imaginaries" (28). Moreover, drawing on diverse cultural theorists such as Jane Bennett, Deborah Gould, and Robin Kelly, Fawaz argues that subjective feelings of "enchantment" and "fun" are basic to the political work of popular fantasy, and goes one step further to suggest that fantasy is a prerequisite for radical politics, since efforts at world making desire to bring seemingly "impossible happenings," such as racial or gender equality, into existence (28-29). The entirety of the book, then, offers a detailed demonstration of how popular fantasy worked across time in a particular medium and genre, superhero comics, opening up a conceptual space for future work to identify the radical potential of other texts denigrated as mass entertainment fantasies. On a related note, Fawaz provides a compelling argument late in the book for seeing magic as a type of politics (244-45).

Another particular strength of *New Mutants* is Fawaz's use of comic-book readers' responses to the popular fantasies he charts. He sees them as central to superhero comics' fantasies, since it is through readers, their interactions with creators, and their acknowledgment of comics' political possibilities that world making happens. What makes Fawaz's queer and feminist readings of comics like *Justice League of America*, *The Fantastic Four*, and *The X-Men* all the more compelling is that he cites letters written to the comics' creators

and published in the comics' letter columns that demonstrate how readers played an active role in critiquing characters and storylines; for example, he references one letter calling out Stan Lee for writing the Invisible Girl as a passive, almost powerless member of the Fantastic Four, after which Lee greatly increased her presence and abilities in the comic. Fawaz deftly reads such moments of collaboration as evidence of an "affective counterpublic" that included comic-book letter columns, fan clubs, and conventions, and that encouraged readers to use "a popular media form to engage one another across race, class, gender, generation, and geographical space" (19; the argument is further developed on 100-13). As ground-breaking as insights like this are, however, Fawaz overlooks previous work on letter columns and comics fandom, merely endnoting Pustz's seminal *Comic Book Culture* (290n4), while failing to acknowledge the earlier history of letter-column counterpublics developed in the pulp magazines, which Earle traces in *Re-Covering Modernism* (2009). The pulp-comics connection here is significant, since Mort Weisinger, who Fawaz asserts introduced the letter column into comic books (18, 100), was originally an editor and publisher of pulps before editing Superman comics at DC in the late 1950s.

As this minor example demonstrates, what *New Mutants* lacks is any serious engagement with scholarship on superheroes, comic books, or other aspects of popular culture that the book concerns such as the transmedia spread of the space opera in the 1970s or the wider cultural presence of demon possession stories during the 1980s. While Fawaz does reference the occasional comics scholar (most often Wright's *Comic Book Nation* [2003], which although a touchstone has been followed by much more thorough investigations of comics, creators, and trends relevant to every argument Fawaz generates), they are never evoked in-text as are key cultural, feminist, or queer theorists, but are instead buried in the endnotes. Of course, such a strategy is not in itself objectionable, since it demonstrates Fawaz's self-positioning as a scholar of postwar America and radical political movements more than as a comics scholar; that is understandable for a number of reasons. But, when paired with the bibliography's lack of any recent major works in comics studies (Hatfield's *The Comics Art of Jack Kirby* [2011] being the only exception), it does have the effect of making *New Mutants* appear incorrectly as the sole pioneer in the study of postwar comics, and more egregiously as the first to touch on topics with robust secondary literatures, such as *The Fantastic Four*'s non-normativity, *The X-Men*'s queerness, or the nuclear-age vulnerabilities of the superhero figure.

Whatever its flaws, Ramzi Fawaz's *New Mutants* will have a significant impact on scholarship about American comics and their superheroes. Comics scholars will no doubt find Fawaz's book thought provoking, even if they occasionally wish for more engagement with relevant scholarship, while scholars

of fantasy and popular culture will discover that concepts such as "popular fantasy" are generative for their own work. I recommend *New Mutants* for individual scholars and academic libraries alike.

SEAN A. GUYNES

Glyer, Diana Pavlac. *Bandersnatch: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and the Creative Collaboration of the Inklings*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2016. 224 pp. Paper. ISBN 978-1-60635-276-2. $18.95.

Diana Pavlac Glyer's latest book on the Inklings provides both a "fly on the wall" perspective of the Inklings' group communications as well as an extended argument promoting collaboration in creative writing groups. The book, an abridgment of Glyer's critically acclaimed *The Company They Keep: C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien as Writers in Community* (2007), is written for a general audience; serious scholars of the Inklings may prefer to stick with Glyer's original version. But those simply wanting a clear introduction to the Inklings without the clutter of academic jargon and extensive research notes will find this to be a wonderful text. It is an ideal book for undergraduates, high school students, or reading groups.

Each of the book's eight chapters maintains a balance between recording how the Inklings collaborated and explaining to the audience the advantages of creating in a group. Chapters 1 and 2 discuss, respectively, Glyer's impetus for writing the book and the beginning of the Inklings' meetings. The subsequent three chapters describe, in order, how the Inklings praised one another's works, how they offered criticism, and how they then provided each other with specific suggestions for revision. These three chapters comprise the heart of the book, as they delve into the ways that the Inklings challenged each other to be better. Chapters 6 and 7 examine other forms of collaboration among the Inklings, such as coauthoring various works and incorporating each other as characters into their narratives. The final chapter and epilogue depart from recording the history of the Inklings and instead focus on practical advice for readers who wish to form collaborative writing groups of their own.

As anyone who has read *The Company They Keep* will know, the historical information Glyer offers on the Inklings and their meetings is both thorough and fascinating, and this is true of her abridgment as well. Glyer writes that, when she first began her research with the aim of answering the questions "What did these writers talk about when they met to discuss their works in progress? And what difference did these conversations make to the books they were writing?" (3), an elder mentor advised her to give up, saying there was no way to know precisely what the Inklings discussed in their meetings (4). After forty years of researching letters, diaries, notes, and manuscript marginalia, however, Glyer has finally reconstructed an excellent approximation of what their conversations must have been like. Most interestingly, Glyer emphasizes throughout her book that the group succeeded not because they shared interests and had similar backgrounds, but because they had very different interests, experiences, and literary tastes.

