



The Carrel



Vol. 3, Issue 2 May, 2021

Theme: Goth & Otherness



“All Work and No Play Makes Jack A Sociopath”: The depiction of Madness and Ambiguous Horror in Stanley Kubrick’s ‘The Shining’

Characteristics of the horror genre that have distinguished the good, the bad, and the best have always surrounded themselves around the elements of darkness, suspense, gore, and an intricately layered plot. Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining* does away with all these elements and still manages to be one of the greatest horror flicks of all time. With a relatively simple story concerning a family of three staying at the prestigious Overlook hotel, the plot turns as the family falls victim to supernatural forces as well as insanity caused by isolation. Kubrick emphasizes primarily on the use of the absurd and eerie, consequently arousing madness to grip his audience into a trance. Through this venture into defining horror using eerie elements, he creates a sort of anxiety due to the audience’s unfamiliarity with this alien version of horror. Drastically different from the original novel written by ‘The King of Horror’, Stephen King, Kubrick’s version of the story moves away from the active involvement of the supernatural that the book is characterized by and instead deploys *Mise-en-scene* in an innovative manner to instil fear within his audience. This article will highlight how Kubrick insinuates horror using ambiguity and madness in his movie *The Shining* by highlighting his alienated characters, eerie soundtrack, cinematography, and most importantly, *Mise-en-scene*.

The most notable aspect of Kubrick’s adaptation is in how he immediately makes the audience aware of the source of horror, who the villain is, and how the action will develop. This unveiling of the plot and the primary threat creates tension as the audience waits for the action to kick start.

The very first scene of the interview already foreshadows the events that will take place in the movie as the protagonist is foreshadowed to descend into madness and attack his family. This, in turn, normalizes his hysterical mannerism and establishes him as the main threat and the centre of the action. Suspense ceases to exist the moment we are introduced to the protagonist, Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson), as he already shows characteristics of a sociopath. His hysterical laugh, the demonic ‘Kubrick Stare’, quirky hand movements, make it easy for the viewers to identify him as the source or victim of evil. Torrance’s son, Danny (Danny Lloyd), shows supernatural abilities through the various hallucinations of death and gore he witnesses. Once Kubrick establishes the abnormal characters, audiences are forced to empathize with the only other prominent (and normal) character left, Wendy Torrance (Shelley Duvall), the wife and mother



of Danny and Jack Torrance. But even the character of Wendy becomes problematic according to the popular ‘Wendy Theory’ that suggests that Wendy was the real sociopath, and the events regarding Jack losing his sanity and her son being characterized by supernatural powers were figments of her hysteria. This discredits Wendy as a reliable character and thus shows Kubrick’s narration to be deceptive, leaving viewers perplexed without any point of credibility. The inherent ambiguity caused by the realization that you believed what Kubrick wanted you to believe and its subsequent subversion questions your very understanding of the events that have unfolded. This, coupled with a very eerie high pitched soundtrack, develops tension as each scene

progresses. What is unique about Kubrick’s choice of sound is how his score creates tension and peaks into absolute nothingness at times while at other times the frame shows a shocking reveal while the score is subtle. This forces his audience to not rely on the score to prepare them for the surprise and be alert at all times. Ambiguity resulting from this causes anxiety of massive proportions as not only is the score misleading, but it is eerie and develops tension as well. *The Shining* is also characterized by its long stretched tracking shots in symmetrical frames, which also creates tension. The wide frames with empty spaces and singular

subjects emphasize the isolation felt by the characters. In a way, the repeated use of tracking shots personifies the Overlook Hotel as a living being that constantly observes the family.

The way Kubrick deploys *Mise-en-scene* is perhaps the most crucial component of his movie as it exemplifies the eeriness and creepiness of his work. The costumes and sets he creates incorporate contrasting images and colours that heighten the audience’s senses. Use of mirrors in all

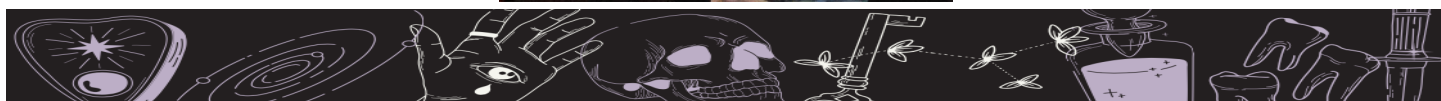
the scenes where Jack displays his mad eccentricities, the use of the Overlook Hotel’s bush maze as a metaphor for the complexity of the mind, exotic designs on the walls and floors of the hotel with a vivid and bold colour palette that heighten viewer’s senses, etc. are examples of different components Kubrick uses to enhance the feeling of eeriness and discomfort. The setting in itself contrasts from very wide halls to narrow hallways, with the narrow hallways

depicting the thin line of sanity. Another clever use of *Mise-en-scene* by Kubrick is in how the same shot constitutes different objects in different frames. This singular inconsistency object placement is what the Wendy Theory is based on; that the inconsistency in objects from Wendy's perspective is because of her hysteria, making her the madwoman contrary to Jack. Kubrick's brilliance is established in this simple plot twist which is subtly hinted at by particular objects being at different places at different times in the same frame. Some critics argue that the object displacement is done so as to personify the Overlook Hotel as a living entity, further adding to the eeriness.



However, the movie's most horrific scene is that of the final zoom shot showing Jack in a picture, taking part in a gala at the Overlook Hotel almost 60 years ago, even before he was born. This end to the movie adds to the ambiguity and confusion, leaving audiences searching for answers. Kubrick's constant search for truth in human existence results in ambiguous endings for existential scenarios. This leaves much to the imagination of the audience, creating subconscious dread in their minds. Thus making them timeless.

Krishnanuni P.



The 'Burton-esque'

Tim Burton is one of the most well-known directors in mainstream cinema, owing to the fact that his films all look like Tim Burton films. It's difficult to think of a recent director whose distinctive visual aesthetic has become so instantly familiar. Moreover, in his latest live-action Disney film *Dumbo*, which is a departure from Burton's previous work — it's a sequel but still serves as a critical examination of the classic — it's a remake that also serves as a thoughtful criticism to its precursor — it is also very "Burton-esque," as are all of his films. Tim Burton is one of the most well-known directors in terms of visual appeal. A "Tim Burton film" is like walking into a macabre fairy tale, complete with a cast of delightfully deranged characters. His hellish cityscapes, rundown theme parks, ghost towns and homes, and eerie circuses serve as ideal backdrops for his zany comedy and horror. Anything from *Batman* to his live-action version of *Dumbo* features set design, Gothic themes, and his use of light and dark. Burton's artistic style is unmistakably his own, but he is inspired by a number of well-known art trends and film forms. His style is diverse, and it is by the blending of various trends that he has developed his own unique style.



Burtonesque Embraces German Expressionism

In the 1920s, a new art revolution swept through Europe's art, cinema, and film, and then into America. The German Revolution, which drew on psychoanalysis, began after World War I. Insanity, anarchy, death, and terror are concepts explored in a German Expressionist film, which are themes that the German people faced as a reaction to the war. They're also appropriate themes for every Burton film. The creation of a dreamlike reality by surreal set design, lighting, and character is how Expressionism expresses these concepts. The main goal is to use props, lighting, and character to demonstrate the characters'; inner psychology while still eliciting social suspense in the audience.

Anthropomorphism

Burton's films also use the Expressionist concept of anthropomorphism, which involves imbuing objects and creatures with human-like characteristics and behaviours. Vincent brings an eerie Jack-in-the-Box to life. There are various monsters and artefacts in *A Nightmare Before Christmas* that have human-like features and attitudes. At a wedding scene in *Beetlejuice*, statues come to life.

***Memento Mori* and Day of the Dead**

The annual Day of the Dead celebrations in Latin America was usually followed by a plethora of vivid representations of skulls and skeletons. *Calaveras*, or reanimated skulls and skeletons, as well as calacas, horns, and skull masks worn during rituals, are among them. Burton's art is fraught with allusions to calacas and calaveras. *Memento mori* are literary and artistic representations of death's inevitability. The concept originated in ancient Rome and spread across Europe in art and theatre. The influence of *memento mori*, which is typically symbolised by a skull (and sometimes a complete skeleton) seen in paintings, can be seen in a number of Burton films, especially the image of the Headless Horseman's skull in *Sleepy Hollow*. Similar representations can be seen in the Mexican Day of the Dead celebration, as well as the calaveras and skull masks that march down the streets during this holiday season. The Walking Calaveras are mentioned by both Jack Skellington from *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and the titular Corpse Bride.

The Grand Guignol

The Grand Guignol, a theatre in Paris that produced bloody stage plays, is a lesser-known influence. French fans flocked to the Grand Guignol in droves to admire its vivid depiction of

sadism, torture, mutilation, and brutal ends at a period when public executions became a means of entertainment. Burton's musical "Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street", which is based on a play produced in London's West End, was inspired by the theatre. Burton sets the film like a play, and he doesn't hold back as Todd slits the throats of his victims.

The Gothic

Tim Burton's work combined his fascination with the fantastic with tales that eschewed the banality of respectfully civilised life. Normal boys feed their passion for the morbid inside quiet normal homes in "Vincent" and "Frankenweenie". "The Nightmare Before Christmas" is of Halloween and Christmas colliding in an infernal way. Dark, ominous structures surrounded by mist; tragic heroes and antiheroes; and a rapacious fascination in the gruesome, strange, and grim proceedings were all present in his aesthetic. These features made their way into filmmaking a century and a half back. Burton, on the other hand, always flips the Gothic on its back. Characters like Edward Scissorhands and Betelgeuse, rather than being shunned and feared (though his films do feature that as well), add a certain charm to the Gothic.



"Beetlejuice" is a reimagining of the classic haunted house story for a new audience. Edward Scissorhands' mask, make-up, and hairstyle are more 80s Goth punk-rocker than Frankenstein's monster. Burton's

Gothic influences are evident in films such as "Sleepy Hollow", "Dark Shadows", and "Sweeney Todd", as well as imagery in his Disney films "Alice in Wonderland" and "Dumbo".

This fusion of great sculpture, theatre, cinematic movements, and carnival acts including the dead and grotesque culminated in a full range of colour that is distinctively Burton-esque. Bright colours aren't usually associated with Gothic stories, but the world's grim, greyscale palette is often contrasted with a goofy, nearly candy-coloured world of pastels, stripes, and splodges. This is exemplified by the Gothic couple in "Sweeney Todd" enjoying a leisurely walk on the pier on a cloudless day, the zany and vivid horror-house factory in "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory", or the Wonderland landscapes in both Alice films. Colours are always light in these realms, but the deeds are grim.

