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**Editor’s Introduction**

*Richard Gough Thomas*

This issue takes ‘re-imagining the Gothic’ for its theme: stepping beyond the journal’s usual focus on literature and film into music, photography, and religious painting.

Lucy Winnington’s essay discusses the ‘haunted land’ in the photography of New Zealand, marking the journal’s first submission on NZ Gothic.

Laurie Ringer’s article “With Teeth” takes a Deleuzian reading of A L Kennedy alongside paintings of the martyred St. Apollonia.

Debra Van Tuyll and Carl Purdy’s piece (our first collaborative essay here at Dark Arts) looks for the uncanny in Irish folk music.

Finally, Will Connor explores experimental Gothic music and performance.

As always, this issue couldn’t have happened without the help of our reviewers and advisors, who give the journal the ‘bite’ of rigorous scholarship.
The Haunted Land: New Zealand’s Gothic Landscape in Photography

Lucy Winnington

Landscape is central to representations of New Zealand’s national identity. From ‘Clean Green New Zealand’ to the ‘Land of the Long White Cloud’, cultural associations of New Zealand appear inherently tied into the physical qualities of the land. Narratives of the landscape are central the history of New Zealand, from Captain Cook’s first sighting of the Poverty Bay coastline to the New Zealand Land Wars and the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. New Zealand is also geographically isolated, cast off to the far reaches of the South Pacific and secluded from the rest of the world. This isolation has allowed a unique environment to flourish; one of sublime landscapes, immense natural variety and unique native wildlife.

These cultural and historic experiences of the land pervade the psyche of the post-colonial nation and are the foundation of many national narratives and anxieties in popular culture. The landscape is recognised globally for its natural beauty, yet it is also alienating and a place of fear and danger, both physically and psychologically. It is vast, yet the mountains and dense bush render it claustrophobic. Large regions of the immense landscape are empty and appear untouched, yet they are filled with the ‘ghosts’ of past events; evident in the photographic works of New Zealand photographers, including Ann Shelton, Laurence Aberhart and Gavin Hipkins.

These landscapes appear to form a visual engagement with the New Zealand Gothic, which although is an established genre of theory as a subgenre of the gothic; until recently the New Zealand Gothic has been applied almost exclusively to film and literature. Synonymously known as the ‘Kiwi Gothic’, the New Zealand Gothic places an emphasis on the land, both on the surface and the unknown that lies beneath, in addition to the possibilities of these elements of the supressed unknown breaking
through. The theory acknowledges the innate hauntedness of the landscape and actively plays on the anxieties and dangers caused by it, in addition to the colonial fears arising from the visual foreignness of the land. These anxieties of the land simultaneously suggest feelings of familiarity and alienation, aligning with Sigmund Freud’s theory of the *unheimlich*. Freud’s term the *unheimlich* corresponds to feelings of being out-of-place or of a place appearing to be un-homelike. William Schafer contends that a period of hauntedness is necessary to the identity formation of young countries such as New Zealand and that ‘the entrance to the former *heim* is through the *unheimlich*. ‘

Suggestions of anxieties stemming from the land appear to be prevalent in the history of New Zealand as a settler nation, with the landscape presiding over European fears. Schafer states that there is an unconscious cultural link between Pākehā and Māori that is a belief in the hauntedness of the landscape. Furthermore, Schafer suggests that the fear is unique to Pākehā as Māori possess an ‘at-homeness’ through their own history, culture and mythology. However, Robert Leonard adds that the Gothic can be found in the art of all cultures, including Māori; exemplified by Lisa Reihana’s *Digital Marae* photographic series, however these concerns manifest in different, culturally specific ways.

Since its inception, the Gothic as a genre has given way to many subgenres, each with their own distinctive characteristics and concerns deriving from the parent

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4 Schafer, p.137.
5 Ibid.
6 In Te Reo Māori, Pākehā refers to individuals of European descent.
genre. This division and exploration has allowed for the emergence of the New Zealand Gothic, as traces of Anglo-European Gothic concerns evident in film and literature have been cultivated and developed within the idiosyncratic culture of the isolated antipodean nation. Scholar Jennifer Lawn remarks that the Gothic is “endemic to New Zealand’s self-representation” with wild landscapes, isolated communities and death haunting the images and texts of the young settler county.\(^8\) New Zealand fashion designer Karen Walker agrees with the pervasive nature of New Zealand’s hauntedness, commenting, “there’s a heavy, ominous, slightly restrained kind of feel and I think that comes from our culture and our landscape and just the personality of the country. There’s a heaviness to it.”\(^9\)

The so-called ‘Kiwi Gothic’ retains elements of the traditional Gothic, such as the emphasis on setting and playing on cultural anxieties, however, they have been translated into themes that are culturally and historically specific to New Zealand. Given the colonial past, conflict over settlement rights, the environmental uniqueness of the landscape and the fact that New Zealand was uninhabited until Maori arrived around 1300 AD, the land itself is as central to the New Zealand Gothic as it is pivotal in retelling the nation’s birth, growth and history.\(^10\) Even if only subconsciously, the land and its physical, visceral qualities infiltrate everyday life in New Zealand through seismic activity, volcanoes, mud pools and the varied but sublime landscapes.\(^11\) Kavka notes that the Gothic landscape infiltrates suburban living in the guise of tree roots; roots representing history, the past and ultimately

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\(^11\) Conrich, p.394.
native life, and that possess an uncanny manner of invading homes, disrupting sewerage systems and therefore ensuring the return of repressed waste.\(^\text{12}\)

This conflict between the past and the present found in tropes of the ‘Kiwi Gothic’ stems from New Zealand’s colonial history and the alienation settlers experienced upon encountering the sublime landscape and sub-tropical climate. During the mid-nineteenth century, migration was encouraged by the New Zealand Company based in London, in order to intensively colonise New Zealand. Many British people however, were reluctant to relocate due to fears of the wild, exotic land and ‘its reputation as a home of bloodthirsty cannibals.’\(^\text{13}\) In response to this reluctance, the New Zealand Company promoted New Zealand as a ‘Britain of the south’ with immaculate pastures and fertile lands, commissioning paintings to demonstrate its potential for prosperous farming opportunities.\(^\text{14}\) The realities faced by migrants when they arrived were often the opposite, with steep mountains, dense bush and a sense of alienation from this un-homelike land.

Consequently, these Gothic concerns are rarely depicted from a Māori or Pacific Islander perspective, suggesting this type of alienation is not a concern within these cultural contexts, although like Europeans, they also originated from other lands and therefore potentially encounter different types of alienation.\(^\text{15}\) Schafer suggests


\(^{15}\) New Zealand artist Janet Lilo, who is of Māori, Samoan and Niuean decent, uses a similar technique of multiplying and mirroring the landscape in her recent video instillation Beneath the Radar in Auckland Art Gallery’s 2012, Home AKL exhibition. Lilo’s landscape depicts urban Auckland opposed to Shelton’s rural scenes, suggesting different cultural concerns.
that both Māori and Pākehā New Zealanders are concerned with the apparent hauntedness or un-homeliness of the landscape, but it is the difference in fundamental cultural traditions and customs that transform these concerns into anxieties for Pākehā. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital suggests that power and understanding are gained through knowledge, with those who have access to certain cultural assets gaining power. Therefore, indigenous cultures including Māori, have access to mythology, traditions and ancestry that makes sense of the land, for example through creation narratives such as Rangi and Papa, from which Pākehā are largely excluded due to a lack of cultural connection to the land.

It is this initial Eurocentric ambivalence in recognising the familiar aspects of the land that disrupts the idea of home and creates an unheimlich or uncanny response to the land as represented in many photographic landscapes, which can be interpreted as a manifestation of searching for home or the familiar. Sigmund Freud’s essay The Uncanny (1919) explores the notion of the unheimlich, which describes a familiar or homelike place that simultaneously presents as un-homelike or uncanny. This double reaction to a place is mirrored by the importance Freud places on visual doubling and repetition, a key feature in Ann Shelton’s work, which he describes as “a preservation against extinction.”

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16 Schafer, p.137.
18 In Māori folklore Rangi (the sky father) and Papa (the earth mother) are the parents or creators of the world. Initially they lay together, their children trapped between them in the darkness, until their son Tane-mahuta pushed them apart in order to live in the light. The myth therefore makes sense of the land through personification of the earth and provides a sense of ancestral origin as being from the land itself; David Leeming, and Jake Page, God: Myths of the Male Divine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.115-116.
Smith notes that Freud’s use of the term *heimlich* to denote the familiar (the opposite of the *unheimlich*) also has a double meaning of alluding to concealment.\(^{21}\) Therefore, Freud’s uncanny can be explained as a familiar place which is momentarily perceived as unfamiliar, due to an unexpected revelation about that place which may correspond to feelings of fear and anxiety.\(^{22}\)

Further to Freud’s notion of the uncanny, Martin Heidegger suggests that the *unheimlich* is not limited to a feeling of the unfamiliar but can be interpreted as actually being unfamiliar.\(^{23}\) As such the uncanny, within a Gothic framework, can refer to the notion of being unfamiliar in a familiar place following a discovery of concealed knowledge of that place. This idea of the familiar turned into the *unhemlich* is central to Schafer’s writings on the New Zealand Gothic and its Eurocentric focus, stating that ‘in the process of self-definition, cultures need to pass through a stage of hauntedness’ and that this hauntedness is built from Gothic concerns.\(^{24}\) Therefore, in order to gain a distinctive home identity, cultures must acknowledge the anxieties that cause national concern and embrace them as part of the process of identity formation. Furthermore, Schafer argues that Gothic concerns are less prevalent in causing anxiety within Māori culture due to the concept of *tūrangawaewae*. *Tūrangawaewae* refers to a concept that translates into English as ‘a place to stand’ and is often used to highlight a connection between people and the land, as such it can be viewed as a potential equivalent to the *heimlich*. However, *tūrangawaewae* regards the land as *tapu* or ‘sacred’. *Tapu* is a complex concept that simultaneously refers to notions of ‘holiness’ and things that are ‘forbidden’, and

\(^{24}\) Schafer, p.137.
dictates relationships between people and the land. Consequently, this concept highlights Māori awareness of the complexities of the land is considered as an acceptance of them.\textsuperscript{25}

Schafer’s argument suggests that due to the recent history of European settlement in New Zealand and the drastic diversity in topography and environment, Pākehā are more susceptible to the misrecognition of the landscape and being uncanny within it.\textsuperscript{26} The distinctive stylistic features of Shelton, Aberhart and Hipkin’s landscapes appear as if viewing the landscape as the scene of a crime, suggesting an uncanny relationship between the artist and the landscape as well as confronting the viewer with an unfamiliar way of viewing the land. This unfamiliarity and susceptibility follows the limited time European settlers have had in which to establish a history and ancestry connecting them to the land compared with the arrival of Māori settlers several hundred years earlier.

The \textit{unheimlich} place, the unfamiliar home that is necessary to the identity formation of cultures and their connection to the land, is also “the entrance to the former \textit{heim}.”\textsuperscript{27} This suggests that the concealed knowledge that is key to the \textit{unheimlich} is repressed information, and in order to be ‘at peace’ and at home, it must be acknowledged.\textsuperscript{28} Schafer comments that fears and anxieties are of equal importance to identity formation as rationally informed feelings, and that the repression of the apparent hauntedness of the New Zealand landscape is what must be acknowledged to enable an at-homeness.\textsuperscript{29} This hauntedness extends beyond supernatural ghost stories of ghouls roaming the landscape and can be explained as

\textsuperscript{25} For example, after Adam Strange was killed by a shark off the coast of Muriwai in 2013 the local iwi, Ngati Whatua Nga Rima o Kaipara held a ceremony at the beach to lift the \textit{tapu} caused by Strange’s death.

\textsuperscript{26} Schafer, p.138.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid


\textsuperscript{29} Schafer, p.143
the traumas that have existed within the landscape such as murder, violence, abuse and madness. These commonplace but taboo traumas are prevalent in the history of New Zealand, but like many other contemporary issues, they are often repressed or covered up to distance the self from fear. In order to find the home within the *unheimlich* place that claimed numerous lives and witnessed the suffering of many more, these traumas must be brought out of the closet and acknowledged and remembered.

The landscape is a source of cultural anxiety within literature, film and urban legends in New Zealand as a direct consequence of colonial encounters with the land. It represents both the *unheimlich* encounter of the initial Eurocentric encounter with the land, in addition to the subsequent traumas experienced by native flora and fauna and by the indigenous Māori population. Consequently, an engagement with photographs that draw attention to the sublime, untamed landscape suggests a return of the repressed anxieties that it is home to.

New Zealand is fêted around the world for its unique and distinctive landscape. From the expansive white sandy beaches at the tip of the North Island, to the immense glaciers that line the West coast of the South Island, with sweeping plains, vast mountain ranges and impervious bush-lands in between, the topography is diverse in its extremes. As within most cultures, the landscape is an important feature in New Zealand art history, both past and present. However, the idiosyncrasy of the New Zealand photographic landscape tradition lies in the foundations of landscape art being distinctly ‘un-Kiwi’.

The landscape is a dominant feature in New Zealand art with an historic trajectory traversing the media of painting, film and photography from the colonial period to the present. The formalistic aspects of New Zealand’s self-representation have been described by art historian William Mitchell as having “a contradiction built into it from the very first. How could New Zealand present itself as a unique place with its
own national identity, while at the same time representing itself with conventions borrowed from European landscape representations?"30 This suggestion, that the landscape is simultaneously essential to New Zealand’s national identity, while also appearing as a palimpsest of the established European landscape tradition, which is evident in the works of early colonial painters such as Augustus Earle and John Alexander Gilfillan. Many of these landscapes introduce stylistic features of the European tradition and are painted with British foliage such as oak trees and flat pastures instead of the ferns, cabbage trees and undulating topography of New Zealand. Consequently, the initial landscape art of New Zealand does not reflect the true nature or culture of the land.

Following the introduction of photography and the subsequent transition in which photography has replaced painting as the principal form of landscape documentation, contemporary New Zealand photographers including Ann Shelton, Laurence Aberhart and Mark Adams have produced a distinctive stylistic approach to imaging the land; reflective of the country’s idiosyncratic history and the cultural diversity of its inhabitants. Furthermore, this distinctive stylistic quality appears to directly engage with tropes of the kiwi gothic.