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The first chapter that deals with how the Inklings responded to each other is chapter 3, "The Heart of the Company," which focuses on how profusely the Inklings often praised one another's works and promoted them to the public. Glyer explains the importance of praise within the group by offering Lewis's explanation that the best minds praise the most often, while the "cranks, misfits and malcontents" praise the least. In sum, Lewis says, "Praise almost seems to be inner health made audible" (31). Throughout this chapter, Glyer highlights the significance of what she calls "resonators," people who "show interest, give feedback, express praise, offer encouragement, contribute practical help, and promote the work to others" (30). She argues that serving as resonators was one of the major ways that the Inklings helped each other. Glyer counterbalances this chapter with the next, "'I've a good mind to punch your head'," wherein she describes how the Inklings could be brutally honest with one another, sometimes crossing the line between honest criticism and meanspiritedness. Chapter 5, "'Drat that Omnibus!'" is the last to deal directly with the Inklings' responses to each other's work; here, Glyer examines how the Inklings gave specific suggestions for revision. Perhaps the most important example Glyer offers demonstrates how Lewis changed the course of *The Lord of the Rings* from merely being another hobbit story to being something more profound: As Tolkien records, "Mr Lewis says hobbits are only amusing when in unhobbitlike situations" (77). This bit of advice, simple yet compelling, changed the trajectory of Tolkien's novel and helped to produce the story as we know it today.

Chapters 6 and 7, "Mystical Caboodle" and "Faces in a Mirror," examine other ways in which the Inklings collaborated. The Inklings had both informal and formal collaborative projects, many of which either did not survive or were abandoned. Glyer notes that "the only book the Inklings produced together from start to finish" was *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (113). And, although there were other collaborations, the most prominent of these was between J. R. R. and his son, Christopher Tolkien. Moreover, the Inklings also commonly based characters in their stories on each other. As examples, Glyer notes how Treebeard's "*Hrum, Hroom*" from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* was meant to be an imitation of Lewis's "booming voice" (133), while Elwin Ransom of Lewis's *Space Trilogy* strongly resembles Tolkien (135). Though this may not strictly be labeled "collaboration," it is certainly "inspiration," and Glyer includes such observations as another way to show how influential the Inklings were upon one another.

The final two chapters move away from specific discussion of the Inklings to deal more broadly with the nature of collaborative groups and how individuals who participate in them can thrive. Glyer cites the work of Karen Burke LeFevre on writing as a social process, and offers LeFevre's anecdote about a

group of trees on Mt. Mansfield in Vermont: These trees are only three feet tall, and if any of them grows taller than the others, extending beyond their protection, it dies. Therefore, Levre advises, "Plant yourself in a tall forest if you hope to have ideas of stature" (151). Glyer then connects Levre's ideas about writing to Tolkien's beliefs about the creative process: Tolkien uses the metaphor of the "leaf-mould of the mind," saying that one's imagination is composed of the works of others (154-55). These works, even if they are not specifically remembered, make a type of fertile mental soil in which new ideas can grow. Furthermore, Glyer cites Charles Williams's ideas of "exchange," in which all people are interconnected, and relates this connectedness to the Inklings' community (157). Their meetings, their criticisms, their camaraderie, and their shared zeal for creating literature inspired all of them to be their best. In her epilogue, Glyer offers helpful recommendations as to how others may form their own writing groups where the members challenge one another to reach their full potential. Although this advice about how to work within a group will no doubt be helpful to those who are interested, it does make for an incongruous conclusion.

Augmenting the text are delightful illustrations placed at the beginning of each chapter. Each of these illustrations except one (which features Samwise Gamgee in his study with his children) portrays a member of the Inklings in one of his familiar haunts with a Bandersnatch—depicted as feathered, dragon-like monster—skulking ominously somewhere nearby. This whimsical juxtaposition of reality and fancy evokes nostalgia fitting for the literary group that produced so much beloved fantasy literature. The looming Bandersnatch also symbolizes Glyer's assertion that the communal aspect of this writing group never really left its members. The ever-present Bandersnatch suggests that the Inklings were not merely a collection of brilliant individuals who met once a week but were otherwise cloistered off in their offices, but rather that they were bound together by a common dream of producing great writing.

In all, this book is a thoroughly enjoyable introduction the Inklings. Glyer's decades of research have shed new light on the inner workings of the most influential literary group of the last century, and the narrative that she has constructed elucidates how the individuals within that group struggled with their writing, encouraged one another, and changed as artists because of each other's influence. Just as *The Company They Keep* has become an immensely important volume in academic circles, *Bandersnatch* will no doubt become an influential work through which many will enter the worlds of the Inklings.

JAMES HAMBY

Higgens, Deborah A. *Anglo-Saxon Community in J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings.* N.p.: Oloris Publishing, 2014. 120 pp. E-book. ISBN 978-1-940992-05-1. $15.00.

Fantasy authors often use and transform medieval materials when creating their fantasy worlds. In *Anglo-Saxon Community in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings*, Deborah A. Higgens seeks to enlighten readers about Tolkien's use of medieval sources in his creation of Middle-earth, making two main claims about Tolkien's engagement with Anglo-Saxon literature. The first, that Tolkien entered an Anglo-Saxon community of writers through his scholarly and creative work (5-6), is questionable, but ultimately not an important issue for her volume. The second, that Tolkien's knowledge about the Anglo-Saxon community, derived from his professional study of Old English (OE) literature and his reading in history and archaeology, informed the writing of *The Lord of the Rings* (*LOTR*), is unquestionably true. Focusing on this second assertion, Higgens traces and explains Tolkien's medievalism, enabling readers to understand how he transmitted and transformed medieval themes and concepts in his major work.