Burton, like his characters, has come to terms with his singular vision and worldview. Burton's nightmare is the mundane truth of suburban life, not the haunted mansion. That's where the thrill is!

Article & paintings by Tillee Sen



GOTH AND THE GAME OF THRONES

When we hear the term 'Goth', we think of all the dreary creatures and stories which were often told to us by our grandparents when we were kids. As a genre, the Gothic in English literature looks backward in history depicting its adherence to "medieval settings, ghosts, castles, vengeance, omens, curses, hopeless maidens," etc. And for most of us, this genre is pretty intriguing even today. Well, in my opinion, it requires the reader to have an eccentric imagination to be willing to accept that there might be something "beyond that which is immediately in front of us".

"Game of Thrones" is a series about nine noble families who squabble among themselves to gain control over 'the seven kingdoms' whilst an army of dead men and white walkers march towards them to annihilate humanity and have a long and endless night.

It is considered to be dramatic fiction, but I believe, in many aspects, it can be considered a part of the gothic genre. The series has a medieval setting and is characterized by many supernatural elements like enchanted forests, a wall of ice, haunted castles, giants, dragons, etc. Also, Gothic architecture is very prominent in several locations in "Game of Thrones."



The series consists of haunted places like the castle of Harrenhal which is presumed to be cursed and the city of Old Valyria which is considered to be doomed, alongside witches like 'The Red Woman' or Lady Melisandre who worships the Lord of Light. The element of fear is made prominent through omens and spells which form the basis of the series as a prophecy made by a witch about Queen Cersei years ago becomes true. Another mention of witches can be seen when Lady Melisandre's demon baby murders Renly Baratheon in the form of a shadow and also when the witch from the village sacrifices Khal Drogo's horse in an attempt to bring him back to life. Another prominent feature of Gothic literature can be seen as Old Nan who is a foolish old woman and tells horrifying stories to Bran about the nightwalkers which eventually turns out to be true.

The kingdom of North is characterized by many shady and strange things like the weirwood trees with faces carved on their bark who bleed tears. There is a vague connection between these trees and human sacrifice and blood magic as it is the place where the white walkers were first created. These white walkers play the role of 'the other' in the series.

In the prologue of “A Game of Thrones” (1996), Martin describes the Others, introducing them as “tall... and gaunt and hard as old bones, with flesh pale as milk” and eyes “deeper and bluer than any human eyes, a blue that burned like ice.” They carry armour that “seemed to change colour as it moved” and wield thin crystal blades capable of breaking glass, accompanied by a deep cold. Martin describes the Others’ voices as “like the breaking of ice on a winter lake,” and they travel softly and speak their own words. Another salient feature of the gothic genre is the virginal maiden which is excellently presented through the character of Sansa Stark who is a sweet, innocent child with a dreadful past and is the daughter of a noble family. She is often referred to as a ‘little bird’. She is married off to Ramsay Bolton, who is a sadist and remains her captive for a long time until she is saved by her hero, Theon, who lived with her family at the beginning of the series.



Eventually, I am certain that the HBO series “Game of Thrones,” which is based on George R.R. Martin’s series of fantasy novels “A Song of Ice and Fire,” is a masterpiece that fits well in the Gothic genre as it contains almost all the elements of Gothic fiction.

Yashika Gera



THE HOUSE OF HORRORS

“I have written myself into the house,” announced Jackson shortly after the publication of “We Have Always Lived in the Castle.” A ‘house’ can metamorphosise into a womb, a refugee’s shrine, a chamber of secrets, the Cave of Spleen, and a prison. Caught in hysteria, women become the victims of their circumstances, caged in a patriarchal land where the men hold the key to the padlock. Yet this womb, as Gilbert and Gubar elucidate, is also the locus of women power, “the umbilicus mundi, or the great antechamber of the mysteries of transformation.”

Such an antechamber of mystery and fanaticism is the Blackwood House in Shirley Jackson’s eerily beautiful novel, “We Have Always Lived in the Castle” (1962).

“I can’t help it when people are frightened,” says Merricat. “I always want to frighten them more.”

On her quest, she poisons almost every trace of the patripotestal lineage which transcends into the transfer of power onto the womenfolk of the house.

Like most of Jackson’s projections of protagonists, her wickedness and immaturity can not be called sheer madness, since Merricat is no madwoman. She is a lonely, hyper-imaginative entity who goes berserk when all her attempts to break free from the “golden Chain” turn futile.

Merricat is no madwoman. She is a lonely, hyper-imaginative entity who goes berserk when all her attempts to break free from the “golden Chain” turn futile.



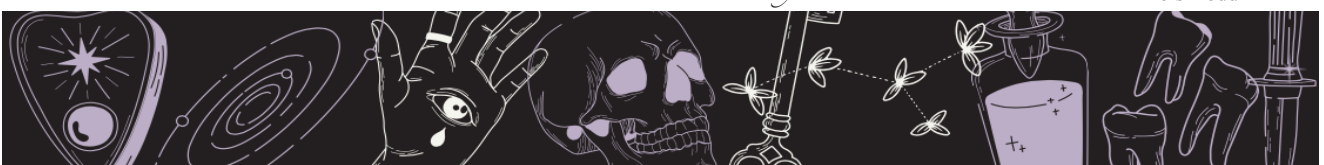
Critics argue that the motif of a lonely woman setting out to escape a miserable family or a claustrophobic village and ending up “lost” recurs throughout Jackson’s microcosm. She runs, tumbles and rises on her blood-clotted feet only to take refuge in a house where though the roses bloom, the sun shines and the nightingale trills at dawn, a slinking menace soon shrouds her in sombre colours. The quest for an alternative and vivid life, hence “proves illusory” (Heller)——

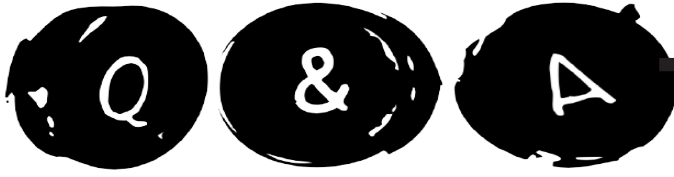
“On the moon, we wore feathers in our hair, and rubies on our hands. On the moon, we had gold spoons...on the moon we spoke a soft, liquid tongue, and sang in the starlight, looking down on the dead dried world” (Mary Katherine Blackwood, We Have Always Lived in the Castle).

The perpetual othering of Merricat for being branded as a ‘neurotic’ by the villagers calls out how the horror genre is rooted in ableism, and more often than not on virtue signalling. So, she spins around and takes on the role of a witch with a bowl full of sugar, brimming with arsenic! “The witch role”, as Elizabeth Janeway opines, “permits the woman to imagine that she can exercise some sort of power, even if it is an evil power.” And Merricat’s spells have from time immemorial meandered the halls of the Castle, for “she was (always) a wicked, disobedient child.”

Jaya Jaiswal

*Image Courtesy:
Lois Dodd





Dave Mckean

Interviewer: Amola Srivastava

01

You have produced art in myriad forms for consumption by children as well as adults. How distinct is the impact of dark and gothic elements across various age groups and what's the contrast between their perception of it?

I don't tend to change the nature of my imagery for children's books. They've tended to be for older children, not very little children, and I've always thought that books are a wonderful safe place to rehearse difficult, even disturbing and upsetting, emotions and events that everyone faces later in life. Obviously there are certain ideas and images that are inappropriate for a children's book, but tackling darker themes has never been a worry.

'Gothic' seems to be a catch all term for all sorts of things, some of which I think actually relate back to gothic decorative art, and the rise of secular art in the 14th century, some of which relates to gothic literature of the 18th-early 20th century, and the romantic haunted horror stories we know from that period, and the development of profusely illustrated volumes.

But more recently it's become a kind of designer goth – the Tim Burtonisation of gothic. It has become a set of tropes and accessories that seem to me to have little to do with either, and have become rather meaningless.

So I certainly have been inspired by the gothic and dark romantic work of late 19th century painters, and how that folded into early production design of silent (often German) films. Gothic literature had an expressionistic quality to it, and expressionism has become probably the most important art movement for me, as I'm interested in how my characters feel, not just superficially what they look like, and how I can relate these inner emotions in their expressions, physical stances and shapes, and how they relate to their environments.

English illustrator, photographer, comic book artist, graphic designer, filmmaker and musician. Directed the movies, *MirrorMask* and *Luna*, his work in focus for the newsletter.

04

Has gothic corpora, in any manner, influenced your work in this particular genre? Can gothic art be manoeuvred to impart a social message or does it cling to the typicality of the mysterious and the horrific?

Body horror, as in the films of David Cronenberg for example? I'm not so interested, but I like his blending of the corporeality of us and our anxieties about technology and modern life. Ballard's *Crash* is great on this, though it's a push to call it gothic. Gothic art at its best was always about our inner lives.

Frankenstein is about human reach beyond faith, becoming god. Ghost stories are almost always about our longing to see our loved ones again, pushing beyond the veil into some realm beyond, these are deep feelings we all share. Recent supposed gothic stories, tend to be more about the clothes and the tattoos than about our inner lives.

02

In the films you have directed, protagonists usually enter a fantasy world and eventually return to reality towards the end of the plot. How crucial are fantastical components in gothic cinema? How do you as a director and a screenwriter manage to make the transition from the real to the unreal seem credible?

Gothic, or horror, cinema plays with the psychological nature of fear, or things felt but unseen, rather than monsters and more obvious fantasies. In *MirrorMask* our heroine retreats to a simpler, more childlike version of reality in order to escape from the sudden harshness of her mother's illness, and being forced to grow up and face a tough real world too soon. She tries to regain control of her life through her dreams. The important part of this idea for me is the reality of her situation, not the fantasy. We digest and comprehend the real world within our own minds all the time, it's a matter of living in two worlds simultaneously, our individual subjective worlds, and the real objective world out there that we all have to navigate somehow. Fantasy, horror, gothic tropes have always been ways of visualizing our deep fears and sense of loss of control in our lives – ways of telling stories to each other, sharing experiences, finding common emotions.

03

Since you have been active as an artist since the 1980s, what in your opinion has changed in the last four decades in the depiction of the murky and the eerie in popular culture?

