



the **lu**minary

Issue 7 2016

Locating Fantastika

Issue 7: Summer 2016

“Fantastika” – a term appropriated from a range of Slavonic languages by John Clute – embraces the genres of fantasy, science fiction, and horror, but can also include alternative histories, gothic, steampunk, young adult dystopian fiction, or any other radically imaginative narrative space. This issue features extended articles from the 2nd Annual Fantastika Conference: Locating Fantastika, held July 2015 at Lancaster University. The conference explored all areas of space, setting, and locations, either in the fictional world of fantastika or in fantastical networks with the real world.

Acknowledgements

Front Cover art, “Homage to Pratchett’s Lancre Witches” by Sam Robinson

Editors: Charul (Chuckie) Palmer-Patel and Chloé Alexandra Germaine Buckley

We would also like to thank our peer reviewers for their kind consideration and efforts with this issue

Contents

Introduction to “Locating Fantastika” **8-13**
Ruth Heholt, Falmouth University

Resident Evil & Doorways: An Exploration of Transitional Spaces in Visual Culture **14-25**
Hannah Boaden, University of Edinburgh

Doorways have consistently been used as a structural device in visual culture. A strong correlation lies between doorways and the unknown potential of the space beyond the doorway. Particularly relevant to this correlation is the prospective emotional responses which arise as a consequence of the unknown. The production of *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002) as a development from the popular video game culminates in one of the most iconic action horror films in cinema. Beginning as a tool to disguise loading screens in the game, doors and doorways are transformed into a narrative device in the film. The film explores the theme of confinement and intrusion, with doors providing a crucial reference for transition between boundaries. These are also intrinsic in the cinematography and editing structure of the film in order to maximise emotional engagement of the audience. Doors are essential in wielding emotive power within the film, indicating the presence of concealed elements that may only be revealed by committing to the transition from one space to another. It is in consideration of these indeterminable factors that the spectator experiences trepidation. Not all doorways are met with such anxiety, and thus the significant component to recognise is that the new space threatens to alter the protagonist’s current reality in a way that cannot yet be fully conceived. *Resident Evil* exemplifies this lack of control, establishing every scene with a doorway that could save, harm, deceive, surrender or resist at will, and therefore providing pivotal moments in the narrative. Perceiving the film in this way allows for a greater understanding of how our experience of space may evoke such emotions of dread and anxiety when no threat is yet apparent. This is important to regard before contemplating further complications from technological influences on our ability to observe environments.

“I didn't say it. Milton said it. And he was blind”: Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman and *Paradise Lost* **26-38**
Thomas Tyrrell, Cardiff University

With his epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667) John Milton envisioned a dramatic universe that combined Christian theology with early modern science, and which had at its heart a vivid and strangely sympathetic antihero in the person of Satan. The influence of his writing on the novels of C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman is well-known, but his influence on the comic book has been relatively neglected. Accordingly, this article traces the introduction of Miltonic motifs and references into the DC Universe, arguing that Milton’s episode of the War in Heaven had already anticipated the Manichean narrative of the classic comic book. Beginning with Alan Moore’s “Footsteps” in *Secret Origins* #10 and analysing in detail Neil Gaiman’s character of Lucifer in *The Sandman: Season of Mists*, before concluding with a survey of their later successors, I examine the process of incorporating Milton’s universe into the already extensive mythological framework of the DC Universe, following the line of influence from its

high point in the nineties up to its present day nadir. By re-examining the seductive charisma of Satan and the arbitrary righteousness of God, Moore and Gaiman investigate the place of the human in the immortal drama, and whether it remains in any sense possible to justify the ways of God to man. Their work represents a sizeable contribution to Milton's place in contemporary culture as well as to the tapestry of legendary, alternate-historical, science-fictional, fantastical, original and derivate material that constitutes the DC Universe.

“The other garden”: Palimpsestic and Abject Faerie Spaces and Species in J. M. Barrie’s and Arthur Rackham’s *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market” **39-53**

Rachel Fox, Lancaster University

This article examines heterotopic faerie spaces as they are constructed within the texts of J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market”, paying especial attention to Arthur Rackham’s illustrations for each text. I argue that heterotopic faerie spaces are composites, built out of the palimpsestic and abject characteristics evident in the narrative and material components of these works. With an emphasis on how written and visual renditions of faerie spaces and species are constructed within the texts’ narrative, this article makes direct reference to a specific material copy of *Kensington Gardens*: an illustrated Edition-de-Luxe small quarto first edition, published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1910. The article begins with an exploration of the construction of “the other garden” as that which constitutes faerie in *Kensington Gardens*, drawing from Michel Foucault’s definitions of heterotopia in his essay “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias”. I then go on to consider the dangers which are associated with trespassing into this faerie space, and explore the threat posed by the equally desired and monstrous faerie species’ that reside in “the other garden”, a haunted and spectral location, both materially and narratively.