Higgens's book consists of an introduction (chapter 1), four chapters examining different aspects of Anglo-Saxon mead-hall culture (chapters 2-5), and a conclusion (chapter 6). Her introduction provides necessary background information, describing Tolkien's lifelong involvement with OE literature and mythopoesis, and laying out the book's argument in the form of short chapter summaries. Her second chapter, "On Fairy-Stories and Monsters," treats Tolkien's two important essays, "On Fairy-Stories" and "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics." For the former essay, Higgens expands upon important Tolkienian themes such as his "Cauldron of Story," an explanation of how storytellers are always borrowing from one another (6). From the Beowulf essay, Higgens distills Tolkien's understanding of the Anglo-Saxon mindset and the OE "Cauldron," i.e., the "ancient modes, genres, and elements" that he used in his writings (7). Thus, in her first two chapters, Higgens clarifies Tolkien's notions of creativity and the available OE literary resources from which he drew when writing of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Higgens's analysis of the influence of OE literature on *LOTR* begins in earnest with a discussion of mead-hall community and culture in chapter 3, "Tolkien Enters the Anglo-Saxon Community Through the Mead-Hall Building." In chapter 4, "The Role of the Lord, Comitatus, and Gift-Giving Within the Mead-Hall," she explains the lord's relationship with his thanes as established by the *comitatus* oath (an oath of allegiance and mutual protection), and how this oath was reinforced through the hall's structure and activities, especially feasting, drinking, and gift-giving. Higgens then shifts to the role of the lady in relationship to her husband and his thanes with chapter 5, "Lady

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with a Mead Cup: The Lady and Her Role as Cup-Bearer, Ambassador, Wife, and Warrior." Here, Higgens focuses on the lady's special duties as cup-bearer and giver of both gifts and advice during the mead-hall feast. In each chapter, Higgens describes the relevant constructs—such as the hall, the relationships among the male inhabitants, and the role of the lady—as gleaned from OE texts, primarily *Beowulf*. A discussion of Tolkien's application of these concepts in *LOTR* follows each account. Chapter 6, Higgens's conclusion, sums up the discussion, indicating similarities in tone and content between *LOTR* and the OE works discussed, which Higgens attributes to an elegiac attitude, as both Tolkien and his models mourn the decline of a heroic culture and articulate the need to preserve some of its values in later times.

Most of Higgens's discussion centers on affinities between the OE *Beowulf* and the Rohirrim, Théoden and his thanes, and Éowyn as lady of Meduseld, all of which comprise a relatively small portion of the totality of *LOTR*. Not only is Meduseld obviously modeled after *Beowulf*'s Heorot, but, as Higgens points out, Aragorn and his small company experience essentially the same view of the hall and treatment by the king's retainers as Beowulf's troop does upon approaching and entering Heorot. Higgens also elucidates the relationships between the king and his retainers that result from the *comitatus* oath and the protocols of feasting, sharing of the mead cup, and gift-giving that appear in OE texts and *LOTR*. Higgens focuses on Galadriel and Éowyn in her discussion of the lady and her role in supporting the *comitatus* oath, especially as cup-bearer during feasts, aligning *LOTR*'s female characters' behavior with that of *Beowulf*'s Wealhtheow and Hygd in confirming the authority of the king and the supporting roles of the thanes. Problematic in her discussion of the lady of the hall is Higgens's claim that Éowyn's disobedience in riding into battle with Théoden is an example of the *comitatus* oath in action. There is no evidence in OE literature or historical sources that Anglo-Saxon ladies entered into such oaths (beyond the marriage vow), and Higgens's only evidence of women engaged in direct combat for any reason comes from medieval Celtic literature.

Higgens extends her identification of the Anglo-Saxon elements beyond the Rohirric episodes in *LOTR* to Tolkien's notion of Northern Courage as exemplified by the various characters who persevere despite despair, danger, and imminent death. Descriptions of battles, "battle joy," and "sword play" throughout *LOTR* also encompass the Anglo-Saxon warrior ethos that supports the *comitatus* oath (45). Higgens additionally examines feasting and gift-giving as acts that maintain the social structure in both Lothlórien and the Shire. The location of Galadriel and Celeborn's feasts outdoors, however, suggests the liminal spaces of Faërie (which readers also encounter in the Wood-Elves' feasts in *The Hobbit*) rather than a mead hall.

This book is recommended for general readers who wish to enhance their understanding of Tolkien's medievalism in *LOTR*. The author presents

aspects of Anglo-Saxon mead-hall culture reflected in OE literature, primarily *Beowulf*, and demonstrates how Tolkien used—or transformed—these elements in his writings. Readers need to be careful, however, not to accept Higgens's assumptions and statements about Tolkien's use of medieval sources uncritically. For instance, her focus on OE literature and, to a lesser extent, Celtic sources, suggests to the uninitiated that these are the primary or only sources from which Tolkien drew medieval material. However, as an expert in Germanic philology, Tolkien was fluent in Old Norse and Gothic language and literature, from which he also derived inspiration. Thus, Higgens could, for instance, have found a possible Germanic parallel to Éowyn's gender-defiant foray into battle in Signy of the Old Norse *Vǫlsungasaga* or Kriemhild of the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied.*

Higgens also makes problematic statements about the context of Anglo-Saxon literature. She discusses the OE texts in terms of "writers" and how such texts were "meant to be read" (4, 25-26). Although the texts under discussion were eventually written down, they were chiefly products of pre-Christian, oral culture. Modern audiences can read the texts in question, but the experience of a modern reader is different from that of a (mostly) illiterate Anglo-Saxon mead-hall audience listening to a recitation by a bard.