Technology anxiety has become a major theme. Right now, isolation and human fragility, mental issues, fear of the air, of bacteria or each other, are all deeply resonant. Gothic stories were always superstitious and rooted in faith and fear of the other. Ironically, the internet has weaponised all these fears, to the point that all our enlightenment certainties are being questioned again. It's very depressing. Has there been an alteration in the technique?

Not really. Gothic and horror stories often deal in half-seen imagery, layered and ghostlike. Photoshop has proved to be the perfect tool for creating these kinds of images. And digital filmmaking has certainly made the creation of the uncanny in moving images much easier and in many ways, much more subtle. Once we blindly stagger into the future of deep-fake with our usual lack of foresight, I dread to think what will happen to the notion of 'truth'.



Q & A

Katarzyna Ancuta

Interviewer: Anola Srivastava



Lecturer at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. Research interests oscillate around the interdisciplinary contexts of contemporary Gothic/Horror, currently with a strong Asian focus. Publications include contributions to *The Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story* (2017), *Neoliberal Gothic* (2017), *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic* (2014), as well as two co-edited special journal issues on Thai (2014) and Southeast Asian (2015) horror film.

01

Why did Gothic stick as a genre in literature and later in other facets of popular culture, for more than two centuries, despite being grotesque? Why do you reckon it appeals to the human psyche?

Let me begin by saying that to talk about Gothic today we need to go beyond understanding it in terms of a genre. Discussing Gothic as a genre imposes several limitations on the term and it only makes sense if we address it as a narrow literary formula that developed as part of Romantic literature. This kind of approach is bound to be problematic for anyone willing to investigate the presence of Gothic in non-literary texts, or even in works of literature that do not fit the established Gothic canon. Gothic has never been defined as a legitimate genre in relation to film, television, art, theatre, comics, games, or music – the Gothic label attached to such texts rarely reflects simply an unchanging set conventions; it is more often understood in terms of a certain code, style, aesthetic, tone, or mood, or as I like to think of it, a process, where texts are not as much perceived as belonging to a fixed category of ‘Gothic’ but rather are in a continuous process of ‘becoming Gothic’ by engaging with a certain rhetoric and being read or interpreted in this context. If we agree to see Gothic this way, we can justify looking for it outside of literature, we can argue for the existence of Gothic texts that bear no relation to Anglo-American literature or culture, and generally challenge the belief that Gothic must be necessarily a Euro-centric or ‘western’ category. This brings me to your question – why is Gothic still popular? I guess the answer to this is that Gothic touches upon something that is bigger than a set of literary conventions like haunted settings or the grotesque, something that cannot be ‘owned’ by a single culture or attributed to a single historical moment. Yes, Gothic as a literary genre can be traced to the appearance of a group of English novels in the 18th century but there were many texts that came before and after those novels that can just as easily be read as ‘Gothic’. Most Gothic scholars agree that Gothic is a term that is notoriously difficult to define. But they also point out a number of common preoccupations different variations of Gothic seem to share. These include, among others, a concern with history or the past, the notion of trauma and the repressed past that comes back to haunt us, fear of otherness and degeneration, liminality, hybridity, impurity and transgression (dead/alive, male/female, human/non-human), exploration of the nature of fear, anxiety and altered mental states – none of these can be seen as belonging to a single specific culture or nation. With its focus on depicting terrors and horrors, Gothic engages with difficult topics and highlights social, cultural, and political issues that can give rise to the abuse of power, oppression and discrimination. Gothic monsters (whether supernatural or human) do cultural work teaching us about inequality, exposing our bias towards certain perceptions of gender, race, class or sexuality and our fear of but also fascination with otherness. It’s easy to see why this can be found appealing by some people.

02

In the *Journal of Modern Literature in Chinese*, you opined, “Ghosts, revenants, zombies and a multitude of other creatures are all very literal embodiments of the past, thrust back into the present from the depths of oblivion”. Can the gothic structure be manifested without the ‘influence of the past’?

Can anything exist without the influence of the past? In cultures that see time as linear, the past is always seen as implicating the present. Particularly, if that past is conceived in terms of a trauma, and Gothic plots often stem from a traumatic incident that took place in the past. Similarly, ghosts, revenants, vampires, zombies, or other creatures perceived as undead or the returned dead exist by such definition as temporal aberrations – they belong to the past when they died and should have stayed there but they somehow reappear in the present, bringing the past with them. This motif of the returning past is rather characteristic of Gothic, but I’d say it’s bigger than that. Not every text that talks about the past has to be Gothic and, philosophically speaking, I’m not sure whether we can ever really escape the past. Still, the re-appearance of the past in Gothic serves a number of specific functions and it may be easier to think about this connection in this way. In Gothic, the past is often seen as barbaric and threatening to civilisation – the return of the past is thus seen as an evolutionary regression to a more primitive state. The returning past also means the uncovering of secrets that were meant to stay buried and forgotten. The returning past disturbs generational order forcing children to take responsibility for the sins of the fathers. In a psychoanalytic reading it is also seen as the return of the repressed memories necessary to confront one’s trauma. More importantly this return is not a solitary occurrence but rather we are dealing with a time loop where the past is trapped in a cycle of repetitions, destined to return again and again. The appearance of a ghost, after all, is not a singular phenomenon – hauntings are regular occurrences repeated over a period of time. The past is also directly linked to memory – both our individual recollections and cultural memory – and to the act of remembering and forgetting, and all of these are significant for Gothic. This connection to the past is somehow complicated in Gothic texts produced in cultures that do not necessarily see time as linear. For instance, in cultural contexts influenced by Buddhist-influenced worldviews time is frequently portrayed as a cycle. In Thai Gothic texts, therefore, ghosts are more likely conceptualised in terms of the forces of karmic retribution than the return of the past but at the same time their appearance is usually connected with a demand that the guilty take responsibility for their wrongdoing (so repair the damage caused in the past), or with a representation of a vengeful ghost as a soul unable to detach itself from its earthly suffering (or its past), is still valid.

03

How conventional is the depiction of women in the gothic realm, especially when portrayed as the antagonist? Is there room to revamp the existing narrative?

It’s true that early Gothic texts were somewhat conventional when it came to gender roles and women were commonly depicted as victimised heroines brutalised by men (or masculine monsters) only to be saved (or mourned) by other men. Some of these texts included also representations of women as monsters but Gothic text featuring well-developed female antagonists are more characteristic of later texts, particularly when it comes to Anglo-American Gothic. This may have something to do with the idea that the Gothic villain is meant to be an active character and Gothic heroines were traditionally seen as rather passive. Things changed when Gothic texts began to focus more specifically on monstrous heroines, which in the western context often meant a female vampire or a witch. In early texts such portrayals were often rather simplistic as the female monster was primarily coded as evil & the monstrous character was rarely developed beyond functioning as a figure of evil. The 19th century gave us many romanticised portrayals of feminine evil (see for instance paintings portraying characters like Lilith, Lamia, or Salome) but our obsession with female monsters, or what Barbara Creed called ‘the monstrous feminine’ really took off with the invention of the cinema. I think that if we read Gothic texts from a feminist or gender perspective, we can appreciate the complexity of its female characters even if these characters seem limited by genre conventions. We also need to remember that many Gothic texts were written by female authors. Gothic has given us many unforgettable female characters – think for instance of the novels written by the Brontë sisters, the works of Shirley Jackson, Daphne du Maurier, Margaret Atwood, Angela Carter, or Joyce Carol Oates, to name just a few. And don’t get me started about films. In my work on Asian Gothic, I have come across several wonderful books written by women and focusing on women – Natsuo Kirino’s *Out*, Zhang Yueran’s *The Promise Bird*, Sharlene Teo’s *Ponti*, Beth Yahp’s *The Crocodile Fury* or Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian* are just a few novel you should give a try to see how complex female Gothic can get.

04

How far has ‘tropical gothic’ managed to come from its germ in European fiction? Has it established itself as a separate genre with the changes accompanying the relocation?

First of all, let me unpack the term ‘tropical Gothic’ as it may be a little confusing. In Gothic criticism, the term was originally promoted to distinguish between the Gothic in the North and Central/South America. At the same time, in Southeast Asia, most people would associate the name with a collection of stories written by a Philippine author Nick Joaquin. To make it simple, we could conclude that ‘tropical Gothic’ should include a type of Gothic characteristic to the cultures of the tropics but this itself is rather problematic as these cultures are very diverse – tropical countries include Mexico and parts of Central America, the Caribbean, large parts of Africa, Southeast Asia, India, parts of the Middle East and Australia. The two main things that unite these countries in some ways are that they do not include Europe and North America and that they share a similar climate and weather patterns that seem to be very different than those known from traditional Gothic novels. So, these two observations are often the starting point of the discussion on the Gothic in the tropics. Tropical Gothic plots play out in the light rather than in the shadows. As I have mentioned before, once we stop thinking of Gothic as a genre, we do not have to trace its appearance in another geographical region to some specifically European origins. Of course, we can find examples of locally produced literature which consciously follows fixed Gothic conventions, particularly in countries that were previously colonised. With its interest in liminality and hybridity, Gothic is also a commonly accepted mode of writing in postcolonial literature. Many of these books have been written by authors who were exposed to western Gothic literature and it is logical to assume this may have had some influence on their writing. But Gothic texts are also written by authors who have not been educated abroad, who write in local languages rather than in English and who are not even aware of the existence of the term ‘Gothic’ in the first place. By taking a closer look at such texts we can see that there’s more to Gothic than a set of conventions or a style that needs to be copied and that Gothic does not have to be an imported category but rather it can grow organically in response to local concerns.

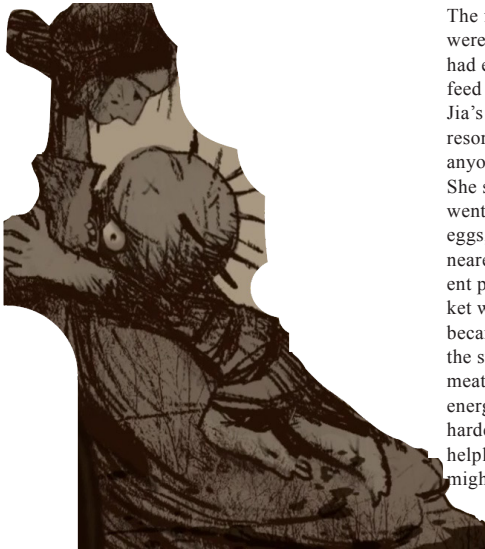
05

Is contemporary gothic corpus confined to popular fiction or does it have potential in literary works as well? Has horror overshadowed the other quintessential elements of the gothic genre in the present-day popular culture?