“Strange Ceremonies”: Creating Imaginative Spaces in Bizarre Magick **54-63**

Nik Taylor, University of Huddersfield

The Great God Pan (Raven, 1974) is a performance magic piece aimed at transporting the imagination of an audience out of the magician’s study (where the piece is set) and into fictional realms of fantasy and horror. This type of work is known as *Bizarre Magick* and is an underground form of performance magic. Many of the pieces in this genre borrow from popular horror fictions and seek to locate Fantastika in everyday physical locations through the creation of a charged sense of space where illusion is played as real. This article examines how these effects, through storytelling, intricate props, and often complex methods, allow practitioners to draw heavily on fictionalised histories of science fiction, horror and the supernatural to create site-specific “strange ceremonies” (Burger, 1991). These experiential theatrical pieces allow the magician (better described as the mage or sorcerer) to act as a facilitator guiding the guests/audience into imaginative spaces where fantastic fictions are made real. This article explores a number of these performance magic experiments and draws on the notion of the “paraxial” (Mangan, 2007) to examine how the performer relocates themselves and their audience in a performative grey area situated between illusion and reality.

“The Kind of Woman Who Talked to Basilisks”: Travelling Light Through Naomi Mitchison’s Landscape of the Imaginary **64-74**

Nick Hubble, Brunel University London

This article argues that Naomi Mitchison’s *Travel Light* (1952) was the result of a long and protracted struggle to find a space in which to live and write outside of the patriarchal order. It begins by introducing the novella and then discussing Amal El-Mohtar’s recent account of the effect that reading it in her early 20s had on her. In particular, El-Mohtar speculates on the difference it would have made to her if she had read *Travel Light* at age seven rather than *The Hobbit*. Following a brief consideration of the links between Mitchison and Tolkien, the article outlines Mitchison’s various attempts to express an unconstrained female agency in the following novels: *The Conquered* (1923), *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* (1931), *We Have Been Warned* (1935), *The Blood of the Martyrs* (1939), and *The Bull Calves* (1947). Her non-fiction work *The Moral Basis of Politics* (1938) and her wartime diary for Mass-Observation are also discussed. The second half of the article argues that as a result of this struggle, Mitchison eventually found a position to write a female agency that would be true to itself by creating an alternative version of the Oedipus story in *Travel Light*, in which the protagonist is a woman. Threatened with abandonment on a mountainside at birth, Halla is rescued by her nurse and brought up in the wild by bears and dragons before being encouraged by Odin to “travel light”. Analysis demonstrates how Mitchison subverts the standard model of the “full fantasy story”, as outlined by John Clute, to enable Halla to break the Oedipal circle of patriarchy and remain free in the pre-symbolic landscape of the imaginary.

“A Tourist Guide to Beszel and Ul Qoma”: Unseeing and the Re-interpretation of Psychogeography in China Miéville’s *The City and the City* **75-87**

Rob O’Connor, York St John University

Urban environments feature heavily in the work of China Miéville, inspiring his world creation in a fundamental manner. The landscape of the city becomes a central character in its own right, constantly shifting and changing into new forms. Miéville takes the imagery of the city and plays with it, fusing the imaginative traits of genre fictions with the everyday to produce his own brand of urbanism that uses the fantastical as a lens with which to examine our own contemporary society. Miéville’s exercise here could easily be interpreted as an act of psychogeography, what Merlin Coverley defines as “the point at which psychology and geography collide, a means of exploring the behavioural impact of place” (Coverley, 2010). Out of all of Miéville’s novel *The City and the City* (2009) most successfully demonstrates the fluidity of urban landscapes; introducing a topologically-challenging representation of the city. We witness the effect that the physical intertwining of these urban environments has upon the inhabitants. The central premise of Miéville’s novel – “Unseeing” - plays a significant role within the narrative, encouraging critical thought regarding our own connection with urban landscapes. The concept of policed borders also engages the reader with political considerations and subtexts due to contemporary and historical conflicts involving land disputes and imperialistic motives. By analysing *The City and the City* closely, this paper will demonstrate how Miéville is using psychogeographical techniques as an intrinsic part of his world-building methodology within the novel and how this approach encourages the reader to consider their own socio-political engagement with contemporary urban landscapes.