One frequently shared characteristic of contemporary New Zealand landscape photography is the unpopulated aspect of such images, exemplified by many works of Ann Shelton and Mark Adams; with many of their works focus on documenting isolate and unpopulated regions of native bushland that are untamed and perhaps untameable. This focus suggests a sense of gothic unease as the artists have selected to demonstrate an encounter with the untamed land that was once a source of anxiety for colonial settlers. However, by photographing the land in this way, the artists force an acknowledgement of the past and subsequently, the past traumas

associated with the land, resulting in an uncanny encounter with the home landscape.

Uncanny reminders of unease associated with the past are also present in works that are unpopulated but have an implied presence of domesticity. This is demonstrated in many works by Marti Friedlander and Laurence Aberhart. Of particular note is Friedlander’s famous work *Eglington Valley, 1970*; a black and white photograph in which a herd of sheep appear to emerge from a cloud of fog on a narrow hill road. The image looks like a scene from a horror film, yet it demonstrates an encounter with a key element of New Zealand’s national identity – sheep. This is significant as it suggests an attempt to tame landscape through domesticity, however the viewer is still distanced from the land through the unfamiliarity of the black and white rural landscape. Like Friedlander, Aberhart works almost exclusively in black and white, but focuses on buildings, memorials and the empty landscape with a technique that is reminiscent of nineteenth-century photography through the use of prolonged exposures.  

Robert Leonard describes Aberhart’s practice as “referencing photography, colonial history and death, he has photographed New Zealand as ‘the scene of a crime.’” It is this contrast between the unpopulated landscape with an implied human presence that aligns with concerns of the Kiwi gothic, as it creates an atmosphere of unease as it juxtaposes the past with the present, with the past represented through old buildings and memorials still presiding over the land.

The use of black and white or sepia tones is a recurring stylistic element of New Zealand landscape photography. This choice is notable in some works of Anne Noble, in addition to Friedlander and Aberhart, and suggests an anachronistic gaze across the landscape, reflective of this historic unease between Pākehā and the land. Furthermore, the sharp contrasts and dominance of dark tones provides an interesting juxtaposition against the light-filled early paintings of Augustus Earle.

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31 Leonard, p.93
32 Ibid
While not all of these artists use black and white film exclusively, and others such as Ann Shelton appear not to at all, the dominance of this colour format in contemporary landscape practice suggests it is endemic to New Zealand’s self-reflexive gaze. This gaze is one of unease and distance, and the use of black and white film is suggestive of looking back at the landscape as a relic of the past rather than as home to the vibrant and culturally diverse urbanisation of twenty-first century New Zealand; thus, this distances the current self from the past land and consequently the anxieties of the past.

A further distinctive feature of many of these photographs is the division of the landscape into diptychs, triptychs and friezes. This is most notable in many of Ann Shelton’s works, wherein the landscape is not only presented as a diptych, but as an inverted diptych of the same view, reflected in on itself; a feature reminiscent of the gothic double. Shelton’s 2007 series, Public Places, documents cultural anxieties; abstract fears that simultaneously stem from the land yet have no concrete place and assume the form of urban myths specific to New Zealand. These landscapes form a visual engagement with the New Zealand Gothic as they produce and reproduce the source of gothic anxiety – the landscape – and disturb conventional viewing, creating an element of the uncanny in a literal sense. Although not exclusively landscape-focused Gavin Hipkins, described by Leonard as a successor of Aberhart, also explores themes of nationhood, identity and unease in his series The Homely (1997-2000), which he has explained as “a postcolonial Gothic novel.”

Like Shelton, Hipkins creates a sense of the uncanny through the juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated, unordered images opposed to Shelton’s technique of doubling.

While not dealing with the landscape explicitly, several other contemporary New Zealand artists working in a plethora of media are also engaging with these same

33 Ibid
34 ibid
gothic themes of death, identity, place and unease. These artists include Peter Madden, Fiona Pardington, Vincent Ward and Maddie Leach. The dominance of such themes among many contemporary New Zealand artists suggests that there is an endemic gothic sensibility, perhaps stemming from the traumas of New Zealand’s colonial past and its effects within the landscape. Consequently, there appears to be an emerging distinctive gothic style to New Zealand’s self-representation through landscape photography. This distinctive style, with many shared features across many contemporary photographers, is one that invokes the threatening *unheimlich* landscape encountered by colonial migrants. However, this unique style of photography is significant as it demonstrates a distinctively ‘Kiwi’ approach to self-representation and thus a marked departure from early landscapes which followed the European tradition.

This ubiquitous style is one of sublime landscapes that are unpopulated, but hint that attempts to tame the land have been made through domestic landmarks. Often captured in black and white, or the frame segmented and divided, in many such photographs the landscape is distanced from the viewer as being presented as unfamiliar. By photographing the land in this way, as if the scene of an historic crime, the innate gothic nature of the landscape is revealed, forcing an encounter and ultimately an acceptance of the land and its associated history. The black and white aesthetic that dominates contemporary New Zealand landscape photography also forces a confrontation with the past. It is this past and the traumas that the land still harbours that are the sources of anxiety, as it suggests a return of the repressed truth of the horrors of colonisation.

It would appear that the root of the fear inducing, infiltrating colonial abjection of the land and its history, lies in the reluctance of New Zealanders to view the *unheimlich* landscape as the home landscape. This is reflected in the distinctive photographic style that has emerged in contemporary New Zealand art, of photographing the land as a relic from the past, cut off from the present through
complex framing of empty landscapes, often documented in black and white; it is this unheimlich landscape that is a reminder of the unease associated with colonialism and the traumas enacted on the land and its people as a consequence.

Following the initial misrepresentation apparent in early depictions of the New Zealand landscape, the true reality of the landscape and of how New Zealander’s perceive the land has been overlooked until documented by contemporary landscape photographers. This new approach to documenting the land and acknowledging its haunted past brings the landscape into contemporary culture and as such, the unheimlich can no longer be avoided or repressed. Instead it must be acknowledged, visited and made a part of history as a whole, rather than subjected to sinister historical accounts. Most importantly, it must be acknowledged as part of New Zealand, its landscape and home.
Works Cited


Hursthouse, Charles, *New Zealand, the Britain of the South* (London: Stanford, 1861)


'With Teeth': Beyond Theoretical Violence in Gothic Studies

Laurie Ringer

From the flesh-corrupting bites of walkers in *The Walking Dead*, to the metallic glint of dental tools in Joe Abercrombie’s *The Blade Itself*, to the menacing displays of ‘white sharp teeth’ in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, to the monomaniac obsession with ‘ghastly teeth’ in Edgar Allen Poe’s ‘Berenice’, teeth are iconic symbols of death, predation, threat, pain, abjection, obsession, and revulsion throughout the Gothic. Paradoxically, these outcomes are desired and feared, both unthinkable and requisite. Gothic characters are ‘made to suffer’, and in being ‘made to suffer’, they evoke medieval saints. Both earn their status through the foreordained torments that are the making of gothic or saintly narratives through the unmaking of their bodies. These violent un-makings are reified and reiterated through the pious practices or theoretical methodologies proper to hagiographic or gothic studies.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari irreverently jest that poststructuralist and psychoanalytic approaches are academic doxie, too devoutly followed. Given the Gothic’s interest in ‘uncovering the instability, the irrational and the imaginative,’ unorthodox practices – nomadically referred to as ‘immanent critique,’ ‘speculative pragmatics,’ ‘rhizomatics,’ ‘research-creation,’ ‘affect theory’, or ‘schizoanalysis’ – expand research and creative potential in gothic studies. Anna Powell has noted that ‘schizoanalysis offers liberation from the splitting of subject/object and from the primal condition of lack.’

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2 Title of episode 8 in season 3 of *The Walking Dead*.

3 Guattari likewise uses religiously-charged language to describe the ways that structuralisms and systemisms control expression to normalize themselves, creating ‘a cult of information or of the signifier’ in *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, pp. 48-49.

4 Jon Greenaway, *Dark Arts*, vol. 1.1, p.3.

5 Powell, *Deleuze and Horror Film*, p. 18.
the new, then through schizoanalysis ‘the unconscious changes from an archaeology to a cartography of motion’.6 In motion, schizoid, rhizomatic, ‘unnatural’ connections reveal what bodies can do rather than what they symbolize.7

Unnaturally and rhizomatically, this article collides two stories that do not belong together: St. Apollonia’s martyrdom and AL Kennedy’s short story ‘Story of My Life’. The title quote ‘With Teeth’ emphasizes the schizoid heuristics of bodies moving with/in/through macabre dental excruciations. What happens when we move beyond the theoretical violence imposed by traditional approaches to gothic studies?

Figure 1: Yates Thompson MS 4 (left), Harley MS 2989 (centre), Egerton MS 2019 (right).

In the Yates Thompson MS 4 image, St. Apollonia is gore-free and spectrally white, displaying one of her lost molars in a pair of pliers;8 her torturers have vanished. The Harley MS 2989 image depicts two torturers at their cruel work,9 while the Egerton

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6 Powell, Deleuze, p. 214.
7 Deleuze and Guattari, Thousand ‘the Universe does not function by filiation. . . The only way Nature operates—against itself’, p. 242; the rhizomatic as ‘unnatural participations’, p. 241.
8 (f. 190v, left).
9 (f. 124r centre).
MS 2019 image likewise depicts her tormentors at work while blood drips down her front.\textsuperscript{10}

Just as St. Apollonia’s story is told through vignettes, so too is A.L. Kennedy’s ‘Story of My Life’. In four vignettes the narrator undergoes renewed dental horrors. The first vignette depicts the narrator’s first tooth extraction at the age of five; the second vignette recounts the un-anaesthetized extraction of her first wisdom tooth at ‘twenty-four, twenty-five’; the third vignette describes an apicectomy, a root amputation, when the narrator is around thirty-five, while her last wisdom tooth is removed in the fourth vignette, possibly at age forty-five.\textsuperscript{11}

\textit{Figure 2: Egerton MS 2019, f.217r}

Open-mouthed, bleeding, and assaulted by cruel implements, Kennedy’s narrator is uncomfortably like St. Apollonia, drawn to the site of her torment, a dentist’s chair, by the inexorable, physiological force of constant tooth (re)growth: ‘my teeth are forceful. They insist’.\textsuperscript{12} St. Apollonia’s Christian faith likewise draws her to the site of torment, insisting and erupting into her local community like the narrator’s disorderly (re)emergent teeth. Like St. Apollonia’s tormentors, the dentist in Kennedy’s second dental vignette, is a ‘big man, meaty forearms’ who is unconcerned at causing pain. He is ‘incurious’ if the anesthetic has

\textsuperscript{10} (f. 217r, right).
\textsuperscript{12} Kennedy, p. 142.
taken effect and ‘generally impatient’. He: ‘goes at it fiercely with the pliers and no preamble and here comes a clatter, a turning yank, and then tooth – I am looking at my tooth without me, grinning redly in the light.’\textsuperscript{13} The narrator and St. Apollonia share the same red grin denoting pain, anger, and even the ‘stupid wonder’ of shock before it registers into pain.\textsuperscript{14} Kennedy’s narrator puzzles over this building feeling which I cannot quite identify – it is large, huge, and therefore moving rather slowly, takes a full count backwards from \textit{tennineeight} to arrive and then I know, then I am wholly, supernaturally aware . . . that I’m in pain.\textsuperscript{15}

The ongoing, moving ‘stupid wonder’ of dental pain entangles Kennedy’s short story and St. Apollonia’s narratives. Before analysis of a gothic subject begins, he/she/it is always already theoretically brutalized because of theoretical approaches that (re)hierarchize and (re)inscribe the ‘adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language’, even in challenging it. For St. Apollonia and Kennedy’s narrator, traditional theoretical approaches foreclose movement and redouble violence through language-based symbolism. For example, Sigmund Freud’s \textit{General Introduction to Psychoanalysis} territorializes teeth as sexually symbolic: ‘A particularly remarkable dream symbol is that of having one’s teeth fall out, or having them pulled. Certainly its most immediate interpretation is castration as a punishment for onanism’, while the mouth ‘takes the place of the genital opening’.\textsuperscript{16} Territorializing their teeth and mouths as sexually symbolic dehumanizes St. Apollonia and Kennedy’s narrator by simultaneously silencing their speech and monstrously double-sexing their bodies.

The Freudian sexual re-appropriation of teeth and mouths extends to small children who: ‘represent a genital in general, regardless of whether male or female.’\textsuperscript{17} In ‘Story

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Kennedy, pp. 142-143.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Oxford English Dictionary (OED), s.v. ‘grin’, v.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Kennedy, p. 143.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Freud’s \textit{General Introduction to Psychoanalysis} is cited by Kindle location, loc. 72.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Freud, loc. 72.
\end{itemize}
of My Life’ the narrator’s adult dental extractions ghost into her own childhood experience in the dentist’s chair;\textsuperscript{18} these experiences also parallel her hypothetical/actual lost child’s experience at the dental surgery.\textsuperscript{19} Freudian analysis of Kennedy’s narrator would wreak symbolic silence and violence on childhood, territorializing it as symbolically sexual before the child is agential. As a female recollecting childhood visits to the dentist, the narrator’s doubly-sexing retrofit (mouth-womb) would be redoubled (mouth-womb, child-womb), (re)re-silencing both her past child and present adult selves.

The viciousness of this symbolic, hermeneutic circle/cycle manifests dramatically on female characters like St. Apollonia and Kennedy’s narrator, but St. Lawrence or St. Sebastian likewise illustrate the problems of pinning, positioning, or binding subjects to signifying grids as a type of martyrdom. Around 288 CE St. Sebastian was bound to a tree or pillar and pierced with arrows. On 10 August 258 St. Lawrence was bound to a gridiron on which he was roasted. Gridding/grid-ironing defines enfleshed subjectivity only by separating it from the force that animates it, and perversely, the only way out of the hermeneutic circle/cycle is a future redemption/cure that unmakes their embodied humanity. As St. Lawrence is said to have quipped mid-passion: ‘This side is cooked. Turn me over and then eat.’\textsuperscript{20}

For Kennedy’s narrator and St. Apollonia, there is no escaping entanglements with dental pain and movements ‘With Teeth,’ but these characters and their narratives are not reducible to their dental excruciations or to symbolic readings. Although saints’ lives and gothic narratives feature violence, approaching violence and suffering as symbolic constitutes a type of secondary violence on characters already

\textsuperscript{18} Kennedy, pp. 140-142.
\textsuperscript{19} Kennedy, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{20} St. Augustine, vol. 38, col. 1394.
‘made to suffer’. Pathologizing behaviours or proliferating ghosts misses the movements of embodied experience.\(^\text{21}\)

Where ontologies/hauntologies of subjects and objects pin subjects like St. Apollonia or Kennedy’s narrator to producing useful work within ideologies, nomadic thought treats everything as a body with mass, velocity, matter, energy, force and with the capacity to affect and to be affected by other bodies, after Spinoza’s (in)famous definition.\(^\text{22}\) Like celestial bodies, words like ‘St. Apollonia’ or ‘teeth’ have cycles, rhythms, beats, forces, attractions, and movements that affect and are affected by other bodies, such as images, media, thoughts, or memories. The ‘speeds and slownesses’ or beats and frequencies of affect theory make words behave more like wave-particles in physics.\(^\text{23}\) As wave-particles, words pierce bodies in the same way that X-rays and soundwaves do. This style of piercing does not pin bodies down to ideological or methodological habits, like St. Lawrence to the gridiron or St. Sebastian to the pillar; rather, it makes bodies move to new beats or frequencies, pitches or tones.