Another problem is Higgens's assumption that similarities in the representation of *Beowulf*'s Heorot and *LOTR*'s Meduseld and the similarity of the Rohirric language to an OE dialect identify the Rohirrim as members of an Anglo-Saxon "equestrian community" (42). Tolkien himself denied this identification, and in fact made the Rohirrim something of a cross between Mercian-speaking Anglo-Saxons and equestrian Goths (as scholars such as Michael Drout and Tom Shippey have pointed out). Higgins misses Tolkien's use of Gothic names among the ancestors of the Rohirrim; Tolkien probably used Gothic—an older East Germanic language—in order to provide historical and cultural depth for the Rohirrim, thus creating a different linguistic and cultural history for them than that established for the West Germanic Anglo-Saxons.

Moreover, academic readers will notice some gaps in this book. For one thing, Higgens published her dissertation of 2007 without updating the book version to include relevant scholarship published since then; the only post-2007 entry in both the Works Cited and the additional bibliography is a 2012 telephone interview with Tolkien's daughter Priscilla. Also, the contents are not new for those who engage with Germanic philology, medieval literature, or Tolkien and his works. Both academic and lay readers might wonder why the analysis is limited to *LOTR*, since Tolkien's professional work in OE literature, especially his study of *Beowulf*, also informed his writing of *The Hobbit.* Including an analysis of Anglo-Saxon elements in the latter work would have been both appropriate and timely, as 2012 marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of its publication.

Although scholars may take issue with aspects of Higgens's argument, her book will likely be of interest to lay readers and may enhance their enjoyment and understanding of *LOTR*, especially its cultural and historical depth. This book might motivate some to read Anglo-Saxon literature in translation or perhaps even to engage with some of the original OE texts such as *Beowulf* or "The Wanderer," of which Tolkien was an acknowledged expert.

CAROL A. LEIBIGER

Pulliam, June, and Anthony J. Fonseca. *Richard Matheson's Monsters: Gender in the Stories, Scripts, Novels, and* Twilight Zone *Episodes*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. Hardcover. xv + 251 pp. ISBN 978-1-4422-6067-2. $80.00.

Since Richard Matheson's passing in 2013, scholarship consolidating the significance of his contribution to science fiction, fantasy, and horror writing has begun slowly to accumulate. Joining Cheyenne Mathews's and Janet V. Haedicke's edited volume *Reading Richard Matheson* (2014), June Pulliam's and Anthony J. Fonseca's two-author study adds to this growing corpus. Best described as an analytical survey, *Richard Matheson's Monsters* covers the seminal author's vast body of fiction and screenwriting, focusing on its representations of masculinity, femininity, and monstrosity. Given the scope of Matheson's work, the volume's textual analyses remain generally underdeveloped, but the extensive coverage and useful plot summaries coupled with references to the secondary literature may guide future scholars working to garner for Matheson the credit he deserves as a major figure in genre writing in the second half of the twentieth century.

Pulliam and Fonseca title their brief introduction "The Most Famous Horror Author You've Never Heard Of," signaling a truism of Matheson studies that has yet to be overturned completely. Although "not a household name like Dean Koontz or Stephen King" (1), Matheson's works are generally well known by genre fans and have increasingly been the object of academic study, not just in the US, but also in France and the Spanish-speaking world. They have no trouble making the case for his significance, but unfortunately his prolific nature frequently requires that Pulliam and Fonseca offer superficial treatment of many of the works they wish to survey. Chapter one's "The Life of the Legend: A Bio-bibliography," for example, frequently breaks down into mere lists of titles, and the plot summaries and analyses gathered in the following eight chapters are often no more than a few paragraphs for each text covered.

Chapter two, "Early Stories and Novels: The Pre-*Legend* Years," offers conventional readings that reinscribe Matheson's work as expressing "the anxieties of these white middle-class men" (26) who most frequently serve as his protagonists. With its foregrounding of female characters gender stereotyped according to post-WWII images of domesticity, and male characters struggling to negotiate evolving social expectations for masculinity, this book positions Matheson's work on the side of a white male established order. This chapter includes examinations of the initially ill-fated short-story collection, *Born of Man and Woman: Tales of Science Fiction and Fantasy* (1954), the first edition of which was largely destroyed in a pair of minor disasters, as well as the early mystery novels, *Someone Is Bleeding* (1953) and *Fury on Sunday* (1953).

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"*I Am Legend* (1954) and *The Shrinking Man* (1956): The Benchmark Novels" are the topic of chapter three, which rightly asserts the significance of these works in both the establishing of Matheson's career as a writer and his reputation since. And yet, analysis remains schematic with only nine and six pages devoted to each novel respectively. The authors largely repeat existing criticism, asserting (correctly) that, "*I Am Legend* spends much time considering the import of a changing view of masculinity in an evolving world. It presents a society where homogeneous Caucasian (read 'white') manhood is no longer defined by the male ability to wield physical and political power over women, children, and nonwhites" (67). Here and in chapter five, "From Legendary Scripts to Film," they focus on protagonist Robert Neville's "sexism and metaphorical racism" (118), thus evacuating much of the novel's subversive potential. They nonetheless note that "Neville is the true monster of this novel" (70) and "his ethic is not terribly different from those associated with the patriarchal civilization whose collapse he has just witnessed" (70). The six-page discussion of film adaptations of *I Am Legend* in chapter five also remains somewhat perfunctory, failing to take into account Matheson's own screenplay for it, "The Night Creatures," published in *Visions Deferred* (2009). In that chapter, Pulliam and Fonseca also address *Legend*'s influence on subsequent vampire and zombie films, including Matheson's screenplays for the 1973 *Bram Stoker's Dracula* starring Jack Palance, as well as offering an analysis of the film, scripted by Matheson, *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957).