I guess by now it should be obvious that Gothic is certainly not limited to popular fiction, nor is it only at home in literature. There’s plenty of critical literature discussing various manifestations of Gothic in film, television, theatre, art, opera, ballet, rock music, comic books, graphic novels, animation, games, fashion, lifestyles, and everyday life. You can even discuss Gothic food and Gothic crocheting if you want. Gothic criticism has become interdisciplinary as well, there are scholars who specialise in medical Gothic, Gothic science, Gothic tourism, Gothic politics, Gothic economics, or Gothic ecosystems, so the abundance of material is overwhelming. The relationship between Gothic and horror remains ambivalent – while some critics tend to see the two as the same, particularly in relation to film since horror is a well-established film genre while Gothic not so much and most of the films discussed as ‘Gothic’ are also labelled as horror, others try to differentiate between the two, often in line with an earlier distinction that saw Gothic as preoccupied with terror rather than horror. We also need to remember that such labelling is often linked to the way a given book or film are marketed. In the 1980s and 1990s, when horror novels were often not considered ‘proper’ literature, many authors got rebranded as ‘Gothic’.

The Zombie Kid

Zombies are considered abominations by mankind; a creature devoid of feelings and that feeds on humans. Ever wondered how it feels to nurture a zombie in the 21st century? No right. Introducing Kim Jia, who could be your average 28 years old with a stable job, friends and family. At first sight, anyone would not suspect a thing that she could be battling to survive and hide her one weakness the world is oblivious to. She begins her day by waking up at 7 am, goes for a jog, has breakfast and keeps a packet of food through her attic's door. She comes home at seven in the evening, prepares supper, and again leaves a packet at her attic's doorstep. A hand pale white snatches the commodity, and sounds of contempt continue to buzz behind the closed doors. Surprisingly, no one knows what is in the attic. Her friends, family, colleagues and neighbours are unaware of what is behind that door. Call it her ill-luck a pandemic broke out, and the entire Republic of Korea is now caught in a frenzy; a virus with no cure and corpses piling like autumn leaves. Owing to the deadly pandemic, Jia had to quit her job and the burden to feed herself and what lay behind the doors was on her. Feeling the urge to check the attic, she went in. And the scene inside was enough to scare anyone- a boy around the age of eight with pale white skin, frozen in its position with his head cocked to his side, with blood splattered all around the walls and on his clothes. The boy was suffering from ophiocordyceps unilateralis when a fungus enters a human body and replicates itself, which eventually kills the brain cells, and thereby the human brain loses control of its own. The body becomes immune to feelings and only knows when to feed. The boy, one may notice, is the breathing example of a zombie, and he happens to be the offspring of none other than Kim Jia! She conceived this child when she was on her



trip to the Amazon with her late husband Kim Hoshi, who died during that trip when his aircraft crashed in the canopy of the trees. She gave birth to the child, who was the last testament of their love but what she saw after gaining consciousness was a baby born with a set of thirty-two teeth and skin that was unnaturally pale. No mother in the world is afraid of her newborn but, she was. Afraid would be an understatement. She was petrified of the abomination she brought into this world.

Before the authorities could analyse the zombie kid, Jia took him and escaped. She was afraid of the consequences this baby could lead to, and the fear of being exposed and questioned took the best of her. She changed her name from Kim Soohi to Kim Jia and started a fresh life in Seoul since Busan gave her bad memories of whose living proof she had locked up in her house. One glance at the boy and she remembered all that she endured. Tears welling up in her eyes were threatening to spill, but one look at the atrocity brought her back to life. She turned cold. The feelings her eyes held long were gone. She stepped back, went into the kitchen and grabbed the piece of pork sirloin and tossed it towards the boy. She was appalled yet at contempt as she fed him. She kept thinking about how she can protect the creature and herself. Soon the days passed, and she dutifully nourished the creature but was running low on her savings. She knew the day was near when she would lose all her money. It was no surprise when she heard the news of her family's demise, she had foreseen this due to their poor immunity. The funeral cost her quite an amount, her savings were almost finished. A couple of weeks later, Jia had exhausted her savings and had no legal way to feed herself and the zombie. The funeral cost her quite an amount, her savings were almost finished. A couple of weeks later, Jia had exhausted her savings and had no legal way to feed herself and the zombie. After all that happened, Jia's will to survive remained intact. With no final resort of making money, she did what was natural for anyone in her situation; she stole.

She stole every day, and owing to the pandemic, it went unnoticed. The zombie kid was served beef, eggs, prawns, pork and all that she could get at the nearest abandoned supermarket but fate had a different plan. Due to her frequent visits to the supermarket which was earlier infected with the virus, she became a host. Jia knew she could not live long since the symptoms were loud and clear still, she stole meat to feed the creature and to ensure herself some energy. The couple of days that followed were the hardest on her, she was burning with fever and was helpless. The thoughts of the zombie in the attic who might be hungry perpetually haunted her.



So, she accumulated all the strength that she could and entered the room. The zombie's eyes were in anticipation of its meal that she brings with her but to his dismay, she came empty-handed. She offered her leg to the zombie as his meal, and without batting an eyelash he devoured. The pain was unlike everything she had experienced in this world. Her eyes were streaming with hot tears, but nobody could ease the agony. She kept enduring everything and waited for her death which

was near.

The dusk approached earlier than expected, and Jia who was writhing with pain was being eyed by the zombie. He too was waiting for his next meal and to his expectations, he was offered her other leg as his supper. The pain which was still tormenting her amplified as the creature kept sucking her bone and the hot blood that flowed from her leg. Jia's situation was no different than experiencing hell on earth. She screamed at the top of her lungs, for the pain was too much to bear. But who would help her when the others too were experiencing a similar pain of losing their loved ones in front of their eyes? All they could do was helplessly bid farewell and wait for their turns. Jia lost consciousness due to the immense pain. Much to her dismay and the monster's expectations, the next morning arrived. The zombie kid had already scooted over for his meal when Jia woke up. Hungry eyes examining her, and just then she knew that this might be the last morning she will ever witness. She beheld the red sun for one last time, tears flowing endlessly. She glanced at the kid with pure love in her eyes and embraced him- the final token of her love her husband left. The zombie without sparing a moment sunk his teeth and satiated his hunger. The last thing Jia remembered was hugging the kid and stinging pain. After the kid satiated his hunger, all that was left of Jia was her skull; adorned with the smile as if that last moment was worth every moment she lived. Soon the zombie kid died out of hunger, and the chaos in the city of Seoul came to an end with a cure that the Korean scientists developed.

*Areum Byeol
(Deepti Chauhan)*



Remember(ing) and Wait(ing) on Myanmar

“It is not power that corrupts but fear.

Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it”

- Aung San Suu Kyi

Myanmar, officially known as the Republic of Union of Myanmar, also known by the notorious name of Burma, is a southeast nation. Just like India, Myanmar is also an agricultural nation which constitutes the largest contributor to Myanmar's economy. It is a culturally diverse nation with a total of 135 officially registered ethnic groups, some the major being the Karen, Shan, Mon, Chin, Kachin, Rakhine & Karenni. Its name has had a long and disputed past since the British colonial period, i.e., since 1885. Back then it was known as the Union of Burma, but, in July 1989, the new military government changed the country's name to the Union of Myanmar as they said that “Burma” only refers to its largest ethnic group and is not inclusive of the country's other 134 ethnic communities. There are still internal disputes on what name the nation should be addressed with. Hence this diverse and complicated southeast nation with a brutal history of military rule, ethnic conflicts, and civil wars is often called a country with “Two Names”

Independence

From 1885-1948 Myanmar was under British rule and was known as British Burma. During this time, it faced a load of wars & conflicts, and by the end of 1947, it suffered fatal damage to its infrastructure and economy. At the same time, General Aung San, who was also the father of Aung San Suu Kyi, along with ethnic leaders negotiated the independence of Myanmar under the pang long agreement and finally, in 1948 the nation became an independent republic. Sadly, just before independence General Aung San along with several cabinet members was assassinated by political rivals. After independence Burma just like all other newly independent south Asian nations, chose a parliamentary form of government and sought peace through foreign aid; but unfortunately failed, mainly because of internal strife.

At the time, U Nu was the prime minister and also the leader of the ruling party, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). In 1958, there was a split in the party. Ne Win, at the time, was the chief of staff and possessed full control of the army; using it he prepared the country for elections, which took place in February 1960, in which U Nu won and was returned to office with an absolute majority.

Military Rule

However, in 1962, Ne Win organized a military coup and detained U Nu along with other officials, and the country was thrown into a Military Dictatorship for the next 26 years. Suspending the 1947 constitution, which had been in effect since independence, henceforth he ruled the country. Ne Win's sole purpose was to make Burma a truly socialist state. A military-controlled, one-party Burma Socialist Programme Party [BSPP] system was established. Ne Win implemented a command economy—a system where the productions are publicly owned and economic activity is under government control. In 1974, a newly drafted constitution was introduced by the military junta which was structured in a socialist manner. However, it further degraded Myanmar's economy, which led to unemployment, poor health care,

an unstable economic system, food shortage, etc. With this, the people started becoming more and more impatient & turned against the military rule.

Myanmar from 1988 and since

There were continuous unrest and uprisings from 1972-1987, but in the summer of 1988, it reached its peak and got so intense & unstable that the country was on the verge of a revolution. Thousands of people took to the streets to fight against the oppression; it was also known as the 8888 uprising; during that time, Myanmar was engulfed by a new military junta under the leadership of General Saw Muang. In order to suppress the protests, he planned a military coup, and thousands of people were slaughtered. At the same time, he also formed the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). It was then, that the SLORC changed the country's official name from the “Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma” to the “Union of Myanmar” and the capital, Rangoon, was renamed Yangon.

At the time, Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of NDL (National League for Democracy), one of the most essential opposing party, and also the daughter of the independence hero Gen. Aung San was put under house arrest. In 1990, Myanmar held its first multiparty elections in 30 years. The result was a landslide victory for the opposition NLD, despite its leader being under house arrest. However, the military junta refused to accept the result of the election & did not give power in the hands of the people. By this time, Myanmar was receiving a massive foreign viewership and worldwide attention, which further amplified after Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

The junta presented a new constitution in 2008 which is presently under effect, giving the military widespread powers even under civilian rule. The military junta suddenly dissolved in 2011 and established a civilian parliament. In 2015, Myanmar held its first nationwide, multiparty free, and fair elections in years since the country's transformation away from military rule. Suu Kyi's NLD party won an astounding victory dominating both Houses of Parliament.