Theory in ‘affect theory’ is not a theory to be applied in ways that preordain the outcome; it is an inveterately nomadic process that tries to avoid becoming habit through an attitude of missing fixed points by putting bodies into play without seeking to control the outcome. What happens if we ask What can gothic bodies do ‘With Teeth’? St. Apollonia and the narrator resist neat narrative summary. There are few facts about either. St. Apollonia met her martyrdom in Alexandria Egypt sometime around 248/249. In Eusebius of Caesarea’s Ecclesiastical History, St. Apollonia is a pious elderly woman martyred for her faith:

> Then they seized also that most admirable virgin, Apollonia, an old woman, and, smiting her on the jaws, broke out all her teeth. And they made a fire outside the city and threatened to burn her alive if she would not join with

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\(^{21}\) For example, Derrida’s Specters, pp. 38-39, 46, 55, 82-83, and 212.

\(^{22}\) For example, Deleuze, Spinoza, pp. 17-19, 40-43.

\(^{23}\) Deleuze and Guattari, Thousand, pp. 267, 269, 271, 277, 283, and 296.
them in their impious cries. And she, supplicating a little, was released, when she leaped eagerly into the fire and was consumed.  

By about 1260, St. Apollonia appears in Jacobus de Voragine’s *Golden Legend*. In de Voragine’s version, St. Apollonia is ‘well along in years’, and her passion is more embellished. She is ‘wreathed with the flowers of chastity, sobriety, and purity.’ A pillar in her Christian community, Apollonia is ‘admired by the angels’; her example offers ‘a spectacle and example to men’. Her overt Christianity attracts mob-violence, and she is ‘carried off to the tribunal of the impious.’ Apollonia defiantly self-immolates, to the wonder of her tormentors.

The executioners, cruelly wreaking their wrath upon her, first beat out all her teeth. Then they piled up wood and built a huge pyre, telling her they would burn her alive unless she took part in their impieties. But she, seeing the pyre already burning and after a brief moment of recollection, suddenly broke free from the hands of the wicked and of her own will threw herself into the fire with which they had threatened her. Her merciless tormentors were shocked beyond measure at finding a woman even more eager to undergo death than they to inflict it.

De Voragine elaborates Apollonia’s attitude to martyrdom in terms of medieval chastity and mystical texts: she is the *sponsa Christi*, the ‘virile’ female martyr, the mystic consumed by the fire of divine love. Unlike gender stereotypes of female fickleness and faithlessness, Apollonia ‘yearns only to please her spouse Jesus Christ’, and her ‘virile spirit’ ensures her success in spiritual battle: ‘Armed against fleshly lusts and all tortures by her faith rather than by sword, she fought and she won’. Her ‘virile’ or manly victory consummates her status as Christ’s spouse, annihilating her molar identity. She is undaunted ‘by the torments visited upon her nor by the heat of the flames, because her spirit was on fire, ignited by the hands of

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25 De Voragine, p. 268.
mortals, could not be overcome the heat infused by God in that indefatigable breast. Apollonia’s burning, ardent desire out-burns the fires prepared for her; her becoming-fire worlds her into heaven.

Whereas Eusebius’ and De Voragine’s written narratives emphasize St. Apollonia’s self-immolation, medieval iconography accentuates her dental excruciations rather than her becoming-fire. The harrowing but incidental tooth loss becomes the new field of emergence or the latest unfolding of reality. The club is overtaken by the pliers, and the older Egyptian woman is outstripped by a younger European woman. The later medieval ‘speeds and slownesses’ arise from the shared differential relation of dental pain. These speeds and slownesses allow the saint and the narrator to exceed – move faster than or at a different speed than – their torments and to co-compose with believers/readers travelling at the same speeds. Kennedy’s narrator varies speed and direction to maintain relational connection with ‘you’. Calculating the pace and drift of her dental vignettes, the narrator thinks ‘I should pause here briefly, because it lets the story breathe and even possibly give a wink. I step back to let you step forward and see what’s next’. Her purpose is to synchronize the differential relation with fellow travellers: ‘This way you’ll stay with us. With me. Which is the point. You staying with me is the point.’

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27 Ibid, p. 269.
28 Kennedy, p. 142.
Figure 3: Barton Turf, Norfolk. Church screen from St. Michael and All Angels.

The ‘point’ of St. Apollonia’s narratives is likewise a differential relation: the saint moves at the speed of sufferings and suffrages which may account for her popularity. On English church screens St. Apollonia is ‘one of the most frequently portrayed saints’ in the late medieval period.\(^{29}\) Unbloodied and unburned, the saint brandishes her lost molar in a pair of pliers snatched from the hands of her tormentors. This speed attracted the devotion of medieval believers with toothache. Her suffrage in the Breviary implores:

God, for the honour of whose most holy name the blessed martyr and virgin Apollonia suffered the bitter knocking out of her teeth, be with us, we pray, so that we who commemorate her may be freed from toothache through her intercession.\(^{30}\)

Anglicised and modernized to the later medieval period, St. Apollonia outruns her martyrdom. Her skin, clothing, and hair are faster than the pyre. She is unharried, regal, and nimbused; her tooth and the pliers that extracted it are impossibly recollected to her. Similarly, the four vignettes in Kennedy’s ‘Story of My Life’ move at hagiographic speeds; these vignettes both dismember and recollect the story just as hagiography simultaneously dismembers and recollects saintly bodies. In the first vignette, the narrator’s memory of her first extraction is fogged by time, anaesthetic, and addiction, so the narrator improvises on her childhood experience in the

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\(^{29}\) Duffy, p. 180.

\(^{30}\) Scott-Stokes, p. 124.
dentist’s chair: ‘I’ll pretend, while I tell you the story, that I know.’ The narrator constructs an enraged five-year old child whose curious tirade conflates fantasy and reality, past and present. The child protests:

Taking my teeth out . . . no one ever takes me out – except to the dentist – to take out more teeth. I need my teeth for the Tooth Fairy – I’m only five, for Chrissake – that’s my one source of income, right there. How else can I save up to run away from here? I could go on the stage – be a sideshow – my manager would want me absolutely as I am – the Shark Tooth Girl: the more you pull, the more she grows: ivory from head to toes. I’d be laughing. With all of my teeth, I’d be laughing. This is untrue, but diagnostic – it helps to make me plain.

In the narrator’s childish confabulation it is not her pathology that becomes ‘plain’ but her ability to form a rhizome, to initiate a becoming. In the narrator’s becomings, the joke is on the dentists/tormentors. Becomings are unbound by arborescent norms. Molar extractions cannot keep up with the Shark Tooth Girl’s prodigious, full-body tooth growth. Her tooth-making machine deterritorializes her body which becomes ‘ivory from head to toes’: she produces teeth too fast for extraction. Like the saint, the narrator’s teeth are recollected to her in this vignette: she brandishes ‘handfuls . . . practically a whole piano’s worth.’ These simultaneously lost and recollected teeth speed the narrator’s experience beyond dental trauma to a type of performance in which the ‘you’ co-composes.

Figure 4: St. Apollonia by Carlo Dolci

31 Kennedy, p. 141.
32 Ibid
33 Ibid
In Carlo Dolci’s painting, St. Apollonia’s lost teeth have collided into the single ‘untrue but diagnostic’ moment/molar displayed to the reader/viewer. In this moment, teeth are simultaneously lost and found. Her image moves transversally, so fast its truth cannot be empirical but relational. Dolci’s Apollonia conjures a creative psychosis that conflates real and unreal, past and present. The saint’s thoughts are moving at the speed of heaven; she is numb, glassy, or arrested to all but worlding. Although temporarily caught in human flesh and costume, she is just ready to outstrip her humanity (again). Dolci’s saint like Kennedy’s narrator, evokes the moment De Voragine’s Apollonia leaps into the fire and out of her skin. Kennedy’s narrator likewise conjures a dynamic threshold from her dreamscape similar in speed to St. Apollonia’s martyrdom. Like Kennedy’s short story, Dolci’s painting is ‘untrue but diagnostic’; it makes the saint’s experience ‘plain’ to viewers.

Kennedy’s narrator highlights the unknowability and the speed of traumatic experience by recounting a story that is true not in content but in pace-making:

The story that kept you here with me and that was true. In its essentials it was never anything other than true. True as going to sleep tonight with the idea of blood beneath my tongue and meeting the old dreams of robbery and tunnels, the ones where I run straight through and beyond myself and on.

The narrator’s triple qualification of ‘true’ complicates it as a differential movement. In the first qualification, the relative pronoun ‘that’ shifts the issue of whether or not the story ‘was true’ into the moving relation ‘that kept you here with me’ as the narrator moves through speeds so fast that she transmigrates. The second qualification confirms the undefined ‘essentials’ of the story as unswervingly true or ‘never’ not true, however much/little the undefined particulars might have sometimes/always swerved from the truth. The third qualification of ‘true’ is just as

35 Kennedy, p. 141.
36 Kennedy, p. 149.
unknowably fast. If the story is as true as the narrator’s sleeping dreams, than it is unverifiable and untruthful, an unholy conflation of imagination and experience: psychosis. As in her dreams, the narrator’s waking experience blurs imagination and experience. She fact-checks the credibility of her perception: ‘The dentist gives me more anaesthetic and I notice his hands smell a little like cornflakes – his gloves, they have this cornflaky scent – which is a detail that makes him seem credible and not simply a nightmare.’37 Triply qualified as ‘true’, the story’s complicating truths misdoubt the essentials and particulars of the title ‘Story of My Life’. The gory dental vignettes may/may not be the true story, as the narrator twice observes: ‘Story of my life – maybe – going to the dentist.’38 Like Kennedy’s narrator, the truth of St. Apollonia’s harrowing, un-anaesthetized tooth extractions is unverifiable and unknowable: the story of her martyrdom – maybe – tooth extraction. Paradoxically, St. Apollonia’s image equals the differential motion of torment and recollection; she is experiencing yet outrunning blood and tooth loss.

St. Apollonia and Kennedy’s narrator are radically open to co-composition and connectivity. St. Apollonia exceeds territorialized and exclusivist distinctions like European/African, older/younger, martyr/suicide, male/female, believer/non-believer, or self/other. In Francisco de Zurbarán’s painting; her expression conveys the words of Kennedy’s narrator: ‘In this story, I’m like you. Roughly and on average, I am the same: the same as you’.

37 Kennedy, pp. 147-148.
38 Kennedy, pp. 140, 149.
She is like her suppliants in the shared bodily speed of tooth pain, and her empathetic intercession. Kennedy’s narrator is also empathetically intercessory to/with/for readers of ‘Story of My Life’. Like St. Apollonia, narrator is loosely territorialized and ‘the same as you.’ The unnamed narrator is of no fixed age ‘five’, ‘twenty-four, twenty-five’, ‘thirty-five’, ‘could be forty-five’ she adjusts her speed to the reader’s. There is no specific reference to the narrator’s ethnicity, nationality, or region. Popular cultural allusions to ‘Bagpuss’ and the ‘Clangers’ suggest knowledge of BBC programming between 1968-1974, though the narrator could be from anywhere within in range of BBC transmissions or retransmissions: anywhere in the digital age when e-books mean the narrator, like the saint, is miraculously ubiquitous and ether-traveling: always connective/connectible at the speed of the viewer/reader.

In Alexandria Egypt around the time of the third-century Decian persecutions, St. Apollonia’s neighbours and fellow Christians have been horrifically tortured and martyred, and the saint-in-the-making shares their fate. In the twenty-first century, Kennedy’s narrator endures four horrific dental treatments. For both women, their dental torments are no more or no less excruciating than their personal lives which

39 Kennedy, p. 139.
40 Kennedy, pp. 141, 142, 144, 146.
41 Kennedy, p. 141.
are territorialized by trauma and absence. In de Voragine, St. Apollonia is a mature woman who has lived a life of chastity, so her own nuclear family is absent from her narrative. The would-be saint, desires to be absent from her earthbound body so ardently that she expedites her martyrdom by leaping onto the pyre. In Kennedy’s story, the narrator’s parents are absent from her first extraction at the age of five, and in the three other vignettes, a partner and child are likewise painfully absent. At the age of twenty-four or twenty-five, the narrator reflects on how ‘wrong or maladjusted’ her life must be when ‘hauling a live tooth raw from the bone leaves you and your state no worse than an average night, a convivial night, a pace or two along your path of joy’. It is not clear if her partner at the time is exploitative, unfaithful, or abusive, but he is absent from the two later vignettes. At the age of thirty-five the narrator lists the things she does not have: ‘kitchen extensions and dinner parties, DIY, the ability to send out Christmas cards signed “With love from both of us. With love from all of us.”’ Finally, at forty-five, sending out ‘Christmas cards– with love from all of us’ is still impossible.