Working only partially chronologically through Matheson's oeuvre, the authors discuss "The *Twilight Zone* Years" of the early 1960s in chapter four. With Charles Beaumont and Rod Serling himself, Matheson was one of the top three writers for the iconic series, and Pulliam and Fonseca offer plot summaries and analyses of gender representations of not only the scripts Matheson wrote, but also two of his stories adapted by Serling for the show. References to earlier stories and *Twilight Zone* episodes recur in later chapters; for example, chapter six, "Novels and Tales to Film, Part I: Multiple Masculinities" revisits "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet" and its reworking in *The Twilight Zone: The Movie* (1983). That chapter focuses on "Matheson's concerns about the rapidly changing idea about what it meant to be a man in the second half of the twentieth century" (137) and whether or not later adaptations of works originally written from the 1950s through the 1970s revised their images of manhood. Once again though, analyses are disappointingly brief because so much ground is covered, from the 1963 *Twilight Zone* episode "Steel" and *Real Steel* (2011) to the novel *Ride the Nightmare* (1959) and short story "Duel" (1971) and their respective film adaptations as *Cold Sweat* (1970) and Steven Spielberg's television movie. This chapter also covers the novel *Bid Time Return* (1975) and the iconic *Somewhere in Time* (1980), as well as "Button, Button" and its adaptation as *The Box* (2009).

Chapter seven, "Novels and Tales to Film, Part II: 'The Most Monstrous of Monsters'," continues the comparative analysis of representations of masculinity in Matheson's fiction and its adaptation to film in the 1970s and 1990s by Matheson or other screenwriters. It continues to see essentialist portrayals of women as weak or threatening, who put men at risk as they need rescuing or destructively seduce in the novel *Hell House* (1971) and its film adaptation *The Legend of Hill House* (1971), and *A Stir of Echoes* (1959) and its adaptation as a Kevin Bacon vehicle directed by David Koepp in 1999. They note Matheson's ongoing fascination with ghosts and spirits and his exploration of themes derived from his developing New Age beliefs, particularly in *What Dreams May Come* (1978) and its 1998 film adaptation starring Robin Williams. Finally, chapter eight examines the "Minor Novels and Teleplays," including some analysis of Matheson's Western novels and screenplays for *Have Gun—Will Travel* and *Wanted—Dead or Alive*. Although it frequently references Matheson's collaborations with producer Dan Curtis, the study gives disappointingly short shrift to Kolchak and *The Night Stalker* franchise.

Invoking the interrelationship between the author's biography and his bibliography in chapter one, Pulliam and Fonseca seem in subsequent chapters to confuse Matheson's own position and opinions with those of his characters, foreclosing oppositional readings (like those found in my own forthcoming study of *I Am Legend* and its film adaptations) that seek to rehabilitate Matheson's work for its visionary potential. Their application of feminist theory lacks consistency as they use the essentialist Nancy Chodorow and the constructivist Judith Butler indiscriminately to support their interpretations. At the same time, they underscore Matheson's radical contributions to the genre(s), including his frequent reversals which render the monstrous human and the human monstrous, and his genre-defying approach to storytelling which ultimately reveals his mastery of popular genre codes.

In the end, *Richard Matheson's Monsters* does makes a significant contribution to the field by bringing together in one volume a relatively coherent analysis of the vast body of his fiction and screenwriting, as well as screen works adapted from his fiction. This expensive volume, published largely for the library market, will also serve as a resource for high school and undergraduate researchers. More advanced scholars will be left wanting a more rigorous and thorough examination of most of the works mentioned in it; let us hope it serves as inspiration to a good number of rising graduate students who might find its bibliography useful for poaching.

AMY J. RANSOM

Schmeink, Lars. *Biopunk Dystopias: Genetic Engineering, Society, and Science Fiction*. Liverpool University Press, 2017. 288 pp. Hardcover. ISBN 9781781383766. $120.00.

Lars Schmeink's *Biopunk Dystopias* provides a useful, and mostly persuasive, account of the visions of bioengineering that have come to populate post-2000 science fiction. The first two chapters set up the premises of Schmeink's argument, and the remaining chapters offer a series of case studies through the close analysis of science fictional works of literature, film, television, and computer gaming. The theoretical discussions make strong claims that will provoke a certain amount of disagreement; the case studies are finely observed and rigorously argued.

The book begins with a consideration of what might be called (though this is not a term the author uses) biopolitical speculation. Ever since Darwin, scientists. intellectuals, and artists have been concerned with the ways that the scientific mastery of evolutionary processes might work to radically change human nature and human society. This is first glimpsed in nineteenth-century doctrines of eugenics, and in such late-nineteenth-century works as Wells's *Island of Doctor Moreau*. Such speculation picks up steam with the biological discoveries of the twentieth century, from the rediscovery of Mendelian genetics, through Watson and Crick's determination of the double helix structure of DNA, and onward through recombinant DNA technologies and discoveries concerning gene regulation, all the way up to the Human Genome Project at the end of the twentieth century. The line between basic biological research and the development of technologies to manipulate biology is a very thin one; it is both tempting and easy to imagine engineering extensions of our increasing scientific understanding of the functioning of the genome and of the cell. By the late twentieth century, in response to these developments, science fiction is replete with "depictions of cloning, genetically enhanced societies, and organ harvesting" (Schmeink here is quoting Joan Slonczewski and Michael Levy's chapter on science fiction and the "life sciences" in Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn's *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*).