The Dialectics of Documents: The Case of the Real and the Fantastic**88-101*****Vladimir Rizov, University of York***

Documentary photography deals with the visual imagination of social issues. I intend to demonstrate that documentary photography as a practice consists of both seen and unseen dimensions. In order to do so, I will utilise Walter Benjamin's dialectics of seeing and his concept of the dialectical image. To illustrate this theoretical work, I will draw on the photographic work of Charles Marville (1813-1879) and Eugène Atget (1857-1927). In particular, the historical Haussmann's urban restructuring of Paris which Marville documents will be contrasted with that of Benjamin's dream image. In so doing, the paper will demonstrate how the practice of framing in documentary photography not only captures a particular historical moment, but also is liable to reveal the underlying ambiguity in the depiction. I will analyse the empty urban landscapes of Atget and Marville in the changing Paris of late 18th and early 19th century as examples of the hidden aspects of a given historical moment. This demonstration will provide further insight into the nature of the document and the photographic – how they are constituted through time and practice, as well as how an image, although documentary, can be made to tell stories beyond the visible.

A note on the contributors

Ruth Heholt is a senior lecturer in English at Falmouth University. Her research concentrates on the supernatural, crime and sensation fiction. Her recent work has focussed on the Gothic, masculinity and haunted landscapes. She has edited a collection with Niamh Downing entitled: *Haunted Landscapes: Super-Nature and the Environment* (forthcoming, Rowman Littlefield, November 2016). She is editor of a new e-journal, *Revenant: Critical and Creative Studies of the Supernatural*: www.revenantjournal.com. She has recently published a scholarly edition of Catherine Crowe's 1847 novel *The Story of Lilly Dawson*, (Victorian Secrets Press, 2015) and is working on an edited collection entitled *Gothic Britain* with Professor William Hughes.

Hannah Boaden graduated in 2015 from Lancaster University with a first-class degree in (BA) Fine Art and is due to commence an MPhil in Art at the University of Edinburgh. Her study interests include: transitional structures, visual culture, temporal perceptions of spaces, and understanding human experience through the arts.

Thomas Tyrrell is writing a thesis called 'Remapping Milton: Spaces of Influence' at Cardiff University, but spent a considerable portion of 2015-6 on visiting fellowships at Chawton House Library, Hampshire and The Huntington Library, Pasadena. He usually writes about eighteenth-century poetry, but writing about graphic novels was very enjoyable, and he might do more of it in future.

Rachel Fox is a postgraduate student in the Department of English and Creative Writing at Lancaster University. She completed a BA (Hons) in English Literature and a MA in Contemporary Literary Studies at Lancaster in 2013 and 2014 respectively. Her doctoral research is focused on postcolonial feminist theory and writing, and deals with works across multiple mediums, including written, visual, and hybrid forms.

Nik Taylor is Subject Leader for Drama, Theatre and Performance at the University of Huddersfield. He is co-editor of *The Journal of Performance Magic* and coordinator of the *Magic Research Group*. As Mystery Entertainer, he specialises in Bizarre Magick, Sideshow, Séance and Divination. He also co-curates *Mr Punch's Cabinet of Curiosities* a dark museum of weird and haunted artefacts the regularly exhibits across the country. He recently advised on Proper Job Theatre Company's *Nosferatu*, the Thackray Medical Museum's *The Magic of Medicine* exhibition and performed as part *YMEDACA* at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. He is a member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians and The British Society of Mystery Entertainers.

Nick Hubble is a Reader in English at Brunel University London. They are the author of *Mass Observation and Everyday Life* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) and the co-editor of *The Science Fiction Handbook* (Bloomsbury, 2013). They have reviewed SFF for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Strange Horizons*, *Foundation* and *Vector*.

Rob O'Connor is researching his PhD thesis at York St John University on the depiction of real and metaphorical landscapes in the work of China Miéville. His other research interests include genre studies and creative writing. He also teaches literature and creative writing at the Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of York and as a visiting lecturer at York St. John University.

Vladimir Rizov is a doctoral researcher in sociology at the University of York, United Kingdom. His research is on the practice of documentary photography, its history and its relation to the city; a key place in his research interests occupies the work of Walter Benjamin. Currently, his research focuses on the work Eugène Atget and the Haussmannisation of Paris.