Impossible absences catalyze self-immolation and substance abuse for the saint and the narrator. St. Apollonia, who has been practicing forms of self-annihilation in life, decides to expedite her entry into death/heaven through her becoming-fire. The narrator is (re)territorialized by the abuse of alcohol and ‘painkillers.’ Deleuze and Guattari describe this as the chemical-assemblage, a type dependency rigidifies lines of flight to chemical consumption. Just as the narrator displays chemical dependency, the saint displays a type of spiritual dependency on the hagiographic-assemblage that likewise rigidifies her lines of flight; the entire focus of her life and her death is on a type of heavenly, unending fix or dependency. Like addicts, saints

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42 Kennedy, pp. 143-144.
43 Kennedy, p. 149.
44 De Voragine, p. 269. Bodies flux between moments of self-awareness and moments of self-loss. These moments of self-loss are becomings (also analogous to haecceities, multiplicities, bodies without organs).
45 Kennedy, p. 145.
are ‘glassy’ or vitrified in an unfeeling and fragile state.\textsuperscript{46} In the third dental vignette, the narrator seeks glassines: ‘Numb is best – I always aim for numb, for numb of any type – but pain has found me anyway.’\textsuperscript{47} The narrator’s desire for numbness causes a dating disaster. Under the influence of ‘painkillers – big ones. I like them big,’\textsuperscript{48} she initially fails to recognize her date; then struggles to enunciate due to oral stiches and pain medication. Upset that her date is not more of ‘a comfort’ and not more of a conversationalist, the narrator regales him with details of her ‘root canals. I summarise the activities involved in an apesectomy – the gum slicing, tissue peeling, the jaw drilling, the noise.’\textsuperscript{49} On this evening the narrator embodies Deleuze and Guattari’s description of drug-assemblage failures: ‘You will be full of yourself, you will lose control, you will be on a plane of consistency, in a body without organs, but at a place where you will always botch them, empty them, undo what you do.’\textsuperscript{50} Although the date itself is a failure, the narrator’s substance-induced experience is a speed or relation that readers can share. Neither the narrator nor the reader is reducible to a bad date, and bad dates are open to becomings.

In Kennedy’s fourth dental vignette, the narrator has just endured a harrowing forty-five minute dental extraction. She emerges from the clinic with impaired speech and temporary paralysis of an eye and an arm due to the anesthetic. As she waits for a taxi in a ‘colourful urban area’ frequented by substance abusers, a ‘relaxed gentleman’ walks up to her: ‘He says something approaching, “Hhaaaaa.” Which is not much of a story, but is true and I know what he means because I can speak alcoholic. I have learned. He reaches me and he says what might be expected’. The

\textsuperscript{46} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{Thousand}, p. 284-285 describes ‘the glassy body of the addict’, also using ‘vitrification’ or turning into glass. Glassy denotes a type of fragile, self-induced ‘phantasy subjectification’ in which the addict is both out of it, as in glassy eyed, and dangerously breakable.
\textsuperscript{47} Kennedy, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{48} Kennedy, p. 145.
\textsuperscript{49} Kennedy, p. 146.
\textsuperscript{50} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{Thousand}, p. 285.
narrator translates his alcoholically-impaired request; she also translates her own anaesthetically-impaired reply: ‘I turn to him with my bleeding mouth and my lazy eye and my dodgy arm and my swollen tongue and I say, “I don no. Havin a biddofa bad day myself.”’\textsuperscript{51} If her first dental vignette is accurate, the narrator will return home from the fourth dental vignette to drink. After the first dental vignette, the narrator wakes up from nitrous oxide sedation with a hangover: ‘Back from the surgery, next came the hangover – naturally, naturally, naturally – but as I was a child it would be kind, more a mild type of fog than a headache.’\textsuperscript{52} The triple ‘naturally’ highlights the unnaturalness of a five year old child suffering a hangover from nitrous oxide sedation. Hangovers are so natural to the narrator’s adult life that these reterritorialize her past self; she cannot recall life without them.

Reterritorialized by the chemical-assemblage, Kennedy’s narrator cannot recall life without hangovers, just as St. Apollonia, reterritorialized by the hagiographic-assemblage, cannot recall life without glassiness. Neither St. Apollonia nor Kennedy’s narrator are limited to symbolic territorializations of their sufferings or triumphs. Their movements with/in/through the lived disjunctions of dependency and piety, dentist and tormentor, extraction and recollection, patient and saint move them away from representing the world toward assembling ‘a new type of reality.’\textsuperscript{53}

The \textit{Dark Arts} editors envision a revelatory role for gothic studies in a world akin to a gothic nightmare.

As neo-liberalism unleashes monstrous forces of financial power across the globe, as class divides widen, social inequality deepens and the despotic power of corporations and big business looms ever larger, the Gothic functions as a site of exposure and resistance – uncovering the instability, the

\textsuperscript{51} Kennedy, pp. 148-149.
\textsuperscript{52} Kennedy, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{53} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{Thousand}, p. 296
irrational and the imaginative that hegemonic forces all too often seek to keep in check and keep well hidden.\textsuperscript{54}

If the gothic functions of exposure and resistance are to have effect against these ‘monstrous forces,’ ‘immanent critique,’ ‘speculative pragmatics,’ ‘rhizomatics,’ ‘research-creation,’ ‘affect theory,’ or ‘schizoanalysis’ are necessary to break the cycles/circles of institutional habit and symbolic violence.

\textit{What can gothic bodies do ‘With Teeth’?} Engage in differential relations that make ‘thought itself nomadic.’\textsuperscript{55} Instead of replicating desire as lack, bodies can produce reality.

\textsuperscript{54} Greenaway, p.3.
\textsuperscript{55} Deleuze and Guattari, p. 24.
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Figure 1: Three manuscript images of St. Apollonia, Biggs, Sarah J., ‘Happy St Apollonia’s Day!, the British Library medieval manuscripts blog http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2014/02/happy-st-apollonias-day.html.

Figure 2: Ibid, BL Egerton MS 2019, f. 217r.

Figure 3: St. Apollonia on church screen, Knott, Simon, Barton Turf, Norfolk, St. Michael and All Angels in Tom Muckley (ed), Rood Screens in East Anglia http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/bartonturf/bartonturf.htm.

Figure 4: St. Apollonia by Carlo Dolci, formerly Matthiesen Fine Art Ltd. http://matthiesengallery.com/artist/dolci-carlo.

Figure 5: St. Apollonia by Francisco De Zurbarán, Musée du Louvre http://www.wikiart.org/en/francisco-de-zurbaran/st-apollonia-1636.


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Reading Irish Traditional Music Through a Gothic Lens

Debra Reddin van Tuyl & Carl Purdy

The popular imagination associates traditional Irish music more with lively jigs and reels, céilíthe at the crossroads, and ballad crooners whose songs tell sad stories of emigration, immigration or unrequited love. However, there is a darker side to traditional music in Ireland. A 2009 study found that the two properties most commonly associated with Irish traditional music are, as expected, its liveliness but also its haunting qualities.¹

These haunting qualities are perhaps most often seen in the slow airs, ballads, and sean nos songs, but they are by no means limited to those forms. Even jigs and reels can be composed so as to take on menacing undertones, or given titles that reflect Ireland’s historic connection to the Gothic and Gothic arts. ‘Old Hag, You Have Killed Me’, ‘The Witches’, ‘I Buried My Wife and Danced on Her Grave’, ‘The Jig of the Dead’, ‘The Banshee’, Troll in the Mustard’, ‘The Wizard’, and ‘Port Na bPúcaí’, which translates as ‘Song of the Pooka/Fairies’ are just a handful of examples of titles that have, at the very least, Gothic undertones.

Folk music, as any other genre of music, can be composed to convey dark, haunting messages and feelings. An entire neofolk genre encompassing dark folk music arose in the 1960s and was the genesis of punk and some of the metal genres. While this music is more commonly associated with heathenism today, it is also tinged with dark arts and supernatural phenomenon.² However, the composition of Gothic folk music is far less studied than the composition of either contemporary popular music or classical music. This paper proposes to address that musicological hole in the

literature by considering how folk music – in particular, Irish traditional music – can be constructed so as to convey a feeling, message or emotion linked to the Gothic.

Irish traditional music makes an ideal subject for such a study because of Ireland’s long connection to artistic expressions with gothic undertones. The dialectic between Ireland and England has allowed Ireland to be portrayed ‘in terms of Gothic isolation and hauntedness since the eighteenth century’ and before. Further, associations between Ireland and music – scholarly and otherwise – are centuries old.³

Further, music is a common character within Irish myths, legends, and folklore, and its very presence often signifies or is the result of magic. William Butler Yeats maintained that Turlough O’Carolan (1670-1738), Ireland’s most famous composer, was inspired to become a composer by the fairies whose rath he slept on one evening on his way home from a late night at the pub.⁴ Additionally, in Irish mythology, the gods Dagda, Lugh, and Ogma used the three strains of music (joyful [geantraighe]; melancholy [goltraigh], and sleep-inducing [suantraighe]) to rescue Dagda’s harp and harper from his enemies. That same harp also magically played the three strains to prophesy the birth of Dagda’s three sons.

Few explanations have been offered for why Irish traditional music has so many instances of songs and tunes that deal with supernatural themes, or at least have supernatural titles. One author suggested that the violent cultures of Ireland, Scotland, and other Anglo-Celtic nations factor large in the fascination with the

supernatural in those cultures.\textsuperscript{5} The author suggests that the violent pasts of these nations has spawned songs that express a longing to see lost loved ones one last time or perhaps serve as vicarious acknowledgments that humans have little control over their fates. Whatever the genesis, traditional Irish music is an expression of local culture and indigenous society. It is a text that can communicate meaning, just like other forms of text, provided one is receptive to meaning embedded in the language of music.\textsuperscript{6}

Likewise, one must also be able to identify ‘the Gothic’ if one is to identify its presence in any textual form, including music. Most scholars agree that actually constructing a scholarly definition of the Gothic has proved elusive. Most definitions have made more reference to features and styles of the Gothic than actually reaching to the heart of the term’s meaning.\textsuperscript{7} When applied to literature, the term ‘Gothic’ actually began as something of a joke. Horace Walpole subtitled his 1764 novel \textit{The Castle of Otranto} as \textit{A Gothic Story}. Walpole used the term to mean something ‘barbarous’, as well as to draw on an association with the Medieval period. In general, references to ‘the Gothic’ suggest, or at least hint at, the involvement of the


supernatural, mystery, and suspenseful unfamiliarity. In fact, it is this notion of unfamiliarity that is perhaps the closest defining characteristic of the Gothic.

This is the basis for van Elferen’s definition of Gothic music: ‘the sounds of the uncanny’, which Freud defined as being related to what is frightening, to what ‘arouses dread and horror’, to when the familiar becomes the unfamiliar. Van Elferen argues that Gothic music is ‘the sonic [characteristic] of the genre. But she, in keeping with other scholars, believes these sonic characteristics ‘remain obscured in Gothicist as well as musicological research.’ She identifies the first great example of Gothic music as the ‘Dies Irae’, which translates from Latin as ‘Day of Wrath.’ This eerily gloomy thirteenth century Gregorian plainsong chant is still used today to conjure up images of death and uncanniness. According to van Elferen, critical assessments of Gothic music typically use non-musical terms such as ‘sinister’, ‘somber’ and ‘depressing’, or ‘moody’, ‘gloomy’ and ‘macabre’. Overwhelmingly, however, the word most commonly used to describe both the Gothic and Gothic music is ‘dark.’ Van Elferen further argues that whenever analyses are done of the compositional strategies used in Gothic music, they do not address how the alleged darkness is produced. In fact, most commonly, critiques of Gothic music focus on particular artists or bands, or on the contemporary Goth subculture. Other genres of Gothic music are typically ignored, which is why a study such as this one that deals with traditional music, the folk music of a particular place, is important, for it

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provides a musicological explanation of how darkness within particular musical
genres.\textsuperscript{13}

The authors have chosen to examine the Gothic in folk music through the medium
of traditional Irish music. This choice is based on Ireland’s long association with the
sort of dark, haunting elements and supernatural characters that are cultural
hallmarks of both Ireland and the Gothic genre – whether literature, film, music, or
some other form. While today most Irish would deny any belief in leprechauns,
trolls, nympha, fairies, the Sidhe, or even magic, they nevertheless embrace these
folkloric creatures as an important component of their cultural history. Just as this
paper was being finalized, Irish tourism posted a film on its Facebook Page about
the fairy tree at Hill of Tara and the movement to reroute a road so as to leave the
tree undisturbed.\textsuperscript{14}

Similarly, in 1999, \textit{seanachai} (a traditional storyteller) Eddie Linehan successfully
waged a campaign to reroute a bypass around Ennis, Co. Clare, so as to save a fairy
tree known as the meeting place of fairies from the province of Munster whenever
they were preparing to go to war against fairies from Connacht province.\textsuperscript{15} Michael
O’Donnell, an Irish farmer from Borrisoleigh, Co. Tipperary was able to buy his farm
at a reduced price because of the fairy fort just behind his farmhouse. No one wanted
a property where they would have to live in such close proximity to the Sidhe.\textsuperscript{16}

Thus, Ireland’s long association with supernatural and Gothic themes and stories,
coupled with the presence of those themes in the country’s folk music as well as its

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid
\textsuperscript{14} Film is viewable at youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04_UjlwLOys or the
Tourism Irish website: http://www.ireland.com/articles/video-stories/
\textsuperscript{15} John Walsh, ‘Irish Road Side-tracked by Fairies’ Right of Way’, \textit{The Independent}, (19
September 1999). http://www.independent.co.uk/news/john-walsh-on-monday-irish-
\textsuperscript{16} Michael O’Donnell, Interview series, 12-16 May 2014, Fairy Fort Farm, Borrisoleigh, Co.
Tipperary, Ireland.
literature, render it an ideal locus for an examination of how folk music communicates the Gothic. In this work, the authors will analyse traditional Irish music to determine how it uses common elements of music to craft stories that fit within many different musical genres, including the Gothic genre.¹⁷ The haunting quality of Irish traditional music and its uncanniness are the defining characteristics that place traditional Irish music within this genre.¹⁸ The haunting quality of Irish traditional music will be demonstrated through the analysis of two tunes, one that goes back at least to the 19th century and one composed in the 21st century.¹⁹ The body of traditional Irish music does not lack for songs (i.e. songs with lyrics) with Gothic themes, but this work will focus on traditional tunes, that is works that do not possess lyrics. The focus is specifically on how the elements of music as a thing in-and-of-itself can tell stories within the Gothic genre.