Military coup and the unrest of 2021

In the parliamentary elections of 2020, two major parties competed, the NLD (National League for Democracy) under the leadership of Suu Kyi and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) which was military-affiliated. Henceforth, the NLD under Suu Kyi again won supermajorities in both houses, whereas the USDP suffered a “humiliating” defeat even worse than in 2015 and as expected from them, they refused to accept the result of the free and fair election and argued that there were several election frauds & improper ways of handling the ballot system in several townships. In the early morning of 1 February 2021, the day when the newly elected office was to be sworn in for the first time since the election, the military arrested State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and other members of the ruling party and Vice Pres. Myint Swe became acting president. He immediately declared a one-year state of emergency and handed control of the executive, legislative,

of the armed forces, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing. Senior General Min commented that the military takeover was essential because there were electoral frauds & irregularities.

Oppress or be oppressed

The people of Myanmar for the first time in their lives had tasted freedom since the last decade, but in 2021, the military junta snatched away their freedom, again pushed & forced them into cages, and the reaction was obvious, the people of Myanmar chose to fight back through peaceful protests and since then there have been continuous protests and uprisings against the military in Myanmar. The military has adopted its old ways and is using violence again

against the protestors to suppress the voice of the people, but in return is receiving explicit international criticism. Global affairs and the netizens are condemning the actions of the military and people all over the world stand in support of the people of Myanmar. Social media handles have been continuously used to spread the message all across the world as the nation needs our support now more than ever. Thousands of people have been killed, including women and children, thousands have been arrested and several sentenced for long term. The military has been continuously targeting ethnic community settlements along its borders through bombardments and strikes which is often recognized as ETHNIC CLEANSING. On 5 April, peaceful protests continued in various parts of the country, people gave their support to the ethnic minority armed groups confronting the junta and honored the actions of Generation Z. In parts of the nation, people marched with the image of Aung San Suu Kyi demanding international intervention. In response, the junta had shut down wireless broadband services and mobile data services. The United Nations has asked the military junta to prevent using excessive force on its peaceful protestors and for the safe release of the protestors. Meanwhile, the junta accused the protesters of halting operations in hospitals, schools, roads, offices, and factories. The violence and tensions are escalating between the people and the military every day. For now, all the world can do is provide support and wait.

Rajat Kumar



Now

Live in the now?
I live here.
In my head and this body that makes me mortal,
From fantasy to reality to the parallel,
I live in the silhouette of the past
and the lustre of what could be tomorrow.
My hope lived years ahead of me, my conscious trails.
Alive with people from the stories I stroll through,
the strung guitar,
a winter afternoon and a budding black rose.
Lived the first millennium,
the dawn of renaissance and the apocalypse.
I live in their ideas and your memories.
Now is trivial.

Amola Srivastava

Beauty of Darkness

Cacophony of the
Glowing and caliginous
Shroud echoing behind
The beauty of darkness,
Savoring every
Peccadillo like
Venom on tongue,
With tumultuous
Bubbles tucked underneath
the cushion's haven,
I kink into the
Silhouettes of the wistful,
Syrupy veneer of the indelible
nightmares,
Inhaling the
Apocalyptic skies
As a perennial
Ecstasy truant.

Khushi Batra

Dignity

I will discard my 'dignity'
And so-called honour
As you did for my opinions
When rejecting them at once,
As you did for my desires
Dismissing them as decry.

I will continue my contumacious behaviour
As you shun me for my inability
To fit for the society's expectations
And replace me with a pretty face
Where make-up hides the flaws
Scrubbing away our real reflection.

I refuse to accept all those teachings
Taught by people too afraid
To obey for what their heart tells them,
I refuse to accept all those things the way they
are
Made by women who were tortured and abused
by their own kin.

I will not apologize for my shrill voice
For it needs to be heard
And my words
For they demand to be spoken.

You can shun me, detest me, cast me out
Break my bones but not my courage,
You can wipe away my existence but never
the idea
For, it exists in eternity.

I refuse to be the Drupadi who never took
matter in her own hands and relied on men to
save her dignity and honour.

Simran

POETRY

Sleep Paralysis

Am I dying?
My limbs don't budge,
but the hands of the clock do.
the shortest of the hands
must be somewhere between three
or four on the spooky night, My eyes
are closed,
All I see is darkness,
Something that you can't see, Something
that enables your vision, I hear something
dripping,
Is it water leakage from the apartment above,
Or is it blood that has seeped through my flesh,
that has managed to
dampened the floor,
Is there someone at the window? The constant
companion,
the same silhouette, perhaps! Or is it just my
eyeballs
pacing in their cage,
I discern overlapping voices, screams of people
I refuse
to recognize, calling me by a name society
doesn't know me by, some in their dulcet
voices, some in their dull monotonous, some
frantically cheerful,
the other, husky, scary and shaky, trying to
waking me up.
I try yanking myself
But can I?
I am panting,
My ribcage turning fragile,
My lungs — hollow!
I am trying to commute,
But can I?
I can see the room
with my eyes closed.
Almost like my body is asleep, but my soul, my
mind, is awake playing tricks on my anxious
self
or a supernatural demon
has made its way inside!
What if the world is a remote controlled setup,
and the player chose to sleep with the system
on? Out of nowhere,
my body is floating now
in the air, and the next
second, it falls down
like Newton's apple,
like his Adam's apple,
with a momentum of
a pendulum, stuck mid-air,
I am about to die,
What does death look like? Like clinched eyes,
white knuckles,
gushing sweat,
choking throat,
perturbed chest,
an expression opposite
to that of Monalisa,
a temporary case of mutism? With all the
vigour
in my nerves,
I open my eyes,
like a gunshot,
the pressure of my blood
gets back to normal,
my chest is raising
grasping on the possible
amount of air I can inhale,
and it's over just before
I decided to give up!
I am alive

Marital Rape

Her father
Purchased her a husband
Hindering her studies
And she was reduced to just a housemaid She was just a teen
And her husband was Patriarchal And dominating
She soon realized
And again and again
She was made to compromise
On her first night
She was weary and whacked
And drowsy
When her husband entered
Their room
And forced himself on her
Without her consent
He undressed her body
And abused her soul
Left her lamenting over her own existence She was filled with
abhorrence
And he slept peacefully
After quenching his thirst
Even she was laying but
Completely lifeless.
After a long gloomy
Endless night
She woke up
But she couldn't appreciate
The existence of sun.
She glanced at her nefarious husband Still sleeping
Which again reminded her of ghasty night.
Blood stained bedsheet
And she's unable to
Even utter a word
Inside her room
And bright walls merely
Mocking at her colourless life And the never ending dark nights.
She was feeble
Yet she tried to raise her voice But it was greeted with
Derision and opprobrium
By the society
Because word called
'Marital rape'
Doesn't exist in the
Dictionary of these heinous people, Instead it is appreciated
And encouraged by many
Is a fact
Inspite of knowing
That it's a flagitious act.
And she was left
Alienated between her 'own' people Numb and disowned
A body without a soul
Merely breathing and existing And husband who was purchased
With her father's wealth
Left her objectified.

Swati Thakur

Sejal Arora

Q & A

W.M. Hughes

Interviewer: Tillee Sen

Professor of Literature in English, and a specialist in both literary studies and medical history. Research interests broadly cover supernatural fiction from the Victorian period to the near contemporary Gothic, especially the ecoGothic implications of vampires and zombies. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and the Higher Education Academy, and a Past President of the International Gothic Association.

01

Why do you think the vampire has risen in popularity and been synonymous with this debonair, sensual figure like the ones manifesting itself in Stephanie Myer's book series 'Twilight' or Tom Cruise's movie?

This is definitely a cultural question, and one which rises from the inequalities of culture. The eighteenth-century vampire of folklore was, generally, a rather shabby peasant, a figure whose appearance was anting but debonair. The people who read accounts of these figures in the British journals of the time were gentlemanly antiquarians – wealthy and educated individuals who often saw the peasantry as a dangerous and uncivilised mob. The rise of a nineteenth-century vampire who dressed and spoke like a member of the nobility – Lord Ruthven, Carmilla, Count Dracula – might be said to be a response to the rise of a middle-class readership, a 'self-made' generation of businessmen and merchant-traders, who possibly contemplated the aristocracy as a decadent and anachronistic group determined to resist change and modernity. By the time the twentieth-century vampire comes about the class distinction is arguably less pronounced, and – in part because cinema sells seats on image as well as implication – the vampire develops into a seductive or sexually alluring temptation. The allure of the vampire is much more pronounced now that the zombie, whose appearance often resembles that of the eighteenth-century peasant vampire, enjoys such a great presence in the popular mind.

02

Do you think the novel 'Dracula' was feared by society only by virtue of it being a threat to that time's religious beliefs?

I would suggest that there is far more to Dracula than its religious content – though I agree, that this is a very important part of what the novel has to say to – and about – the closing decade of the nineteenth century. There is a great deal in Stoker's novel that addresses the so-called 'crisis of faith' of the later century, and which acknowledges the development of a secular mind-set in which 'faith' is placed both in science (including medicine) and in the supposed inevitability of human progress rather than in religion. Again, there is also a sense – which is very relevant to Stoker's Irish origins – in which the efficacy of Protestant Christianity is questioned by a close comparison with Roman Catholicism and, perhaps, Orthodox Christianity in Eastern Europe and, at the hands of Van Helsing, in London.

03

Why do you think the vampire is the ideal vessel for the taboo on a 'social level'?

Quite simply because it is uncanny – it is like us, but not us. It allows the reader to explore possibilities through a nominally familiar physicality but one enhanced with an occult freighting of extended life and greater power of perception and action. The vampire is what the human might become if the checks and balances of civil society were removed – a force that is selfish, non-altruistic, totally devoid of ethical control.



04

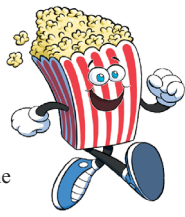
Mostly viewed as a "middle-class subculture", how does Gothic transcend the symbol of the working class in your viewpoint?