Schmeink discusses how the growth of these technologies leads to a mutation in the focus of cutting-edge science fiction. He defines *biopunk* as being a development, or a transcending, of the cyberpunk of the 1980s and 1990s. Cyberpunk was mostly about the new virtual technologies, but it also addressed the visceral impact of these seemingly disembodied forms of experience. From Gibson's *Neuromancer* onward, the price of entry into the weightless realm of cyberspace always involves extreme bodily modification, often with horrific physical consequences. To a large extent, cyberpunk dystopias always already involve a biological or post-biological dimension. The shift in twenty-first-century biopunk is therefore one of emphasis: Instead of embed-

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ding body alteration within a cybernetic, virtualizing, and digital framework, biopunk embeds new communications and computing technologies within an overall framework of bioengineering. Instead of adapting human biology to the needs of the computer, we now employ computing power in the service of biological manipulation for its own sake.

Beyond observing this transition, Schmeink extrapolates from these observations to suggest that biological speculation has reached a threshold, and passed from specialized concern to general social ubiquity: "with the turn of the twenty-first century, the genetic has become not just a theme in sf, but rather a cultural formation that transcends the borders of the literary genre and establishes itself in mainstream culture" (9). Biological speculation is no longer just a concern of science fiction literature, but pervades all areas of the cultural sphere. And the actual developments in recent bioengineering are getting close to the extrapolations that science fiction has traditionally depicted.

In *Biopunk Dystopias*, such observations are intertwined with a number of arguments on different theoretical levels. These strands of thought concern utopianism, posthumanism, and the nature of globalized, financially dominated capitalism today. Schmeink embraces the critical posthumanism of such thinkers as Rosi Braidotti and Cary Wolfe; but he does not follow the critical utopianism of such Marxist-Blochian sf critics as Suvin, Jameson, and Freedman. Rather, he "sees 'utopia' as a neutral term that incorporates any form of 'social dreaming'," and that thereby "also allows for dystopia, the negative side of the dream, the nightmare to be warned about, as equally utopian"(12). For Schmeink, *eu*topia (the good place) and dystopia (the bad place) are the equal endpoints of a utopian continuum. I am not happy with this formulation; like the aforesaid Marxist-Blochian thinkers, I fear that it flattens out the dialectical interplay of the opposing poles or terms. At its best, sf utopianism does not just equivocate between liberating and oppressive outcomes of technological development. Rather, it both conveys a sense of communism as a radical rupture with the given capitalist world, *and* foregrounds the ways in which communism is not an ideal opposed to present actuality, but an actual condition of change or extrapolation, "the real movement which abolishes the present state of things" (Marx, *The German Ideology*).

Despite this theoretical disagreement, I have no quarrel with most of Schmeink's observations on the social influence of new biotechnologies, and on how science fictional extrapolation allows us to comprehend this. For social theory, Schmeink draws most heavily on the late Zygmunt Bauman's notion of "liquid modernity," involving "the dissolution of social institutions and the shifting of focus from public debate onto private life choices, the global dimension of current political issues, and, in contrast, the individualization of solutions to those issues" (15). Bauman's theorization can itself be taken

as an extrapolation, for the specific conditions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, of Marx and Engels' famous observation that, in bourgeois society, "all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind" (*Communist Manifesto*). Schmeink notes as well that (like Marx and Engels themselves) Bauman never proposed anything like "a utopian blueprint for future action" (12); his work remained critical and negative. Indeed, this is why Schmeink focuses on the dystopian side of sf extrapolation, rather than what he calls the eutopian side. Despite the theoretical disagreement I noted above, I think that this is a good strategy pragmatically, which pays off in the powerful insights of Schmeink's close readings.

These theoretical considerations are important; but the real meat of *Biopunk Dystopias* comes in the discussions of particular representative works in the remaining chapters. Schmeink discusses, in turn, the ways that biotechnology run amok is contemplated in prose fiction by Margaret Atwood and Paolo Bacigalupi; the way that Vincenzo Natali's film *Splice* reflects on corporate and entrepreneurial modes of biotechnology research; the way that the video game *BioShock* comments, both in its themes and in its formal manipulations, upon genetic manipulation and the ways this is and is not open to individual, market-based "choice"; the way that the television series *Heroes* negotiates the dilemmas of individual and collective action, and moves between the extraordinary powers of biologically enhanced superheroes or posthumans, and the quotidian necessities of everyday life; and finally how the ubiquity of zombie fictions in the post-9/11 era dramatizes the stakes, not just of terrorist threats, but also of corporate manipulation, and of general processes of "viral" contamination and contagion, in both literal and metaphorical senses, of the term, in our globalized and security-obsessed societies. All these chapters are dense and rich with insights. All the works discussed within them trace the consequences of Bauman's liquid modernity on scales both personal and societal, and trace the emergence of political strategies of preemption, exclusion, and sovereign exemption. Both the works discussed by Schmeink, and the discussions themselves, add nuance, detail, and concretization to themes that have been discussed not only by Bauman, but also by such thinkers as Foucault and Agamben. The book ends by tentatively proposing some ways in which the biological horrors of all these sf narratives also offer, at least provisionally, a vision of posthuman developments in their eutopian (or just utopian in the old sense) aspects. The book rightly does not exaggerate these hopes, but offers at least a glimpse of how the way through the biotechnological menaces of our world today might also involve a way out.

STEVEN SHAVIRO

Fimi, Dimitra, and Andrew Higgins, eds. *A Secret Vice: Tolkien on Invented Languages*. London: HarperCollins, 2016. lxv + 157 pp. Hardcover. ISBN 978-0-00-813139-5. $26.84.

On November 29, 1931, J.R.R. Tolkien delivered "A Secret Vice"—his first public exposition for his views on language, language creation, and sound symbolism—to the Johnson Society at Pembroke College, Oxford. Given the great importance of language in Tolkien's creative process, editors Dimitra Fimi and Andrew Higgins hope that their new scholarly edition of Tolkien's lecture will help make that important text, a manifesto on Tolkien's language creation, as "equally indispensable" as "On Fairy-stories" has been for his art of writing (ix). To this end, *A Secret Vice: Tolkien and Invented Languages* provides a much-needed step forward. If Fimi and Higgins oversell some of their claims about the importance of this new volume, as indeed they seem to do, this nevertheless hardly undermines the solid contributions being made to the field by this volume.