The tunes to be analyzed are an older piece, ‘King of the Fairies’, and a contemporary composition, ‘The Ghost.’ The first tune analyzed is ‘The Ghost,’ composed by Liz Carroll, a Grammy-nominated trad-style fiddler from Chicago. In an interview with the authors of this paper, Carroll said that her compositions are not guided by rules of theory but by her understanding of traditional Irish music’s stylistic conventions, her own musical sensibilities, and as well as by the idea or message she is trying to express with her tunes.²⁰

Carroll composed ‘The Ghost,’ in 2002 for a graveyard scene in Marina Carr’s play ‘By the Bog of Cats.’²¹ In the case of ‘The Ghost,’ Carroll said the tune ‘just came to

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¹⁸ Smyth (2014) 54-44.
¹⁹ Fitzgerald and O’Flynn, 147-152.
²⁰ Liz Carroll, Personal interview 3 November 2013, Atlanta, Georgia. Interview notes available from Debra van Tuyll.
²¹ Grace Toland, (grace.toland@itma.ie), ‘The Ghost. [Email to Debra van Tuyll (dvantuyl@augusta.edu). Sent 28 Augusta 2013. No time stamp. Available from Debra van Tuyll at email address given.
her’ when she started thinking about what a nighttime graveyard encounter with a ghost might sound like. Carroll explained that she is not formally trained in composition, so her tunes are not composed so much by following the rules of ‘musical grammar,’ as by what her imagination tells her the tune should sound like. Carroll’s skill and intimate knowledge of this genre lends her an instinctive understanding of how to use the sonic characteristics of music to convey a particular feeling or emotion.22 In this piece, she captured the sense of a ghostly presence and added an Irish twist to it.23

By contrast, ‘King of the Fairies’ is a traditional tune that perhaps should be considered ‘pan-Celtic’. It appears to have derived from a Jacobite tune, ‘Bonnie Charlie,’ and is very similar to an English tune titled ‘William of Orange,’ an interesting historical juxtaposition. The tune migrated from Ireland to Cape Breton, a North American epicenter of Irish traditional music, where it was transformed into a march titled ‘Rí na Sideog’, or ‘King of the Fairies.’24 In Irish folklore, ‘King of the Fairies’ is considered to be a summoning tune. According to tradition, if played three times consecutively during a celebration, the Fairy King is compelled to appear. Once arrived, he assesses the festivities, and if they are to his liking, he joins in and everyone has a grand time. If he is displeased with what he finds, he turns to mischief to entertain himself.25


24 Another version of ‘King of the Fairies’ can be heard at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekiPWKvgDZE; the score is available at https://thesession.org/tunes/475. See version No. 8.

The compositional style and subject matter of both tunes are associated with traditional Irish music, which dates roughly from the 17th century. 26 Traditional Irish music is historically dominated by pieces about love, home, emigration, poverty, and war, but dozens of Irish songs and tunes deal with Gothic and supernatural themes such as curses (‘The Curse of the Molcolbhin Line’), mystery (‘The Mystery Reel,’ ‘The Mystery Jig,’ ‘The Mystery Inch’), hauntings (‘The Haunted Jukebox,’ ‘The Haunted House’) and cross-cultural supernatural creatures who appear in Gothic tales such as witches, hobgoblins, ghosts, monsters, trolls, and fairies. Others tunes have titles that deal with supernatural creatures peculiar to Ireland such as leprechauns, puca, banshees, merrows, changelings, dullahans, and grochs. Ghosts commonly make appearances in traditional Irish songs, sometimes appearing in human form (e.g., ‘Molly Malone’) and sometimes in animal form (e.g., ‘Molly Bawn’), but other supernatural themes occur as well in Irish lyrics, such as Satan appearing in altered form so as to steal souls more easily (e.g., ‘An Cailín Deas Crúite Na mBó’ (‘The Pretty Girl Milking the Cows’) and fairy abductions (e.g. ‘The Lake of Coolfinn’).

That said, it should be added that simply because a tune has a title that deals with the supernatural, it is not necessarily Gothic. ‘The Fairies Hornpipe,’ for example, is neither dark nor haunting, but it does tell the story of a type of supernatural creature, albeit a creature that seems to be more like Disney’s Tinker Bell than the Sidhe of Irish tradition. It captures the light, ethereal aspect of fairies rather than the darker, scarier, unfamiliarity of an Irish fairy.

These characteristics function as a system of grammar and which scholars generally agree are common across musical genres. 27 Communication occurs when shared

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meaning is accomplished. In the case of music, the communicative properties of a particular piece may or may not be terribly sophisticated, yet music from any genre is capable of delivering at least a rudimentary message.\textsuperscript{28} The communicative power of music comes from its unique characteristics – pitch, rhythm, harmonic treatment, etc.

Experts disagree on exactly how music’s characteristics achieve the creation of shared meaning (i.e., communication). One school, the expressivists, believes music communicates by evoking emotions. The other, the formalists believe music can only express the musical craftsmanship of the composer and/or performer. Formalists argue that any musical expression is grounded in theoretical training and an understanding of the rules and characteristics of music.\textsuperscript{29}


Neither the formalists nor the expressivists provide a satisfactory explanation for how music communicates. However, combining aspects of the two approaches offers a more satisfying explanation of how music communicates. Philosopher Leonard Meyers, for example, maintains that music communicates through both formal grammatical structure and emotion that are employed to create shared meaning.30

Working from Meyers’ perspective, the authors argue that traditional Irish music is a medium through which shared meaning is shared both through the formal structure of a composition and through the composition’s emotional content. Redfern Mason, an English-born music critic for the San Francisco Examiner and the Boston Evening Transcript in the early 20th century, recognized the communicative properties of Irish music in an admittedly romanticized, pro-nationalist study. In that work, Mason contended that

Every air has a mood so definite that it provokes inquiry as to the nature of the poem with which it is associated. Even the dances, which of all music, would seem least to demand the inspiration of words, are no exception to this rule. In many cases . . . the name irresistibly suggests a story, an idyll, a legend, a joke.31

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30 Meyer, (p. 6, 10, 29).
If music can suggest a story or a joke, make people happy or sad, amorous or patriotic, it follows that it can also evoke the sort of titillating fascination with fear and the macabre that are the classic emotional responses to the Gothic.

Further, music has specific characteristics that function as a sort of musical grammar and syntax and afford music its communicative aspects. The following sections are intended to give the reader a brief explanation of how the elements of musical grammar and syntax are used in Irish traditional music to reflect the Gothic.\(^3\)

**Tonality**

Tonality functions as the overall structure or grammar of music and is a key element used to embed Gothic (or other) meanings into tunes. Tonality refers to the character a piece of music takes on as a result of the key signature (scale pattern) in which it is written.\(^3\) Most western music today is written in either a major or a minor key. However, far more tonal options exist if one reaches back in time to the Gothic period (roughly 1100-1500) when eight scale patterns, called modes, existed (See Figure 1). Ionian and Aeolian modes, which would eventually become the major and minor keys, remain in common use across a broad spectrum of musical genres today.

*Figure 1. The eight modes, based on the C major scale (i.e., the scale pattern that would begin on the note C and would contain no sharps or flats).*

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The other modes are used less frequently in most other forms of contemporary Western music.\textsuperscript{34}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{C_major_scale.png}
\caption{C major scale}
\end{figure}

Traditional Irish music, however, has retained two additional modes from the original seven: Dorian and Mixolydian.\textsuperscript{35} Dorian and Mixolydian modes are related to standard major scales but are structured differently. They start on different notes, and the accompanying chords will be different as a result. They are recognizable as music, but they sound noticeably different, perhaps even alien, from the more typical major and minor scales that one is used to hearing. Consequently, Dorian and Mixolydian modes can be used to create sounds that are familiar yet not familiar. Their familiar unfamiliarity can be used to add darkness to a tune because of the relationships between notes in the scale, even the starting note of the scale, is different from the standards used in Ionian and Aeolian modes.\textsuperscript{36} Listeners would know they are hearing music when listening to a composition in Dorian or Mixolydian modes, but it would sound just a bit off kilter, a bit uncanny. The tonality would be off just enough to create a sense of disorientation or anxiety.\textsuperscript{37} Use of these uncommon modes in musical composition, then, functions something like a haunted house. A house is familiar

\textsuperscript{36} D. Ramos, J. L. O. Bueno and E. Bigand, ’Manipulating Greek Musical Modes and Tempo Affects Perceived Musical Emotion in Musicians and Nonmusicians,’ Brazilian Journal of Medical and Biological Research, 44, 2, pp. 165-172 (p. 167).
\textsuperscript{37} M. Conran, The National Music of Ireland: Containing the History of the Bards (London: John Johnson, 1850) (pp. 17, 53, 54); T. Mooney, History of Ireland from its First Settlement to the Present Time (Boston: Patrick Donohue, 1854)
because of its association with family structures, but a haunted house, while its
design, construction, and set-up might be common, is unfamiliar because of the
ghostly presence.\textsuperscript{38}

By way of example, a tune written in the G Dorian mode would follow the structure
of an F major scale but would start one note higher. The G Dorian scale sounds
uncanny because it is familiar – recognizable as a musical scale – but unfamiliar at
the same time in that it does not sound like a ‘normal’ scale pattern. Some pitches
will sound higher or lower than a listener has learned to anticipate. The emotional
result is the rough aural equivalent of a cliffhanger, which a composer can use to
signal listeners that the story the music is telling may not be what it seems.\textsuperscript{39} Modal
settings, then, are ideal for musically telling stories with Gothic themes because they
allow the music to produce a vibrant and rich range of emotional experiences for
listeners.\textsuperscript{40} Liz Carroll’s ‘The Ghost’, analysed later, does exactly this through its use
of the G Dorian mode. She uses the Dorian mode to create an implied duality that
straddles the world of the living and the world of the non-living, or, in Irish
mythology, the Otherworld.

\textit{Intervallic Relationships}

If modes are the musical grammar that facilitate the telling of Gothic tales, then
intervallic relationships are syntax that allow a composer to add nuance to a tune.
Intervallic relationships refer to the proximity of one note to another. For example,
notes that are adjacent are referred as a minor second (See Figure 3).

\textsuperscript{38} Anne Williams, \textit{Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic} (Chicago: University of Chicago
\textsuperscript{39} Mason, p. 65; Vallely, 1991, pp. 239, 243.
\textsuperscript{40} Vallely, 1991, p. 243, Smyth, 2009, 54-55
Figure 3. A major second is the name for the intervallic relationship of notes that are two half-steps apart. In this figure, you have a C and a D. A C sharp (which can also be called a D flat) falls between the C and the D. The interval between a C and a C sharp would be a minor second, or a separation of only one half-step.

An important element of musical syntax used to create Gothic-themed music is chromaticism, that is, moving up or down by half-steps. Chromaticism arose as a technique used by Romantic composers to create tension and suspense.\(^4\) The use of successive pitches in the melody that moves from one half-step to the next sounds like a 12-legged spider scuttling after lunch or a ghostly presence beckoning a Gothic heroine to follow it into a dark ruin.\(^5\)

**Rhythmic meters and patterns**

Rhythm is a characteristic of both language and music. Trained storytellers use rhythm to help them pace their stories – speeding up in exciting passages, slowing down or pausing in sad sections, just as poets use precise meters in composing their works.\(^6\) Likewise, musicians use rhythm not only to keep all the players together but also to create a sense of shared experience and meaning with listeners who may be clapping or tapping their toes in time with the music.\(^7\)

Rhythmic meter is, of course, a characteristic of Irish traditional music, which follows the same two basic rhythmic patterns of most music. It will have either a

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\(^5\) Tischler, 1958, p. 95.


duple meter (two or four beats to the measure. See Figure 4) or triple meters (three or six beats to the measure. See Figure 4).

![Duple Meter](image1.png)  ![Triple Meter](image2.png)

*Figure 4. Duple meter is based a rhythmic pattern that has either two or four beats per measure. Triple meter has three beats per measure.*

While timing is important to music, it is less so for creating a Gothic experience – at least for listeners. Within the Gothic genre, timings can be stretched, compressed, or overlapped. Given its origin as dance music, rhythmic meter is vitally important to traditional Irish music, thus a tension does exist within this element between the Gothic and Irish traditional music. This is accomplished by, for example, interspersing triplet and duple rhythms creates rhythmic tension as in ‘King of the Fairies’.

Speaking as musicians, however, the authors would argue trying to navigate the maze of different tune types within the pantheon of Irish traditional music and their slight rhythmic variations can present an authentic Gothic experience for a performer if not a listener. Remembering to play a hornpipe differently from a reel, a strathspey, or a polka; what the difference is between a slide, a double jig, and a slip jig; or whether this particular barndance is in reel time (4/4 time signature) or slide time (12/8 time signature) can be a discombobulating experience.

Rhythmic patterns are an important component for creating a feeling of the Gothic, for they, at their core, are music’s equivalent of the human pulse. They provide tunes with ‘a steady recurrence of contraction and relaxation, tension and release.’

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rhythmic patterns of music draw listeners in by offering a vicarious connection to other humans. These patterns also allow listeners to become part of the community sharing in the musical story by tapping their toes or drumming a rhythm on a surface while listening.47

Both ‘The Ghost’ and ‘King of the Fairies’ employ rhythm to convey meaning. In ‘The Ghost’, the slow, buoyant feeling of a ghost is created by the tune’s bouncy triplet meter. In ‘King of the Fairies,’ the rhythmic pattern is more definite with its syncopated rhythms (a pattern of longer notes followed by shorter notes or vice versa. See Figure 5). It moves like a march with decided emphasis on beats one and three to create the sense of a grumpy fairy stomping as he assesses a gathering with a skeptical eye.

Figure 5. The syncopated rhythm used throughout ‘King of the Fairies – a dotted eighth note followed by a sixteenth note. The two notes together account for one beat within a measure. (Hyacinth at the English language Wikipedia | GFDL (http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html) or CC-BY-SA-3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)%5D, via Wikimedia Commons)

Ornamentation

Ornamentation ‘is a decisive stylistic determinant in Irish traditional music.’48 One of the most interesting and often daunting elements for those learning to play traditional Irish music, ornaments are non-notated notes added to a tune to give it increased character and interest. Trills, cuts, triplets, and turns are the most

common ornaments in traditional Irish music.49 Ornamentation is not generally specified by the composer. It is an interpretative frill added by performers, which allows them to function as co-creators of meaning through individual interpretation of the tune. Given that Irish traditional music is commonly passed on aurally, this co-creation of musical meaning is unavoidable. Ornamentation and interpretation can also be sources of suspense regarding whether the song will be performed in exactly the same way this time as last.

Ornamentation can add Gothic elements to traditional Irish music in that ornaments can be used to create sound effects of a sort. A violin glissando can illustrate a spectral presence gliding about, or a pizzicato (plucking the strings rather than bowing) can signify frightening excess.50 A trill or short roll on a whistle might signify the fluttering of a fairy’s wings. These may be elements written into the original, or they may be ones the player uses to co-create meaning with the original composer.

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The following two sections represent the authors’ analysis of two Irish traditional tunes. As with any art form, each individual’s ‘reading’ of the piece may differ. However, these analyses are grounded in musical theory guided by the expertise of a long-time composer and performer of both folk and art music. In addition, in the case of ‘The Ghost’, the interpretations are guided by a conversation with the composer as to her intentions as she wrote the tune.