That is, very much, a question whose answer will inevitably vary across more than two centuries of generic presence. Though nominally a middle-class form of writing in the eighteenth century, and a form very much shaped by the interaction of female readers and writers, the development of the Penny Dreadful and the Newgate Novel in the nineteenth century introduced the Gothic to a broad working-class readership. As a form, therefore, it says different things to different readers – and in modernity we might, perhaps, think less about social class in readership and more about the consumption of new Gothic works by national and regional audiences and, more significantly, by age-determined readerships: teen-Gothic and YA fiction, particularly where these interface with science fiction. Gothic is, I would argue, a very transcendent and malleable genre.

05

Kathleen Spencer in Purity and Danger (1992) asserts that "the central appeal of fantastic literature is that, like the violent scapegoat rituals it mimics, it allows its writers and readers simultaneously to acknowledge and deny those aspects of themselves and their world that they find most troubling." Based on your experiences as visiting scholar at the University of Macau, why do you think that one of the core tenants of Chinese Gothic is humanity, whereas, in English Gothic Literature, beastliness is akin to humans?

Alas, not having anything like a reasonable command of Cantonese or Mandarin, I really can't comment with authority on Chinese Gothic. That said, I have found that students whose educational background was developed primarily within a Chinese culture, readily comprehend the complexity that Spencer describes in her work. Gothic is a form which, after all, addresses a broad range of cultural issues, and its presence in Chinese culture (and, indeed, in the cultures of other non-Anglophone nations) is no mere imitation of western forms but a discrete development of the genre to accommodate, interrogate and explore distinctive local issues. All cultures have creativity at their core, and it is inevitable that change must happen when a style or genre of writing crosses national or cultural boundaries.



TV Series Review

When you hear of a new Netflix/BBC series from the creators of *Sherlock*, you definitely expect more. If episodes from *Sherlock* were an obsession to you, *Dracula* might have a lot to roll down your eyes in thrills and twists. The series is packed with horror, tragedy, and dark comedy. Gruesome scenes like Dracula violently emerging from the body of a wolf, crawling vampire baby, cremated vampire bride does well to keep up to the expectations of a horror fan. Besides, the plot adapted from Bram Stoker's classic novel- *Dracula*, the makers have brilliantly added an investigative storyline with satisfactory storytelling to it. Although, several changes can be seen in the series when compared to the novel like switching the timeframe to swap in the gender roles. The beginning of Episode 1 'The Rule of Beasts' is similar to that of the novel where Jonathan Parker, a lawyer from England, heads towards the castle of Count Dracula to deal with some issues related to Dracula's purchase of land in England. But Parker is oblivious of his fate and ends being imprisoned and prey to Count Dracula. A vampire hunter, Abraham Van Helsing of the novel, is now a well-educated nun in the series, named Agatha van Helsing, who attempts to crack Dracula's psychic and his behavior surrounding vampire myths. This opportune swap in gender roles allowed a female character to steal the spotlight from a male aristocrat. She is clever, brave, and of high acuity that makes her a perfect rival of Count Dracula, who even outwitted him in several instances throughout the show. Dracula in the series is a sophisticated, charming, savage, and a bloody

scary creature. The thing that makes him peculiar & different from other undead is that he chooses his victims carefully per their knowledge, talent, and abilities. So, after sucking their blood, he acquires the same and regains his youth that makes him so maintained and powerful of all. Claes Bang is more than a match for playing Dracula as he has finely portrayed every aspect of the character, allowing viewers to get into the skin of Dracula. Who is at the Cabin No.9? When found, it was Agatha in there, there was a great twist in episode 2 'The Blood Vessel' preceded by a scene of a chess game being played between two exceptional minds – Count Dracula & Agatha. The *Dracula* series has two time-frames, episodes 1 & 2 being set in the Victorian era and the 3rd one 'The Dark Compass' in the present day. Dracula in this episode is again revived after lying trapped and unconscious in the depths of the ocean after 127 years. Also, Agatha marks her comeback, but as an identical descendent of hers- Zoe who is suffering from cancer. Both the characters are shown as cutthroat rivals, but an unpopular opinion might say that they were secretly in love this whole time. Coming towards the finale, it reveals that all the rules that bind Dracula like having to be invited in, aversion from sunlight, fear of the mirror, etc. were just mere habits that he formed over centuries mainly ruled by his fear of death. It takes courage to accept death, and Dracula is shamed for not being dead, unlike others who acquired an honorable death on the battlefield. If looked upon his character carefully, Dracula is more about us than a monster. Aren't we too driven by desire, fear, and pride?



Nidhi Rahangdale



Directed by Mike Flanagan *The Haunting of Bly Manor* is a second entry to the follow-up series of *The Haunting Anthology*. But the two series' narratives are not connected. Mike's previous series *The Haunting of Bly Manor* was received positively by the critics and reviewers. Although *Bly Manor* had some mixed reactions for its plotline and characters. The

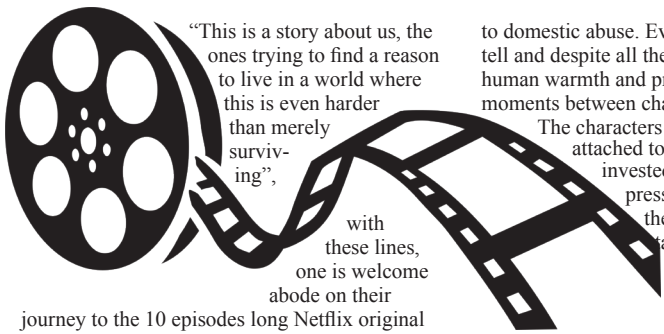
show features Hill House's crew and cast. The story begins when an *Au Pair*/ Governess (Dani) is hired to look after Henry's niece and nephew at the family country house. There she starts to observe that there is something wrong with the kids. Well, the very first question that will arise in your mind is, 'Is it Scary?' The answer is a simple- no. The only thing that makes it so is the eerie and frightening sounds in the background. However, the series is more than just a horror TV show. My main motive to watch *The Haunting of Bly Manor* was that I was looking for some good horror drama, given Mike's previous work on *The Haunting of Bly Manor* was outstanding. Although I might have to admit I was a bit disappointed in the horror part. The horror elements were few, and the whole vibe of the series was minimal. There were not many jumps scares. But the storyline of the follow-up series of *Hill House* was unique and intriguing. The story takes its inspiration from Henry James's novel *The Turn of The Screw*. The series does not wander around a specific plot but focuses on different periods occurring in the *Bly Manor*. Hence this is the sole reason I could not move my eyes away from the screen, speculating what might happen next. The show is more than just a horror drama, it has the elements of psychological thriller, revenge, betrayal, and a major part is about love. Moving onto the characters, we see quite a few actors from the previous series *Hill House* appearing in *Bly Manor* but in different avatars. Carla Gugino is our chief storyteller who sets the tone faint and soft with the way she narrates the incidents taking place in the *Manor*. But she is more than just a storyteller, which you will find out towards the show's ending. Victoria Pedretti (Dani) is back again with a secret of her own. Victoria's character, Dani

may appear annoying in a few scenes. She acts as a "damsel in distress" but at the same time verbally insults or attack those who try to help her. My favourite character in the show is Oliver Jackson Cohen who plays Peter. His attempt at the Scottish accent is quite good. He initially creates a vibe of cunning, selfishness, not to mention, egocentric, but deep down he is more than that. He tries to save the love of his life through unfair means, but you can not hate that. The accents used in the series are culturally wide, which is "perfectly splendid." Next is the character of the housekeeper Hannah Grose played by T'Nia Miller. Her character is not just dark but also a bit confusing. While watching the series, I was confused that is even a human, given the way she used to forget things, disappear in-between frames and did not eat at all.

Every character in the *Bly Manor* has a motive of their own, which unfolds gradually making the viewer a bit bored and distracted. Flanagan has tried to give each character one same element, and that is a psychological trauma ascended from their past, which I feel is quite usual in any story. What makes it different is the way it is presented on the screen. The character's back story does not move like a narration but in a "dream-hop" manner. You understand the concept when you watch the series. At one point the ghost does not even scare you. You will pity them. Personally, if you want to watch *The Haunting of Bly Manor* because you feel it is haunted, don't. It will not bring you the satisfaction you are looking for in a horror genre.

Tanya Saini





“This is a story about us, the ones trying to find a reason to live in a world where this is even harder than merely surviving”,

with these lines, one is welcome

abode on their journey to the 10 episodes long Netflix original apocalyptic South- Korean series *Sweet Home*. *Sweet Home* is based on a webtoon of the same name by Kim Carnby and Hwang Young-chan. Directed by Lee Eung-bok, Jang Young-woo, and Park So-hyeon, trace the journey of high school loner Cha Hyun-soo, who is suicidal and enters Green Home apartment and is caught amidst an apocalypse amongst other inmates of Green Home. Hyun-soo witnesses humans turning into monsters and is himself infected. Are human desires the cause of all evils? If yes can our desires turn us into monsters? Well, that’s the catch, these monsters are not the result of an infectious virus or disease, nor being bitten by monsters has turned them into one. As the series mentions “It’s not a disease, it’s a curse”, this monsterization is related to human desires. The forms these human turned Monsters take is a direct manifestation of their deep inner desires and no one knows who would turn next which creates a state of constant panic and fear. Even the President turns into a monster during a live broadcast which intensifies the already existing fear and their future looks bleak and doomed to them. The monsters and their shape being a direct manifestation of their desires are not mere caricatures but are unique and interesting, they subtly tell a story and are open to interpretations. The characters, big or small have their own importance and relevance to the story and are justly utilised by the Director. The characters are well written though the series has its little share of stock characters. The plot touches upon various issues, ranging from bullying, incompetence of the Justice system in protecting individuals and delivering justice. class

to domestic abuse. Every character has a story to tell and despite all the bloodshed, the series retains human warmth and provides various beautiful moments between characters amidst the chaos.