The centerpiece of the book, of course, is "A Secret Vice" itself. Unlike many of Tolkien's other major academic works, "A Secret Vice" does not have the extensive drafts and textual variants that justified the previous scholarly editions done for Tolkien's works. Thus, Fimi and Higgins fill out their edition not only with rigorous and informative endnotes but also, for the first time, the complete and unabridged text of the 1931 lecture. In the original 1983 publication of "A Secret Vice" in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays,* Christopher Tolkien had decided to silently omit several passages, including one passage—over two pages in length—about Tolkien's invented language of Fonwegian. A natural enough question is why had Christopher Tolkien done so? Fimi and Higgins offer no guess, although Andrew Higgins admits in a different publication that they simply don't know (see Higgins, "Fonway" 1). Considering the omission, publishing the full, complete text in *A Secret Vice* constitutes a nice improvement. It should be mentioned, though, that the editors inadvertently create some confusion about the Fonwegian issue. Although they note that the Johnson Society minutes of Tolkien's lecture "record the name" of the "omitted" language (xxxiii), the minutes do not actually mention *any* languages by name. Instead, they mention two languages via description: a language that uses "the names of animals" (i.e., Animalic) and a language "spoken in the island of Fonway" (qtd. in xxxii, xxxiii). I had to cross-reference Christopher Tolkien's 1983 text and double-check that the omitted language was actually Fonwegian.

An "Essay on Phonetic Symbolism" supplements Tolkien's centerpiece lecture, a previously unpublished piece that largely echoes ideas from Tolkien's main lecture, and also several disparate pages of archived notes and commentary on languages and language creation. New material by Fimi and

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Higgins includes a substantial introductory essay (itself worth the price of admission) plus a briefer "Coda" that details the reception and influence of Tolkien's languages. The editors round out the volume with a chronology of Tolkien's intellectual projects from 1925-1933, useful for showing Tolkien as "a man actively engaged in social, academic and creative interests" (xxxiv–xxxv), and a bibliography of Tolkien's works.

Although the full text of "A Secret Vice" represents an important selling point for this edition, even more significant (arguably) is Fimi and Higgins's discovery that the Johnson Society at Pembroke College, the group to whom Tolkien delivered his lecture, kept minutes of that event. Not only do these minutes provide the only known contemporary account of Tolkien's lecture, they also definitively prove that Tolkien read to them his passage on Fonwegian. These minutes, combined with an impressive familiarity with Tolkien linguistics (including the two specialist journals, *Parma Eldalamberon* and *Vinyar Tengwar*), grant Fimi and Higgins's introduction additional substance and depth. Indeed, the introduction provides an excellent overview of Tolkien's ideas on language, the intellectual context surrounding International Auxiliary Languages (IALs), and the contentious issue of "sound symbolism," fitting sense to sound, something deeply questioned by contemporary linguistics but essential to Tolkien's creative linguistic process. Much of this overview, granted, can be found in other sources, most notably Part II of Dimitra Fimi's own *Tolkien, Race, and Cultural History* (2008), but the new information and up-to-date research means that the editors go well beyond rehashing old information.

Even if the importance of the unabridged text of "A Secret Vice" and the Johnson Society Minute Book cannot be denied, however, other claims by Fimi and Higgins betray more hopefulness than rigor. For example, the issue of Esperanto features heavily in the editors' discussion of IALs. As Fimi and Higgins note, Tolkien scholarship generally holds that "Tolkien originally expressed admiration for Esperanto but changed his mind later on, or at least lost his original enthusiasm" (xlix). They *seem* to wish to challenge this consensus, but their argument is extremely unclear. As far as I can tell, their argument centers around the penciled notes Tolkien made to his lecture. At the opening of Tolkien's lecture (corresponding to pages 4-5 of *A Secret Vice*), the editors present two poorly explained columns. The right-hand column represents an "alternative opening" (38), and the editors claim that Tolkien wrote this alternative opening in 1931, *not* decades later in preparation for a possible second delivery. (Only three undeniable instances of later revision exist: respectively, endnotes 31, 37, and 39 on pages 43, 44, and 45.) My best guess, then, is that Fimi and Higgins are responding to Christopher Tolkien's assertion in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, an assertion later

followed by Wayne Hammond and Christina Scull, that this alternate opening "more probably" (219) offers a further indication of a possible second delivery. If I read Fimi and Higgins right, however, questioning that lone assertion hardly challenges the general consensus—at best, they remove one minor piece of supporting evidence. Even so, the editors offer no reason for dating the alternative opening at 1931.

Even more tenuous is the implication that Tolkien critiqued "the artistic qualities of [James] Joyce and [Gertrude] Stein" (lxiv). We know that Joyce and Stein came up during the original 1931 post-lecture discussion, but the Johnson Society Minute Book provides no specifics. Thus, Fimi and Higgins's evidence that Tolkien actually *engaged* Joyce or Stein on language centers on two vague references from the manuscript notes. Tolkien's commentary on Stein (pages 100-101) consists of one short paragraph only and never mentions anything Stein wrote or what Tolkien thought she was attempting to do. Actually, the opinion of the Johnson Society on Stein is much more rigorous: she "had undoubtedly succeeded in depriving words of all meaning, but the result was not only unbeautiful, but even utterly ridiculous" (qtd. in lxii). The evidence for Tolkien's engagement with Joyce is even flimsier—nothing more, in fact, than Tolkien jotting down the phrases "Anna Livia Plurabelle" and "Stream of consciousness" (91) on two separate lines. If the following manuscript notes *are* an attempt to engage Joyce, they are as superficial as Tolkien's comments on Stein. I suspect that Fimi and Higgins, in their excitement to see Tolkien engaging major modernists on language, simply over-reach on the available evidence. It happens.