While ‘The Ghost’ is a contemporary piece it was composed to fit into the traditional Irish music genre. By the same token, Carroll’s background as a traditional fiddler informs her imagination and influences her use of musical language. Carroll is not a trained composer who looks to music theory to guide her composing. She is more

49 Keegan, online.
likely to ‘hear’ a piece as it forms in her mind. Nevertheless, her work clearly makes use of the characteristics of traditional Irish music to place the listener in the presence of the supernatural – in this case, to put the listener in the presence of the ghost of a recently deceased person.\footnote{Li Carroll, [Personal interview 3-11- 2013], Atlanta, Georgia. Interview notes available from Debra van Tuyl.}

Carroll employed each of the communicative elements discussed above in her composition. For example, when the authors considered her choice of a syncopated 3/4 meter, they heard a rhythmic structure that evokes a feeling of buoyancy and lift that they interpreted as depicting a floating ghost who settles, then lifts off, moves forward, then settles again as if searching for something unobtainable (See Figure 6).

![Figure 6. A measure from 'The Ghost' that illustrates the syncopated rhythmic pattern. This pattern is a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. The two notes together account for two beats within a measure. ('The Ghost', The Session, https://thesession.org/tunes/13880).](image)

Carroll also portrayed this the ghostly presence by using particularly large intervallic relationships (5ths, minor 6ths, and octaves. See Figure 7) to create movement and a sense of sprightliness through the large leaps.

![Figure 7. The second and third notes in this measure represent an octave (eight note) leap. ('The Ghost', The Session, https://thesession.org/tunes/13880).](image)
Large leaps are dramatic because there is always melodic tension where the transition from the first note to the second is hard and uncomfortable, it is an unexpected twist that is disjunctive. Smaller movements, such as between adjacent notes (minor seconds) create extreme dissonance. Dissonance is a technique that can be used to create tension, or a sense of the familiar unfamiliar. A listener is aware of hearing music, but listeners the dissonance is jarring; the preference for consonant music is typically strong. Dissonant music is uncomfortable; it is rather like the proverbial fingernails on a chalk board. Further, moving from one note to another, whether ascending or descending, creates a sense of motion. In the case of ‘The Ghost,’ Carol uses ascending intervals to move her ghost up into the air and descending intervals to move it back down to earth.\(^{52}\)

Carroll’s choice of the G Dorian mode aids in portraying a sense of sadness and maybe unresolved longing or searching. The dark ambiguity of the G Dorian mode (i.e., neither major nor minor key) plays into the portrayal of a ghostly experience through music.

Her chordal harmonic treatment is disorienting because of the use of the secondary dominant, a technique a composer uses to portray considerable movement in a piece.\(^{53}\) The effect in this piece is a feeling that it is toying with two different key signatures and, perhaps, as a result, suggesting the presence of two different ghosts. Regardless of the intent, the result is unsettling, which accomplishes Carroll’s goal of creating tension in the listener. The stepwise progressions of chords, both ascending and descending, demonstrate an emotional contact between the spiritual and the temporal. The use of ascending and descending chords creates an arc that


takes the listener on an unsettling emotional journey similar to what the ghost experiences as it walks along the path that will lead it from this world to the next.

This same message is embedded in the form of the piece. The A section has a much more unsettled feel to it due to the large intervallic leaps, stepwise harmonic treatment, and unusual rhythms. In the B section, the syncopated rhythms still feel a bit off kilter but are more regularized to what the ear is used to hearing – long notes followed by short notes. Also in the B section is Carroll’s most important use of a doted half note, a long drawn-out note that gives the listener an opportunity to pause and settle after the emotional turmoil of the A section.

Carroll’s use of ornamentation is limited in this piece, occurring in only three places. She uses three simple turns to contribute to the buoyancy of the piece. That is, Carroll makes good use of these ornaments to accelerate the movement from one measure to the next and to propel the piece forward. No ornaments are included in the B section at all.

‘The King of the Fairies’, in the key of E Dorian, paints a musical picture of an irritable fairy stomping grumpily around without regard for those who might get in his way. Place is not so apparent from the piece, but if one is aware of the associated legend, one can easily see the Fairy King haughtily assessing a gathering to determine whether it is to his liking. This picture is painted musically through rhythmic structure, key signature, tempo, and tune type.

While the piece is a set dance, it is generally played so that it sounds like a hornpipe, which is a type of dance, and accompanying music, that originated in the British Isles in the 16th century. A hornpipe is played with swing or syncopation, and the hornpipe dance is traditionally done in hard shoes to emphasize the percussive stomping of the dancer’s feet.
The same rhythmic pattern repeats throughout the ‘King of the Fairies’. The pattern consists of a recurring transition from syncopation to a simple, even, movement created by two repeated unsyncopated long notes that are both accented so as to sound like two stomping feet. This sort of accented first and second beat is an uncommon pattern in most hornpipes, as is true of most pieces written in common time. More typically, the first and third beats of a measure receive the emphasis.

The first part of the story, represented in the A section of the tune, is told musically through the ploddy syncopated rhythmic pattern that concludes in two accented beats and then moves to syncopation again. Such a pattern creates, at least in the imaginations of these authors, an image of a grumpy old fairy who is furtively prowling around, ‘casing the joint’, and who keeps looking for reasons to be displeased. Finding none, he stomps his feet or pounds his fists in consternation.

The B section begins with three consecutive long notes: the root (the first note in the scale, in this case, an E), fifth (a B) and octave (a high E) intervals that are followed by the two quarter note demonstrative treatment. The measures that follow are played in a higher octave than the A section so as to demonstrate the shrill frustration and the height of this fairy’s consternation. The B section plays out a musical melodic tirade until an eventual melodic stumble that is emphasized by the downward movement from the G-F#-E to a D along with the rhythmic pattern which moves from a long note to short note (a dotted quarter-eighth-dotted-quarter-eighth).

An even more dramatic stumble follows in the next measure with a rhythmic pattern that is unlike any other in the piece. This measure is syncopated, but its long-short pattern uses notes of longer durations (dotted quarter and eight notes). The melodic structure is different as well. Instead of being more-or-less stepwise, the notes in this measure move down two notes, up a note, then back down two notes. This measure is so different from the rest of the song that it is clearly the climax of the
piece, the moment when something has caught the king’s attention, and he pauses to make his assessment of the gathering. That the piece picks up and continues on in the previous pattern for another seven measures, which could be read as an indication that he is pleased with what he has seen.

‘King of the Fairies’ is among the most popular pieces classified as hornpipes on The Session, a website that collects primarily Irish tunes and that also functions as a forum for traditional musicians’ discussions of tunes. ‘King of the Fairies’ comes in third, as measured by the number of downloads.\(^5^4\) Further, the tune has sparked lively discussion among musicians regarding its provenance, proper tempo, and proper playing arrangement. The word ‘haunting’ comes up time after time in comments about the piece.

Most agree that the tune can be played just as any other Irish set dance, but, with proper treatment and instrumentation, it can be made to sound scary, spooky or haunting. One reason for that may be that when played as a set dance, the piece is played ‘crooked,’ according to Zina Lee (the username of one of the Session discussants). The first section is repeated three times instead of the traditional two – once to give the dancers an introduction and then twice for them to dance – and then the second section is only played once. Some, who are likely familiar with the legend that this tune can be used to summon the King of the Fairies, even commented that they play it around 11 p.m. at musical gatherings in hopes of that the pub’s former landlady will magically reappear.\(^5^5\)


The Gothic genre is complicated, for its appeal is contradictory. Stories in this genre are both repulsive and enticing. They pull in and they push away. They appeal by offering what is forbidden or dangerous, and, at the same time, promise satisfaction of inexpressible impulses. There is something inexplicably pleasant about flirting with the fear of the familiarly unfamiliar, the uncanny, the unknown.\footnote{Lothar Mikos, ‘Between Fear and Pleasure,’ in \textit{Suspense: Conceptualizations, Theoretical Analyses, and Empirical Explorations} ed. by P. Vorder, H. Wulff, and M. Friedrichsen, (New York: Routledge, 2013) (pp. 37-49).}

Tales of the supernatural have generally been communicated through stories and words. Today, new technologies allow audiences to be mesmerized by television programs about pet psychics, celebrity/ghost encounters, vampires, witches, and even the occasional zombie. Movie theatres offer similar fare, though with a much higher price tag. Words and images, however, are not the only way in which Gothic stories can be told. As this paper has demonstrated, they can be told with music as well.\footnote{Bruce F. Kawin, \textit{Horror and the Horror Film} (London: Anthem Press, 2012); George Lipsitz, \textit{Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) (p. vii).}

Though it comes from art music rather than from folk music, Modest Mussorgsky’s ‘Night on Bald Mountain,’ offers a useful example of storytelling by a composer. According to the composer, the piece was inspired by Russian legends about a gathering of witches on St. John’s Eve. Mussorgsky’s intent, according to his notes, was to recreate subterranean sounds of supernatural voices. Appearances of spirits of the darkness, followed by that of Satan himself. Glorification of Satan and celebration of the Black Mass. The Sabbath Revels. At the height of the orgies, the bell of the church village sounding in the distance, disperses the spirits of darkness. Daybreak.\footnote{Phil G. Goulding, \textit{Classical Music: The 50 Greatest Composers and Their 1,000 Greatest Works} (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995) (p. 460).}
While ‘Night on Bald Mountain’ is art music, scholars have long argued that certain universals do exist across different genres of music.\textsuperscript{59} One of those universals is music’s power to convey a message from composer/musician to listener. Another seems to be an interest in the supernatural. Mussorgsky and his comrades in the classical genre are not the only musicians to compose music that deals with Gothic or supernatural themes. Both ‘King of the Fairies’ and ‘The Ghost’ tell the same sort of stories. That they are folk music makes them no less a musical depiction of the Gothic. Both ‘King of the Fairies’ and ‘The Ghost’ are scary stories about creatures from another realm. These pieces of music tell their stories by the ways they combine intervallic relationships, metric relationships, key signatures, ornaments, and other musical attributes. Combining the characteristics of music in specific and particular ways, any composition can evoke strong emotions, and when a skilled composer wishes, can also tell a story.\textsuperscript{60}

Most Gothic tales are told through the vehicle of literature (novels, short stories, poetry, and other word-based genres), but, as the analysis of these two pieces shows, stories can be conveyed without words. Music also offers a genre for telling ‘tales of mystery and imagination’, to borrow a phrase from Edgar Allan Poe.\textsuperscript{61} Music uses a different ‘grammar,’ which limits the detail that can be included to that which can be conveyed by sound and rhythm. Nevertheless, music has the power to engender long-lasting memories and to create moods and atmospheres, and music has the power to enhance, even to duplicate, what language evokes. In fact, music can portray feelings that cannot necessarily be expressed well in words. For example, a


\textsuperscript{61} Edgar Allen Poe, \textit{Tales of Mystery and Imagination} (London: Vitzelly, 1852).
story can tell a reader that an annoyed fairy crashed a party, but only music can let the listener actually hear the stomping about.

The ‘reading’ of these tunes presented here is idiosyncratic to the authors, but this is no different from what happens when a reader reads a Gothic novel or a viewer watches a Gothic movie. Communication theory tells us that meaning is co-created between the sender and the receiver. This does not apply only to traditional text-based communications media such as books and movies. It applies to any form of communication, including music. Will another listener hear a different story when he or she listens to ‘The Ghost’ or ‘King of the Fairies’? Very likely – but the differences will be similar to the differences between two readers’ assessments of what a text-based story meant. The structure and grammar of the language of music allow composers of to evoke emotions and to suggest meanings. This is as true of composers of folk music as it is of composers of any other genre.
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Performing the Sounds of Darkness: An Exploratory Discussion of Musical Instruments and the Gothic Aesthetic

Will Connor

Gothic subculture is an extremely broad term used to describe the community of people who embrace a wide range of popular culture, that exhibits a particular set of traits. The popular culture considered Gothic, consisting of media, fashion, literature, and more, encompasses a plethora of styles and contains within itself multiple subsets of groups, all unique and varied. Despite the inherent variety among the subsets, the traits that associate any given group or cultural event, product, or work with “the Gothic” retain a high level of consistency. Some of the more prominent attributes (despite their potential to be vague and difficult to define succinctly) are darkness, bleakness, romantic tragedy or romantic survival in spite of tragedy, associations with the supernatural or the inexplicable. Obviously, this is a very truncated list, and the Gothic community certainly possess many other traits (for instance, Gothic studies scholar Micah Issitt states creativity, imaginativeness, and humor would also fall within the realm of Goth culture),¹ but the underlying, uniting sensibility within the Gothic subculture is the ability to find beauty in the dark and disturbing.² I would even go further and suggest that embracing death as an integral part of life, be that positive or negative, is also essential.³

These sensibilities valued by the members of the Gothic community have developed dialectically with the culture with which it is associated, and a portion of the influential culture (Gothic literature and film, primarily) was cultivated prior to the Gothic subculture emerging and establishing itself beyond a mere trend,⁴ but Issitt

² Ibid. p. xvi.
³ Drawn from multiple conversations with members of the Gothic community between 2005 and 2012 during research for Ph.D. thesis.
points out that the formulation and solidification of today's Gothic community was and is heavily reliant on its own music scene.\footnote{Issitt, (2011), p. 2.} Music within popular Gothic culture is often described as also possessing the same defining traits. There is, of course, a broad spectrum of Gothic music spanning various styles. However, Goth bands, film soundtracks, audiobook backing music, the current trend in drama to present Gothic-influenced theatre, and even Gothic websites, video games, and art installations all seem to be recognized as Gothic through these associations, disregarding the tremendous differences between the specific composition of the music and how it is presented.

What, then, makes music Gothic? Van Elferen presents an extensive and definitive initial study in her book \textit{Goth Music: Sounds of the Uncanny},\footnote{Isabella van Elferen, \textit{Goth Music: Sounds of the Uncanny} (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016).} clearly explaining the ways in which the Gothic imagination and connected aesthetics work dialectically to unify various types of music presentation to form the cannon of Gothic music composition and performance, and her arguments are sound and fascinating, thus I have no intention of rehashing (beyond the brief introduction below) or challenging them here. Instead, what I hope to achieve with this paper is to point out that it can also be said that, in part, it is the musical instruments involved that assist in constructing, maintaining, and propelling the concepts of the Gothic aesthetic through various performative aspects, including both sonic and visual elements and a network of associations that link the instruments to the Gothic community and subcultural values.