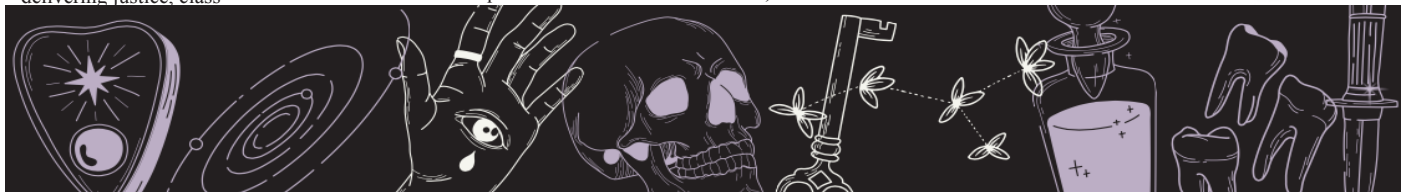
The characters grow on viewers and we get attached to the characters and become invested in them. The skepticism expressed by characters regarding the military as well as the military’s cynical attitude towards citizens in the series seems to allude to the ambiguous role of the military in



such circumstances or an indirect critique of it. The theme of humanity runs across the series and despair or tragedy seems to hold or bind the characters together in these challenging times. What makes us human? And what makes one a Monster? What makes humans apart from monsters? Where is the line? Is it the outer appearance (built, form) or is it humanity? The series explores these questions. The humans in the series subject other humans to questionable inhumane treatment, we do come

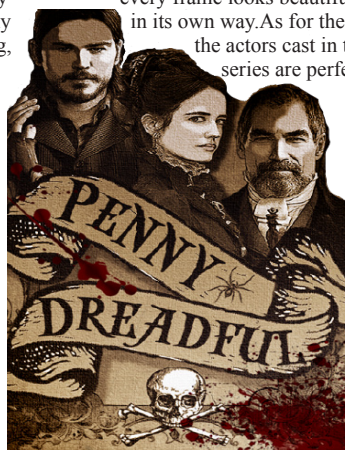
across monsters that don’t harm humans, but do humans repay these mentioned monsters the same way? The series showcases various instances and reveals the monstrous streak in these humans. When faced with challenging circumstances, do we retain our humanity or unleash the beast within us? Is the Monster in us (a part of us) or is it us? The cinematographer does an amazing job, the first scene of Hyun-soo walking in the snow is beautiful and well shot. The camera movements complement the fast-paced action and induce a sense of panic and anxiety amongst the readers. The compliments the series well, be it Warriors by Imagine Dragons that suits the emotional and high times or Side by Side by BewhY, which compliments the action as well as high-paced camera movements. The actors put on a stunning performance, be it Love Alarm fame Song Kang as Cha Hyun-soo, Lee Jin-wook as Sang-wook, or any other actors. Lee Si-yoon did an amazing job at her action scenes. However, Lee Do-hyun shines as Eun-hyuk, a calm and rational person but a protective brother. The viewers seem to have a love and hate relationship with his character in the beginning. The downside of the series could be its lack of detail, as it doesn’t present a detailed account of monsters and their desires, something that intrigues the viewer. However, this gives space for viewers to form their conjectures. The series also entertains certain logical leaps in some scenes which can be excused, as an apocalyptic series demands a willing suspension of disbelief. Although similar to other works in the genre in terms of plot and certain tropes employed in the series, it still distinguishes itself through its settings, monsters, underlying plots by utilising the time, themes, and warmth as well as connection between the characters. It makes you care and feel for its characters and its ending leaves you craving for more. This pandemic, South Korea brings an Apocalyptic series, a tale of the struggle for survival of people trapped in a building and questions the nature of human desires, humanity, and above all, what makes us human?

Preeti Kumari



Getting familiar with some gothic stories and picking the favorite ones out, I wanted each of those characters to be with each other and have a certain plot. For example, what would Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Frankenstein make together, or did Frankenstein ever get to be with his companion or a bride just like him, how would be Dorian Gray if he could be real, etc. If you have ever thought like this, I think your and my wish got fulfilled. A TV series on Prime Video, *Penny Dreadful* brings some of the most enticing characters from English Literature onto a single, intricately woven platform. The series draws upon many public domain Characters from 19th-century Victorian Gothic fiction including Dorian Gray from Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Mina Harker, Abra Abraham Van Helsing, John Seward, Renfield, and Count Dracula from Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, Victor Frankenstein and his monster from Mary Shelly’s *Frankenstein*, Henry Jekyll from Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* And Justine from *Justine*, or *The Misfortunes of virtue* by the Marquis de Sade also appears. In the Victorian era, the 19th century was introduced to *Penny Dreadful*, a cheap popular serial literature. The term refers to short horror stories which consisted of weekly parts of 8 to 16 pages, with each consisting of a

penny. The motif of these stories was customarily appalling, focusing on the exploits of detectives, criminals, or supernatural entities. The set for the Victorian era seems strikingly gorgeous. From the paintings to the cinematography, there is not one thing that doesn’t give away the Victorian period. The time when the night descends upon London (Victorian era), and the fog starts creeping through those narrow cobblestone alleys, nearly every frame looks beautiful yet deadly acting, in its own way. As for the actors cast in the series are perfect. TV



Eva Green (the Bond girl from *Casino Royale*) as a witch, Timothy Dalton (a former Bond) as the strongest human ally, Billie Piper (Rose from *Doctor Who*), Rory Kinnear (awarded for best actor for Shakespeare’s play) as creature and many other Talented actors. These actors portray their obscure, troubled characters with an unambiguous kind of “Auditorium” intensity that fits the story and the turn-of-the-century setting admirably, without a doubt. Entirely, it senses your moral beliefs and makes you see a side of you which, in some cases, has never emerged, or, if it did, would be like candy for children. The characters are undying, at least the main cast. The way they evolve is a tribute to the writer, director, and producer and, more importantly, to them. As they go beyond themselves as a single identity or an individual and become even more than a true character, they become immortal. The historical aspect brings front characters of tales and stories, of mythological and biblical implications evaporating the narrative line between the world of the living and that of the dead... or undead. The music, visuals, dialogues, pace, etc. are neither more nor less, they are accurate. The atmosphere is ideal: dense, gothic, surreal, and agitating. The camera work is fluid and imaginative, and the grimy or unyielding London settings are really well-designed, almost

expressionist at times. What particularly impresses are the scenes in the gentlemen's club, shot from a high angle and laid out in a curious Victorian grid pattern. Moving on, the dialogues are proficient and heavy. This itself makes the show worth watching. There's a Victorian ostentatiousness about it, but also some real intellectual content. The pace, the steady evolution of the plot, is an invigorating change. Close up at the end of the 2nd season, the admiration by the audience for this series continues to grow. The atmosphere of Victorian menace is denser than ever. The characters are more flamboyant, the dialogues more poetic. Though it is not sure where the story is going, or not sure if it needs to be headed for any specific destination when every moment of it is so enjoyable and sublime in its very own way.

Penny Dreadful is not your typical horror show. It doesn't terrify you in the typical methods of using startling voices and the likes. It engulfs you into the catastrophe of the life of the characters... Their loneliness is palpable in every aspect throughout the show, and as the show unfolds, you realize that it is this loneliness that is not only scary but petrifying too. If you look at it carefully, *Penny Dreadful* is basically a show about all those people or, in a literal sense, characters who have lost something or their loved ones and are struggling to reconcile with it again. According to me, there are certain points that are the best part of the show. Eva Green as a beautiful witch does her part very effortlessly.

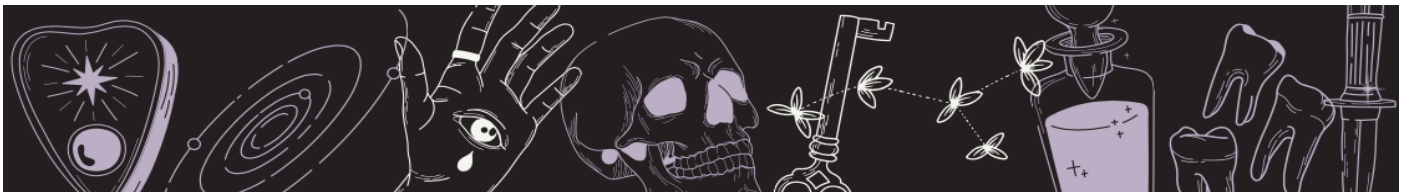


The way her character turns from a warm, loving, kind person to a cold, dangerous, and an unforgiving witch is remarkable. Watching her on the show arises the thought that she was made for this role or vice versa. She is one of the main reasons you can watch this show. Harry Treadaway plays the role of Victor Frankenstein incredibly. The way Dr. Frankenstein's role was written by Mary Shelly, it is crystal clear that Treadaway has done an

excellent job. The loneliness, the pain of the death of his dear ones, and his dedication to his research for reviving the dead are some emotions that describe his all-over life, and the actor's dedication towards the character can be seen. He is another reason to watch the show. The creature or Frankenstein's monster is my favorite character of all, or it can be because the actor who plays it is best for this role. He is kind, beautiful in his own way, a being without a soul. Even though he is a monster or a creature – he develops humanity and shows it to humans who treat him worse than a monster. A beautiful and seductive devil-like siren calling you to her ruinous shore, not ugly with cloven hooves. He is another reason to watch.

And the last reason is the poems they say at times. Of all the poems, P.B. Shelly has become one of my favorites. The way Eva Green and the creature narrate the poem, it's a cherry on top. The show tells that a beautiful face carries the most evil, and you don't need to search for it down your bed because people carry it everywhere. On the other hand, an ugly face with scars can be the most beautiful and kind being you have ever met. You nowadays need the ability to see them with your heart and not your eyes. Even if you don't like gothic characters, just see the show for Eva Green, Harry Treadaway, the Creature, the poems mentioned.

Simran



Death and Dubiosity

"Death destroys a man: the idea of death saves him."
-Morgan Forster, Edward, Howards End

Death, we hear Greek's ramble, ramble on about death as the ultimate tragedy of all. However, Goth says differently. Goths believe in having a more flexible meaning of death. Independent ways of perceiving it, the test of life, a piece of a puzzle. Death does not have to be the end; it can hold the potential to play the beginning, or maybe reside as the notion of how the game always goes on. It is wonderful how death can be a far larger concept than life itself! It is wonderful how we as mere mortals can perceive death and talk to it. Gothic Literature fancies talking about death as if it is its entity, a creature, a force or another uncaring god responsible for the balance of power in our world. Though, certain individuals plead guilty of being torn about the concept. Pendulums swinging back and forth from treating death as a scary and brutal force to an inevitable reality to be treated like an old friend to meet when our time comes.