Also, given the heavy emphasis on Esperanto and IALs in the introduction, one wonders why Fimi and Higgins did not include additional materials by Tolkien on these subjects. It makes sense, of course, to exclude Tolkien's other major lecture on language, "English and Welsh," since that will probably receive its own scholarly edition someday, as well as to exclude Tolkien's relevant letters, readily available elsewhere. Why not, however, include Tolkien's 16-page *Book of the Foxrook* (1909), never before published in full, or "A Philologist on Esperanto," Tolkien's 1932 letter to *The British Esperantist*? The editors mention the former and excerpt the latter, but *A Secret Vice* is slim enough that the full text of either would have helped provide "an expanded view of Tolkien's thoughts and ideas on language invention and related linguistic notions" (viii). Indeed, the basic inclusion-exclusion principle of *A Secret Vice* seems somewhat arbitrary—the book limits itself to MS. Tolkien 24, fols. 3-52, texts located at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Even if the editors had limited themselves to the period between 1925 and 1933, a "key moment of [Tolkien's] academic and creative career" (lxiv), that would have included the full letter to *The British Esperantist*—at least for convenience,

if nothing else. As it is, readers and scholars interested in a more complete picture are still advised to consult the excellent work of Arden R. Smith and Patrick H. Wynne.

Regardless of omissions or overstatements, however, the crucial question for a scholarly edition is, "Does this scholarly edition supplant the previously go-to text?" In this regard, I think *A Secret Vice: Tolkien on Invented Languages* certainly succeeds. Scholars, so long as they are cautious about some of the more exuberant claims in *A Secret Vice*, will benefit from the rigorous endnotes and the complete text, and general readers will find the introduction and discussion of technical linguistic questions accessible. The minutes from the Johnson Society are a revelation, and the editors should be thanked for their contribution to the field.

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John Kessel's speculative fiction includes a newly published novel *The Moon and the Other*, novels *Good News from Outer Space* (1989) and *Corrupting Dr. Nice* (1997) and collections *Meeting in Infinity* (1992), *The Pure Product* (1997), and *The Baum Plan for Financial Independence and Other Stories* (2008). His fiction has received the Nebula Award, the Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award, the Locus Award, and the James Tiptree Jr. Award, and has garnered more than 40 nominations. His story "Pride and Prometheus" (2009) received both the Nebula and the Shirley Jackson Awards and was a nominee for the Hugo, World Fantasy, and Tiptree Awards. With James Patrick Kelly, Kessel has edited an influential series of anthologies, and the two also collaborated on a novel, *Freedom Beach* (1985). Kessel teaches American literature and fiction writing at North Carolina State University, where he helped found the MFA program in creative writing and served twice as its director. He lives with his wife, novelist Theresa Anne Fowler, in Raleigh.

Guest of Honor

Nike Sulway

Dr. Nike Sulway is a writer and academic. She is the author of several novels, including *Rapture* (2014), the first work by an Australian writer to win the James Tiptree, Jr. Award. Her previous publications include the novels *The Bone Flute*, *The Tree Green of Hope*, and *What The Sky Knows*. Her works have won or been shortlisted for a range of national and international awards, including the QLD Premier's Literary Award, the Commonwealth Writers Award, the Children's Book Council of Australia's Book of the Year Awards, the IAFA Crawford Award, the Aurealis Awards and the Norma K. Hemming Award. She is also the author of a number of published and forthcoming essays and articles on contemporary women writers, including essays on Lynn Paloma, Sarah Waters, Barbara Newhall Follett, and James Tiptree, Jr. Her most recent novel, *Dying in the First Person*, came out in mid-2016. She teaches creative writing at the University of Southern Queensland.

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Fred Botting

Fred Botting completed his PhD in Cardiff before going on to teach English literature, cultural theory, film, and media studies at the Universities of Lancaster, Keele and Kingston. He has written extensively on gothic fictions from the eighteenth-century to the present as well as publishing work on literary theory and genre (horror, romance, and science fiction) and contemporary literature. His books include *Making Monstrous* (1991), *Gothic* (2nd ed. 2014), *Sex, Machines, and Novels* (1999) and *Limits of Horror* (2008).

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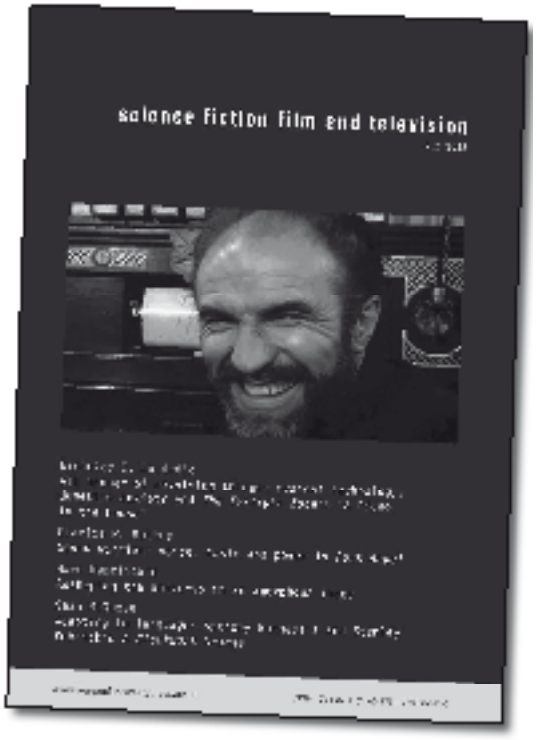

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