To better understand the specific aesthetics musical instruments are employed to perpetuate, it is useful to present a short overview of the development of Gothic music (again, see van Elferen for a more detailed discussion.\footnote{Ibid. [2016]}) Jerrentrup writes that
the emergence of the Gothic popular culture scene and the subsequent development of Gothic music was a product of a split in the punk rock scene between community members circa the late 1970s, specifically those members who valued an anarchist attitude and those members who valued a subversive, education-based approach to rebellion⁸ (each in reaction to current affairs, primarily in the United Kingdom, and soon to follow in the United States). Musically, this lead to the Anarchist Punk music movement, led by bands like the Sex Pistols, and to the Noble Punk movement that eventually was labelled Goth music by members of the press and some of the band’s managers when referring to bands like Suzie and Banshees, Joy Division, The Damned, and 45 Grave. The development of Gothic music from that point onwards cultivated a specific style that has been both constantly evolving, and simultaneously consistent in the traits embraced within the styles that emerged.

The spectrum of Gothic music today spans from Gothic “trad” rock (short for traditional, meaning styles of rock employed by the bands who first were deemed part of the Gothic scene), to Goth metal, Neo-Medievalist Goth, Electro-Goth, Dark Ambient Soundscapes, Industrial Noise, Classical/Romantic period Influenced composition, and a variety of combinations of these styles that fall in between, with new styles emerging constantly. These styles, however diverse, still maintain traits of the Gothic aesthetic through many factors, including compositional choices, visual reinforcement, and sonic-based semiotics, and they do so, in part, through the musical instruments on which the music is performed.

Aesthetics and associations from Gothic literature published in the late 1800s and the following horror and pulp fiction published up through the 1940s (which has now developed its own movements and styles, which continues to feed into the contemporary Gothic aesthetic), and subsequent Gothic film releases (such as “monster movies” released by Universal Studios based on Gothic literature or

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presenting stories in the same vein, including Dracula, Frankenstein, Creature from the Black Lagoon, The Mole People, and many others) have provided a rich source of influential material for Gothic music (and the subculture in general). Many stories from the body of Gothic literature include subject matter that links to the spiritual or magical (or to use the term van Elferen cites regularly, spectral),\(^9\) relaying tales that evoke mystery or unimaginable horror; impart a sense of eternity or longevity (or the reverse, meaning a truncation of what should be eternal); and love beyond the grave or connections between characters that spans life and death (similar to the theme of longevity or eternity, but with a specific emphasis on the romantic).

There are many superb works about Gothic writings which explain their traits, background, and development in far greater detail (i.e.: Punter and Byron),\(^10\) so I will not expound further here, but I should point out three of the main associations upheld by the Gothic community that translates directly and indirectly to musical instruments chosen to be incorporated into Gothic music (and some of the techniques used to play them): associations with the exotic or unknown; associations with historical, ancient, or folk culture; and associations that evoke nostalgia or the romantic, all of which often take on a melancholy, grim, or horrific air.

How do musical instruments, then, evoke these emotions or assist in creating these associations? It certainly cannot be said that standard rock instruments be categorized as Gothic simply because they are being used within a Gothic music setting. By taking a closer look at some atypical or non-rock musical instrumentation being used in some subsets of Gothic music, a potential distinction arises that can, perhaps, point out more decisively how instruments used in various

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genres can be seen as being more Gothic and become accepted, and even iconic within certain circles of the Gothic community.

**Lovecraftian Fear and Unfamiliar Sounds**

As van Elferen discusses at length, Gothic music is strongly associated with Gothic literature, primarily via a sense of style that evokes the elements inherent in both forms of expression. Gothic literature is an extensive subject that has many subsets, as does Gothic music, but as mentioned above, there is a unification of the written media through the common aesthetics and narrative elements found somewhat consistently throughout the body of works. Specific examples, therefore, can be made of any particular subset, and here I will address the use of musical instruments in the context of Lovecraftian Mythos horror, a subset of Gothic literature made popular by American writer Howard Philips Lovecraft, considered by some to be the “grandfather of modern horror”, and other pulp fiction and Gothic writers who drew from his original works and style.

As mentioned above, the Gothic music spectrum is not limited to rock or dance forms, nor is it restricted to performance settings that demand a concert, festival, or nightclub venue to present the music. Film

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"Isabella van Elferen, *Goth Music: Sounds of the Uncanny* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016). p.11-33"
soundtracks, video games, art installations, and theatre sound design can also be valid mediums for presenting Gothic music when the focus of the narrative or creative endeavor is deemed Gothic or Goth-related (by the creator of a work or the body of peers engaging with the work). The works, then presumably would possess traits accepted as encompassing elements of the Gothic aesthetic for the work to be considered Gothic by the community of peers, and would attempt to include musical composition or performance that reinforces these aesthetics by employing instrumentation that would afford recognizable support. One specific example (and certainly, by no means is it the only example), is the use of experimental instrumentation in Dread Falls Theatre’s production of *Father Dagon*.

*Father Dagon* is an immersive theatre piece written and directed by Victoria Snaith, owner of Dread Falls Theatre. The company is known for their Gothic, Steampunk, and Folklore/Fairytale related presentations12 and *Father Dagon* is no exception. The piece that was recently toured throughout the U.K. is based on the works of horror writer H. P. Lovecraft, in particular, his Innsmouth cycle of stories, that tells of a small fishing village inhabited by cultists who worship an ancient sea god called Dagon. In the stories, so as to worship their god more fully, some of the cultists have undertaken a supernatural transformation to become half human, half fish creatures. Outsiders who discover Innsmouth’s secret either go insane, get killed, or join the cult, often undergoing this horrific transformation (typically, as a result of a romantic encounter with one of the cultists). The play not only covers all of these story lines within the show, but also is set in spaces converted into full-scale surreal environments where the audience, instead of sitting comfortably in seats during the performance, move freely within the set, with the ability to roam and experience the village, actors, and music firsthand, as if they are newcomers to Innsmouth and can see the characters’ tales unfold around them.

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12 Victoria Snaith, Dread Falls Theatre Official Website. [http://www.dreadfallstheatre.com](http://www.dreadfallstheatre.com) [accessed 18 February, 2016]
Snaith chose to include live musicians along with the general backing soundtrack to create what she considers a more intense experience for *Father Dagon*’s audience.\(^{13}\) She states that she based her aesthetic decisions on Lovecraft’s own Gothic mentalities, citing one of his more famous quotes as inspiration:\(^{14}\) “The oldest and strongest of Man’s emotions is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.”\(^{15}\)

Her approach to accomplish embracing Lovecraft’s sensibility of fear and the unknown through music is to have the live musicians improvise with homemade instruments or use extended techniques on more conventional instruments to create a sonic elements consisting of sounds with which the audience would be unfamiliar. (In addition, the musicians react to and influence acting and motion by the other performers, as well as they relocate at points during the show, and sometimes, conceal their instruments; all of which can assist in building the sense of unfamiliarity that Snaith seeks.)\(^{16}\) The unfamiliarity, too, can serve to support the parts of the narrative that contains supernatural and monstrous aspects. Given that the elements of the supernatural and horrible monsters in Lovecraftian tales are primarily indescribable (both because Lovecraft would recount beasts and fantastic magical happenings in his works as being such, and because in a practical theatrical situation, these things would be impossible to describe, especially without text or specific props or costumes, which the show purposefully uses sparingly, also as a conscious choice to embrace the unknown). Sounds created on instruments that are unique, or generated through unusual performance techniques would lend themselves to being more difficult to describe, and therefore fitting to support a

\(^{13}\) Victoria Snaith, Interview with the author. [5 November, 2014]
\(^{14}\) Ibid. [2014]
\(^{16}\) Snaith, [2014]
desire to present something regarded as also difficult to describe, that being supernatural happenings or horrific creatures.

Musicians and sound artists who took part in the performance included raxil4, Mu, Seesar, Charlie Collins, Anton Mobin, and (in a recording capacity only) Akoustik Timbre Frekuency, and each of them employed a variety of homemade instruments and “extended techniques” to create their sounds. Raxil4 and Mu both created instruments specifically built for the performances, in fact, citing that they would be able to make new sonic contributions beyond that of traditional instrumentation. (Raxil4 built what he calls “The Bone Guitar”, and Mu created what the show’s crew dubbed “The Spine of Darkness”) Both artists utilized cattle and goat bones in the construction of the noise-makers to add to what they considered to be the “horror” or “Gothic” nature of the instruments.17 Mu imparted in a private conversation that she knew the new instruments would be seen as well as heard, and therefore wanted to build something that would add to the spirit of the performance visually and sonically.18

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17 Andrew Page (raxil4), Private conversation with the author. [2 March 2014]
18 Lydia Morgan (Mu), Interview with the author. [3 March, 2014]
Mu and raxil4 (as well as Seesar and Akoustik Timbre Frekency) are also members of a collective of composers and performers called the New Leaders of the Eldritch Cult, who engage in creating works related to and inspired by Lovecraft and Italian Futurist composer, instrument builder, and self-professed occultist Luigi Russolo. The group calls for artists to compose and record dark soundscapes that reflect a Lovecraftian sense of the unknown through the incorporation of Futurist musical instruments, many of which are either self-made acoustic or electronic instruments, or re-functioned household items. Seesar, an all-percussion project, professes to use performance techniques and employ items not intended to be used as musical instruments when built (i.e.: bicycles, shelf brackets, metal mixing bowls, large springs) specifically in order to undermine the listener’s sonic expectation of what a percussionist may produce to further engage with the creation of unknown, fearful sounds; and Akoustik Timbre Frekency regularly adds ritual instruments from various religious settings (Shaman drums and rattles, Tibetan rolmo orchestra

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19 New Leaders of the Eldritch Cult Facebook Group. [https://www.facebook.com/groups/10515395518259803/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/10515395518259803/) [accessed 17 August, 2016]

instruments, et cetera) with the intention of connecting his music to Pagan rite practices or cultist worship akin to rituals described in the writings of Lovecraft.\textsuperscript{21}

To reiterate, the examples given here are quite specific and only reflect a very small subset of Gothic music. However, the notion that instrumentation choices are being made to conjure a particular aesthetic and further engage in a commonly accepted set of sensibilities deemed Gothic is clear in this case; and it is this mentality that informs performers’ decisions to employ certain instruments and playing techniques, regardless of the way in which the instrument itself is seen as being unusual or not, upon which I will elaborate further below.

\textit{Figure 3: Akoustik Timbre Frekuency live in London, 2012, shown here with Himalayan singing bowls, a Tsimshian shaman rattle, and a type of fipple flute often used in Pagan rituals. ©2013 Kevin Wright}

\textbf{Neo-Medievalist Goth Music and Early Music Instrumentation}

Returning to van Elferen’s text on “Sounds of the Uncanny”, she states that “the Gothic” renders nostalgia audible, and thus Gothic music embodies that nostalgic association.\textsuperscript{22} In this section, I suggest that composers and performers of nostalgic-driven Gothic music must consider the instruments and the

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\textsuperscript{21} Kevin Wright (Priapus 23 from Akoustik Timbre Frekuency), Interview with the author. [12 December, 2015]

\textsuperscript{22} Isabella van Elferen, \textit{Goth Music: Sounds of the Uncanny} (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016). p.5-6
associated performance techniques played on those instruments in order to realise the feeling of nostalgia valued amongst the Gothic community.

Gavin Baddeley points out that Goths often look centuries into the past to find inspiration, and specifically, according to Jerrentrup, the Gothic scene pays special attention to the European Middle Ages, aesthetically speaking. Historically associated art as well as Gothic architecture is a primary area of influence from which scene members draw bleak or “darker” outlooks on music and fashion. From this area of influence, another form of music that lies within the Gothic music spectrum developed, known as Neo-Medievalist Goth music. As the name implies, performers in the Neo-Medievalist scene (sometimes called the Medieval Gothic folk scene, Medieval Pagan rock scene, or Mittlealterm/Middle Ages Goth scene) draw material from historical sources, in particular that which evokes a medieval or ancient era, and rely on evoking ancient times whilst simultaneously embracing the present. As with the overall genre of Goth music, the range of styles within the scope of Neo-Medievalist music spans from rock to electro to chamber ensembles and dark ambient projects, but regardless of their style, Neo-Medievalist Goth bands typically use a combination of Early Music-style instruments and instruments regularly heard in contemporary rock bands (although there are certainly a large number of performers who choose to restrict their instrumentation to historically associated acoustic instruments in projects that lean more towards being an Early Music ensemble whilst targeting a Gothic audience). Typically, instruments played by Neo-Medievalist Gothic bands include lutes, recorders, frame drums, medieval-style double-headed bass drums, bagpipes, dulcimers, hurdy gurdies, shawms, schalmei,

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and/or various fiddles such as rebecs or kits. In some cases, players will use Early Music instruments without alteration (meaning acoustic instruments whose makers attempted to maintain a high level of perceived historical accuracy) whilst some performers choose to play instruments that have been modified in some way, presumed at the time to make them more functional or aesthetically acceptable.

Groups that include these elements are not necessarily Neo-Medievalist Gothic projects. In addition, a project that is not considered Neo-Medievalist Gothic by the artists, themselves, may well be embraced by members of the Neo-Medievalist Gothic scene. Neo-Medievalist Gothic performers and their music share defining sonic or visual traits with the main styles that influenced them, namely Early Music and traditional European and Middle Eastern music. Similar instrumentation, clothing that reflects historical associations, or traditional melodic content may all be present. The differing factor which the Neo-Medievalist Gothic community member commonly embraces is a purposeful departure from historical accuracy, either with visually related fashion or sonically related musical elements, that firmly plants the presentation within a Gothic subculture context.

Members of the Neo-Medievalist scene have differing tolerances for various levels of perceived historical accuracy within musical presentation. It would be unfair to say that all members of the community disregard historical elements as long as the performers wear black clothing and suggest pre-Baroque eras with their song titles; however, historical accuracy typically takes a secondary position among the hierarchy of values placed on the genre’s presentations. A listener, it seems, only needs to be reminded of an earlier period of history for the Neo-Medievalist connection to be made. Also, any level of Gothic crossover is acceptable, no matter

how tangible, and it need only be perceived by the fan base, not the performers themselves.