One day you see a man shot on a busy road and it becomes your trauma for life, and in the next minute, you are lying blank among a pile of corpses without a flinch. How is it that, centuries of thinking could not find a balance in perceiving death? Is it the cause, the condition, the magnitude of the sheer suddenness of the move? To find the answer to this question, we take a trip down to a cemetery— soul freezing tinge in the atmosphere, tombs over tombs, pots over pots, each with a different yet very similar story. I visit this cemetery and I find more intellectuals, thinkers ranging from shameless thinkers known for pondering for timeless hours to more freaks who fantasised copulation over graves, on a path to insanity or possible sanity just for the sake of that damned concept of death! Chasing that mere shred of truth, when they are aware of how they are chasing smoke with their bare hands. Nevertheless, life goes on and the shameless pondering continues. Goths do not believe in hope; hence none shall expect them to believe that this chase might lead to some truth. We are aware of submitting to death and unlocking the pleasures of watching the uncertainty unfold. Ironic isn't it? However dominating you are, you shall submit to the inevitability of death, or is it? There are many more layers left in this onion bulb, but what is life without a little thrill of mystery? I shall leave you to think...

"I see ahead, I don't see much. These heavy locks spreading across my face, feeling each breath I take. My mind in constant chaos of whether to pleasure with how life is like a spore blown away in a snap or fight the higher power for the golden coin of control with my name on it."

Bhavya Dua



Crimson Peak

A brief overview of American film and television since the 1990s affirms Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren's conclusion: 'It seems ghosts are everywhere these days.' With the release of *Crimson Peak* in 2015, Mexican filmmaker Guillermo del Toro did not only add another horror movie to his oeuvre but as a horror-ghost film *Crimson Peak* joins a long list of cinematic representations of ghosts. It also displays del Toro's unique style, his vision of movies as 'durchkonzipierte und bis ins letzte detail kontrollierte gesamt-kunstwerke' [conceptualized and detailed, total works of art].

GHOSTS AND THE FEMALE GOTHIC

Crimson Peak, a tale of horror and romance, is a predictable yet surprising horror-ghost film. It does not join the style of contemporary ghost-movie film series such as *Paranormal Activity* (2007-), *Insidious* (2011-), and *The Conjuring* (2013-), but is rather reminiscent of horror romances such as Francis Ford Coppola's Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1992) or Neil Jordan's *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). Its plot, method, style, seem predictable because del Toro and co-screenwriter Matthew Robins quote other horror traditions, mapping the development of the genre from early gothic fiction, films, as well as to postmodern, self-referential horror. *Crimson Peak* is exemplary of Rick

and subversive representation of its female protagonists which infuses the tradition of the slasher films into this female Gothic story. Interestingly, both genres have been a subject of debate when it comes to their feminist or misogynist politics.

TURNING TO THE SLASHER

Crimson Peak borrows from the American Gothic and its sub-genre, the female Gothic, to narrate a tale of ghost-horror that is motivated by an interplay of capitalistic greed, female anxiety, and deviant emotional and sexual longings. del Toro's iconography of the Gothic created by the uncanny settings, the visual fixation of the ghost as a diaphanous, red or black skeleton that is repeatedly shown in full shots, occasionally turn into body horror that is common for slasher films, a genre that thrives on its visibility and materiality, and seldom features supernatural elements. These concrete genre allusions destabilise genre hierarchies by bringing together with the 'high' and 'bottom': On the high side of the horror lie the classics: films that by virtue of age, literary ancestry, or fame of director have achieved reputability within the context of disreputability [...] At the very bottom, down in the cinematic underbrush, lies- horror of horrors - the slasher films: the immensely generative story of a psycho-killer who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims, one by one, until he is himself subdued or killed, usually by the one girl

who has survived. World's understanding of the horror film as a cinematic genre that 'draws together and transforms mythic and literary traditions, forming a pool of images and themes that filmmakers reference, vary, or revise', and that 'often tacitly or directly references its forebears and acknowledges its place in a larger tradition, if only to invert or undercut the assumptions and expectations of those earlier works.' While *Crimson Peak* does not address all the 'American pressures' [such as the Puritan inheritance, the relative absence of 'developed society' and the racial issues concerning both slavery and the Native Americans], it certainly reconstructs what Lloyd-Smith calls 'the fear of European subversion', or more specifically, the fear and general suspicion



who has survived.

Whether the Final Girl is a symbol for female emancipation has been discussed since Clover's publication of *Her Body, Himself*, the article that inspired her monograph of 1992. While she acknowledges that the slasher is 'a genre with at least a strong female presence', she clarifies that thinking of the 'Final Girl as a feminist development is, in light of her figurative meaning, a particularly grotesque expression of wishful thinking'. This 'figurative meaning' refers to Clover's argument that: The Final Girl is boyish, in a word. Just as the killer is not fully masculine, she is not fully feminine.

This gender transgression supposedly disqualifies the Final Girl from being an emancipatory figure within the rather misogynist slasher genre. And indeed, while Edith is visually not boyish, the loss of a female role model is used as a rather simplified explanation for her 'unusual' unfeminine character. Next to her supposedly unfeminine aspirations of becoming a writer, she shows no interest in frequenting with other women her age; the only moments of intimacy that are shown are between her and other men. She might choose to not participate in the established rituals of femininity, yet this does not masculinize her. As Christian Knoppler argues concerning Isabel Cristina Pinedo's criticism of Clover, 'if a female character has to be read as male when she is aggressive, there can be no female agency. Edith and Lucille's aggression displayed female agency because it is ultimately tied to patriarchy and how it smothers attempts of female emancipation. The slasher here 'functions as a fantasy of female rage and an opening for feminist discourse because women are not only victims but allowed to retaliate'.

CONCLUSION

Being more than a film about emancipated ghosts and Final Girls, *Crimson Peak* acknowledges what del Pilar Blanco and Peeren have called 'the ghostliness of new media'. del Toro suggests that there is a haunting presence of the past in today's horror. Similar to Murray Leeder's argument that 'cinema's supernatural qualities are a result of the 'innumerable technologies and practices that anticipated it', the horror film today is a result of the technologies and traditions that anticipated it.

of obsolete anti-democratic ideologies like aristocracy and feudalism. The foreign Other in *Crimson Peak* is, after all, the aristocratic European man who stands for an antiquated and supposedly exploitative economic and social system that is contrary to the American democratic and industrial ideals. Carter Cushing, on the other hand, needs to be read as the embodiment of American optimism and pragmatism. The ghosts represent the antagonism between aristocracy and democracy, as well as the 'dangers of corrupt [or rather perverted] nobility' that threatens the American middle and upper classes. Yet del Toro does not solely focus on this antagonism; more importantly, as evidenced through the film's attention to Edith and the female ghosts, he addresses the pressures of gender norms, female anxieties and desires. The ghosts reveal an untold story of female suffering. In the beginning and during the movie the ghosts symbolized the diseases that took women's life or the atrocities they had suffered. But with Edith's last statement, "Ghosts are real, this much I know." The voice carries an eerie ambivalence: it either suggests that the woman seen on the screen has survived, or that she has died and what is heard is a ghostly voice from the afterlife. Owing to this uncertainty *Crimson Peak* retrospectively becomes a different tale. Hence, oscillates between a conservative

It is no coincidence that the plot is set at the turn of the nineteenth century when film technology was invented: 'with its ability to record and replay reality and its representation of images that resemble the world but is an intangible half-presences, cinema has described as a haunted or ghostly medium from early on. del Toro stresses the ghostliness of 'new' media in the nineteenth century by referring to spirit photography and sound recordings that capture and recreate the past in the present, through images and sounds. However, he cites more contemporary movies such as Oren Peli's *Paranormal Activity* and Gore Verbinski's *The Ring* in which ghosts inhabit contemporary technology. As del Pilar Blanco and Peeren have argued about these films, 'the increasing ghostliness of new media influences the representation of ghosts in media'. In *Crimson Peak*, the ghostliness of old media demonstrates the continuity of media history and the horror genre. del Toro's numerous genre citations show that filmic and literary manifestations of the gothic and horror infuse one another, thus they cannot be and should not be hierarchised.

Deepti Chauhan

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Was the folklore of 'Whitby Abbey' the true inspiration that compelled Bram Stoker to pen down *Dracula*? Or was the real reason for the throne getting passed on was the prophecy or Manfred himself just like in one of Shakespeare's plays? Is death the end of life as everyone portrays or there can be another view to see it?

As the saying goes, "there is a thin line between love and hate, good and evil", this edition of *The Carrel* proves that there is an even thinner line between evil and its host. Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Stoker's *Dracula*, Fanu's *Carmilla* etc. are some masterpieces that focus on dread brought by metaphysics, one's mortality, and the horror borne out of fellow human's evil deeds that seem to have no end, no limit, and no cause. In layman's language, the supernatural obsession and typical villain — Satan, vampire, ghosts — are replaced by human criminals.

Occasionally, all it takes is one human meddling with science against nature. From Dr. Jekyll's persistence of making a serum for the transformation of body to Frankenstein's dedication to making a life and Griffin's devotion to optics, *The Carrel* ventures on all those tours of cosmic horror and eco Gothic, where everything, nature's creation (human) does against nature itself, is not a lesson but just an attempt towards an annihilation-free environment where science is used for development for humans and against nature. Because sublimity lies in the imperfection of the human and the perfection of nature.

However, all the characters from Gothic literature are immortal, small efforts to give them a face and bring them alive virtually are always going on.

Though it is true that 'every great hero needs an insane villain,' but the elegance of Gothic literature does not need a hero. This edition of *The Carrel* explores the diversity of villains who are magnificent in their certain ways with death being seen as a part of life and the sublimity of the characters that are undying no matter the number of centuries passed.

From the articles about Gothic fiction to cosmic horror and dark romance in *Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde*, *Kidnapped*, *Invisible Man*, *Carmilla*, *Rebecca* and many more, *The Carrel* explores the uncanny world where the desperation of desire turns into obsession tainted by opium dens and nightmares, where the fine line between evil and its host, sanity and insanity vanishes and losing in the melody played by a haunting figure which is unable to recognise.

This issue of *The Carrel* is much awaited and anticipated. The focus on Goth and allied concerns has been part of academia for a while now. The newsletter will address the serious and the popular around Goth and its varied avatars. I wish the ELA and the team all success.

Dr Smita Banerjee

Teacher-in-charge
Department of English

It is a very challenging task to be productive during the pandemic but the Editorial team of ELA transcend themselves to bring the fifth edition of *The Carrel* with special emphasis on Goth and Otherness. I thank each member of the team and would like to congratulate them for the successful publication of *The Carrel*. All the best!

Swati Thakur

President
English Literary Association

Editorial Group

01 YASHIKA
GERA

02 JAYA
JAISWAL

03 AMOLA
SHRIVASTAVA

04 TITLEE
SEN

05 SIMRAN