The band Dead Can Dance, for instance, performs works taken from Medieval songs and based on performance styles informed by texts written in the Middle Ages, using a multitude of folk and Early Music instruments, such as hammered dulcimers, Arabic goblet drums, and lutes; yet they freely incorporate electronic keyboards or modern trap drums on occasion and often alter melodies to suit a dance-friendly aesthetic the value. Visually, Dead Can Dance may wear medieval style garments or something derived from a more Gothic rock fashion. Brendon Perry and Lisa Gerrard, forming members of Dead Can Dance, have stated in interviews time and time again that they do not categorize themselves as either Gothic or Neo-Medievalist (although they admit the musical influences from both, and to appreciating the large number of fans from the Gothic subculture community)\textsuperscript{29}\textsuperscript{30}, yet arguably, the majority of their fan base is the Neo-Medievalist Gothic community. It is not a sense of historical accuracy, then, that is important to the Neo-Medievalist Gothic community, but rather an impression of authenticity that places the artists within the genre as perceived by the fans, and this is done, in part, through the choice of instruments made by the performers.

\textsuperscript{29} Brendon Perry, Interview, \textit{Arcane Delights}
\url{http://members.tripod.com/arcane_delights/Dcd/interview.htm} [accessed 15 March, 2012]
\textsuperscript{30} Lisa Gerrard, Interview, \textit{Barcode Zine}
\url{http://www.barcodezine.com/Lisa%20Gerrard%20Interview.htm} [accessed 15 March, 2012]
A historically accurate instrument can be an attractive resource for the Neo-Medievalist Gothic performer, as much as it could be considered too dissimilar to the genre’s accepted aesthetics. Evoking a historically early era can be achieved with greater ease and more convincingly through the medium of a period instrument: conveyed through its visual aspects, its unique timbre that differs from commonly used modern instruments, and/or its ability to appeal to a sense of tradition. Commonly two or all three of these traits are inherent in an Early Music instrument. Because Neo-Medievalist Gothic fans tend to conflate the historical eras from ancient to the end of the Renaissance as being acceptable, historical association with an instrument is not limited to the Middle Ages.

Nor is association limited to European history, although it is the primary region of interest. Tradition for other geographic areas can be seen in Neo-Medievalist Gothic music, especially if the tradition with which the association is being made can be linked to a specific historical era or European history indirectly. In particular, Near Eastern and Middle Eastern traditions appear regularly in the scene as a reminder of the spoils of Christian crusades. Goblet drums, sistrums, and other instruments brought back to Western Europe made their way into common use during the end...
of the Middle Ages,\(^3\) and thus in turn have been adopted by the Neo-Medievalist Gothic music scene. For example, both Czech/U.K.-based band PerKelt and Bulgarian group Irfan add a range of Early Music, folk music, and Middle Eastern percussion to their line-ups. At the 2016 Castlefest, currently the largest Neo-Medievalist Goth festival in Europe, instruments the two groups used between them included Egyptian tablah, Celtic harp, non-keyed clarinet, cimbalom, recorders, Ghanaian dhun-dhun drums, Native American shaman drums, and ouds alongside acoustic and electric guitars, keyboards, and vocals sung in a wide range of languages evoking archaic styles.\(^3\)

Figure 5: Irfan performing with oud, tablah, harmonium, and vocals, and electronic (drums out of frame) at the 2016 Castlefest, Lisse, Netherlands. ©2016 The Seventh Chakra / Castlefest NL

Hybrids of historical and modern instruments also appear within Neo-Medievalist music. Michael Popp, for example, is a multi-instrumentalist who performs what he calls “Medieval electro music” in his two projects Estampie and Qntal. Typically, with these two bands, he performs either modern Goth-influenced renditions of Medieval material, or original compositions that make use of Medieval style, melodic content, and instruments. Popp performs on keyboards, guitar, electric bass, lute, and several bowed string instruments (Early Music instruments and modern instruments),

\(^3\) Music of the Crusades Era, [http://www.umich.edu/~eng415/topics/music/music-article.html](http://www.umich.edu/~eng415/topics/music/music-article.html) [accessed 15 March, 2012]

\(^3\) The author attended and performed at Castlefest 2016.
including an electric viola da gamba called a Ruby Gamba.\textsuperscript{33} Estampie is primarily acoustic whilst QNTAL is more of a Gothic rock band, but both bands incorporate electric and/or high volume instruments, which would render an acoustic viol too quiet to be effective without amplification of some sort, thus Popp’s choice to play a Ruby Gamba;\textsuperscript{34} the amplified instrument maintains the modern functionality needed whilst also being able to evoke historical association through the instrument.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{ruby_gamba.jpg}
\caption{Michael Popp performing on one of his Ruby Gamba with the Neo-Medievalist Goth band Qntal. Reprinted by permission of Michael Popp}
\end{figure}

The historic association afforded through the use of Early Music or related instruments is a major part of how Neo-Medievalist Gothic musicians engage with the Gothic aesthetics. For many, even if unconsciously, the reference to ancient times bears underlying tones of both the eternal or archaic as well as sounds that may be deemed romantic, the combination of which fits squarely within the realm of Gothic sensibilities. Often Neo-Medievalist lyrics, album covers, and clothing impart narratives that tell of life beyond death, love that lasts forever despite tragedy or impending doom, and recount tales of magic from eras long past, all of which can be supported with a strong historical association; Neo-Medievalist performers understand this and purposefully select their instruments accordingly. As above, it should be pointed out that the Neo-Medievalist Goth scene is a thriving, but smaller subset of the overall Gothic rock community, however, as with the aesthetics associated with Lovecraftian music, the traits exhibited by Neo-Medievalist Gothic performers

\textsuperscript{33} Michael Popp, Interview with the author, [07 September, 2011]
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
support the argument that Gothic aesthetics inform instrument choices, in this case evoking a sense of nostalgia.

**Evoking the Gothic with Rock Instruments**

As to be expected, a genre of music that stemmed from punk and related rock styles from the late 1970s would generally employ standard rock instrumentation, and such was definitely the case with the most or all of the first wave of bands who were part of the Gothic music movement. I do not suggest that standard rock instruments be considered specifically Gothic, because in terms of the instruments themselves, they have a much wider range of association (blues, Javanese kroncong, country rock, and many forms of jazz often also include electric guitar, for example) and thus it may be considered to be less the type of instruments and more the ways in which they were played or presented that makes them Gothic (or rather made the music Gothic). However, I do feel that it is necessary to point out the means by which these standard instruments became perceived as Gothic, at least in some cases, is by emulating other instruments and embracing specific non-sonic attributes which helps construct and maintain the Gothic aesthetic.

The song *Bela Lugosi’s Dead* by Bauhaus,\(^{35}\) often seen as the first or “flagship” song of Gothic rock,\(^{36}\) performed entirely on “traditional” rock instruments, contains an excellent example of Gothic association, even beyond the obvious lyrical content that evokes connections with vampires and indirectly with Gothic horror films. The band creates a melancholy soundscape with a strong, underlying rhythmic and melodic element driven by the drums and bass, whilst guitarist Daniel Ash performs waves of unusual sounds generated with the use of multiple guitar pedals and extended performance techniques. The intermittent lack of melodic material present in the guitar performance combined with the experimental sounds is

\(^{35}\) *Bela Lugosi’s Dead*, Bauhaus (Small Wonder Records, 6 August, 1979)

purposefully being used to conjure a sense of darkness, the supernatural, and the unknown, as with the example above of the improvising musicians in Dread Falls Theatre’s *Father Dagon*. Additionally, the consistent, prominent “dry” drum track, is contrasted by a duplicate underlying drum track being processed heavily with similar effects to Ash’s guitar sounds to further support the construction of these aesthetic traits.

Another example of standard instruments being used to perform Gothic music come from the composers and musicians who are part of the New Leaders of the Eldritch Cult, mentioned above: All of these performers purposefully embrace timbres intended to be considered unusual or unfamiliar by the artists as the root of the musical constructions, as opposed to an intention to enhance the basically rock-oriented music, such as that of Bauhaus; yet not all the members of the New Leaders collective make their own instruments or use found objects or household items. In fact, some members do not depart from standard modern instrumentation at all. For instance, Michelle Eris Price aka R’Lyeh uses a variety of rock instruments, primarily electric guitar, keyboards, and trap drums;[^37] Chris Courtney aka Hell Is Carbon is primarily an electric guitarist;[^38] and Benj Arcane aka Yog Sothoth plays keyboards (and some homemade electronics).[^39] However, due to the methods they employ for creating sounds, either performance techniques, tunings, or electronic filters and effects, the end results of the music forged is similar in nature to the other New Leaders projects – ambient with a decisive intention to be harmonically and melodically ambiguous and dissonant, purposefully to fulfill the requirements of Gothic aesthetics, whilst still using commonly-played modern rock instruments.

Nostalgia can also be evoked using standard rock instrumentation. An instance of this comes from another Bauhaus-related recording by singer Peter Murphy in his

[^37]: Michelle Eris Price, Email conversation with the author, [20 February, 2016]
[^38]: Chris Courtney, Email conversation with the author, [15 April, 2016]
[^39]: Benj Arcane, Skype conversation with the author, [27 July, 2016]
song *Cuts You Up* from his solo album *Deep* released in 1990.\(^\text{40}\) The song generally is a straight-forward rock song, but bassist Eddie Branch employs a cello bow in certain passages to evoke a feel of a classical instrument when playing his fretless electric bass. The aesthetic of the fretless bass already contains associations with upright double basses, but the additional use of the bow for compositional emphasis and dynamic changes brings forth a feeling of nostalgia by relating the instrument to something that can be seen as having a historical association. Obviously, cellos and many other bowed instruments are contemporary and modern, as is definitely the case with a bowed electric bass, but it is the placement of this performance technique and the melodic presentation it affords within the rock context (and specifically Gothic rock context) that supports the Gothic aesthetic by contrasting other rock genres in favour of a darker, romantic period music feeling that in turn builds an association with the archaic and thus upholds the value placed on vampires, death, and romance, as discussed above.

*Figure 7: Eddie Branch bowing his electric bass in the video for Peter Murphy’s song Cuts You Up.*  
©1990 Beggars Banquet

When embracing Gothic aesthetics is not possible sonically, through either creating unfamiliar sounds or evoking nostalgia, or additional associations with Gothic aesthetics are desired, another method of engaging “the Gothic” can occur. Visual

\(^{40}\) *Cuts You Up*, from *Deep*, Peter Murphy (Beggar’s Banquet, 1990)
aesthetics are also a large part of Gothic music presentation, and musical instruments are not exempt from this. One way in which makers and players of what may be considered standard rock (or any type of) instrument converts them to meet a Gothic aesthetic is through the ways these instruments look. The Las Vegas-based luthier Roman / Abstract Guitars, for example, makes a line of electric guitar marketed as being their Gothic model that features sharp protrusions from the points on the guitar where a more standard guitar would have none, rendering the instrument reminiscent of an indescribable creature a la Lovecraft, and it is only available in all black (including the metallic parts which are black chrome) adhering to a sense of darkness or death. Abstract even sell the guitar in a special case (most likely because it would not fit into a standard case), and have chosen to shape their special case in the form of a coffin.

Figure 8: Roman Abstract Pagan Guitar’s Goth guitar in its coffin case. ©2015 Roman Abstract Pagan Guitars

Standard rock instrument makers are not the only builders who embrace this mentality when designing instruments being specifically targeted for Gothic performers. Jan Goorissen, Early Music performer, instrument designer, and owner of Ruby Gamba (mentioned above), has come forth with a Gothic model. The all

[accessed 17 February, 2016]
black model is similar to the Abstract guitar in that all its metallic parts are also black and its shape is somewhat distorted in comparison to other Ruby Gamba models, and is intended to be used within a Gothic context. The instrument sonically has only one difference from his other models; a different pickup system that is meant to allow the instrument to be used in higher volume settings. Goorissen has also designed a new seven-stringed model geared towards the neo-Medievalist Gothic market. It consists of a mahogany body and neck lacquered black with an ebony fret board, silver hardware, and red trim and a red Celtic style cross on the pick guard. These models of Ruby Gamba both cater to the visual aesthetics of the target demographic, that being the Neo-Medievalist performers. The choice to use a black finish can be argued as being a conservative colour, but Goorissen specifically calls this model a Gothic rock model, so I infer the decision was deliberate in attracting players of Gothic genres, specifically via visual aesthetics as well as sonic aesthetics that match those of the Gothic subculture and music scene.

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42 Jan Goorissen, Interview with the author [7 July, 2011]
Further Investigations

The ways in which Gothic music constructs the aesthetics associated with the genre is partially achieved through the musical instruments incorporated. Fear of the unknown, nostalgic views of past lives, and romantic outlooks on magic and the supernatural are all sensibilities that can be supported with specific musical instruments through their sounds, shapes, and associations. This may be achieved through inherent timbres, extended playing techniques, or implied via visual and physical traits. In turn, it seems the instruments, through the agency of the makers and players, engage dialectically with the community and evolve alongside the generation and development of the scene’s aesthetics. The few examples given here are but a mere starting point for the research needed to fully unravel the entangled web between instruments and the Gothic scene, however, and many additional examples and unaddressed lines of discussion await further investigation. The aim of this paper is merely to suggest a skeleton of a study that takes into account the basics of the Gothic aesthetic and music performed within the Gothic scene in an attempt to open a dialogue that can provide a base for an initial line of questioning, and is by no means a complete project with concrete findings. The discussion still holds value, however. By addressing the possibilities of associations of musical instruments with the Gothic aesthetic and community, a further understanding of this important subculture can be brought to light; as well
as putting forth encouragement for parallel studies of musical instruments in other groups can show the ways in which material culture engages dialectically with social groups to formulate value systems partially influenced by specific creative trends and movements.
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Contributors

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Morticia is a gothic photographic artist who has just completed a Masters in Creative Practice at Leeds College of Art. She is inspired by all things gothic, and Victorian mourning culture in particular. She uses analogue and digital photographic processes to record remnants of the past and explore how their echoes can still resonate and disturb. You can find out more about her work and the inspirations behind it by looking at her blog www.ladylugosi.blogspot.co.uk or following her @ladylugosi on twitter.

Debra Reddin van Tuyll is Professor of Communications at Augusta University. She is the editor of The Civil War and the Press (Transaction, 2000). Carl Purdy is an Instructor of Music at Augusta and has toured internationally with a variety of instruments. His composition Benji the Banjo was recently published as a children’s book with accompanying musical CD.

Laurie Ringer is Associate Professor of English at Burman University. Her research interests include medieval heresy, spirituality, Affect theory and British fiction. She received her PhD from the University of Hull.

Lucy Winnington holds an MA in Art History from the University of Auckland and is now studying for a PhD in History of Art at the University of Edinburgh.