Introduction to “Locating Fantastika”

RUTH HEHOLT

This journal issue comes out of the “Locating Fantastika” conference that was organised by Charul (Chuckie) Palmer-Patel and hosted by Lancaster University in 2015. The original call for papers for the conference set out the agenda as follows: “‘Locating Fantastika’ explores all areas of space, setting, and locations, either in the fictional world of fantastika or in fantastical networks with the real world”. This is a wide remit and the papers given at the conference reflected this. Over two days there were papers given questioning genre and narrative structure and theoretical discussions around eco-criticism and the fantastic. The locations discussed ranged from different types of tangible, physical spaces: urban landscapes, wilderness, borderlands and haunted houses, to the more esoteric constructions of location: transitional, borderless or performative spaces and imagined, fantastical spaces and locations. The conceptions of place, geography, topography, setting and space are often what define a work of literature or art, a game or a film *as* fantastical.¹ From the inter-planetary and lunar landscapes of science fiction to the imagined other-worlds of fantasy games, the uncanny spaces of film and fiction or the haunted houses that lurk in urban side streets, the locations of Fantastika resonate with depth, meaning, fear and pleasure.

Genre

Fantastika is a genre, or what Brian Baker describes as “an umbrella term of sorts” which he suggests provides a “framework of generic inter-relatedness” (9). Generic fiction is sometimes criticised as being “lazy” fiction, whereby the generic conventions preclude real artistry from the authors or serious thought on the part of the audience. In relation to film genres Christine Gledhill points to criticism in the 1970s in which “the term ‘convention’ was used pejoratively, referring to the second-hand meanings and stereotypes associated with mass production that militated ... against the personal expression of the artist” (252). Here the lack of “originality” is critiqued and the role of the author/auteur/artist downgraded. However, in more recent criticism of genre texts, this easy (itself often lazy) critique of generic fiction is being questioned. Thus for example crime fiction is now being seen as a form of literature (not just “writing”) that involves active participation by its audience and I want to claim the same for Fantastika. In relation to crime fiction Charles Rzepka claims for the audience “the exercise of our powers of imaginative invention” (25). He argues that with each clue, the reader looks afresh backwards at what has gone before and re-imagines and re-invents the events from each new perspective, leading to a continual re-reading. This he claims is truly active reading (28). Texts (of all sorts) in the Fantastika genre also require “imaginative invention”, a re-evaluation of what is known and expected and a re-reading of spaces/places and situations. There are reading choices to be made in relation to recognising and questioning *what* we are reading/watching/playing and the interpretation of the spaces and places of these fictions. Fantasy fiction does not turn its back on the real; to journey into the imaginary unreal requires a continual re-reading between the

known (the “real”) and the imaginary not-known. For Fantastika to be effective and affective it needs a skilful blend of the real and the imaginary and an alert and active audience who can negotiate between the two. A fantastic landscape is an immersive one and there must be participation in the creating of the space/place on the part of the audience.

In the Fantastika genre in particular, one of the most important and productive interactions is between different texts and dialogues between different sub-genres encompassed under the Fantastika umbrella. The imagined spaces and landscapes of Fantastika need to be intertextual and authors and audiences are alert to this. As with all genre fiction, it is the inter-textuality, the inclusion of other generic forms and conventions that helps to define, form and re-form the genre of Fantastika. Brian Baker suggests that:

“Fantastika” ... seeks to work across generic divisions and sub-divisions, allowing scholars and writers working on sf, Fantasy, the Gothic, horror and hybrid texts to enter into dialogue, to see similarities and shared concerns across these fields. This is, of course, how genres themselves develop: by importation, stealing, hybridization. Genres are not “pure”. (Baker 2015)

Fantastika locations are not “pure” either. This melding and fusing, cherry-picked thieving and re-modelling of genre forms and locations forms a part of the richness of Fantastika and is also vital to its recognition *as* a genre. Baker cites John Clute who coined the term “Fantastika”. Clute insists that generic awareness is a vital part of the genre itself. And for this “awareness” to occur there must be an agreed, communal recognition of what Fantastika is and the forms, styles and imagery that define it. Yet part of this recognition involves testing the accepted boundaries and it is this that enables growth and movement in the genre and the push and pull between author, text and audience is a vital part of this.

Affect

The audience is always implicated in the creation of Fantastika through the imagination and also through the embodied response to texts. In recent cultural geography theory there has been a movement towards affect theory and what is called the “non-representational”. Ola Söderström states that “non-representational thinking has led geographers to [introduce] new figures such as: the body, emotions, spatial practice, interaction, performance, ‘things,’ technology” (14). This resonates with all forms of Fantastika. Whilst the fantastic landscape will of course be represented at a certain level (we have to recognise it), there will also be inter-play, performance, reaction and imaginative intervention. There is an affective collapse between the imagined and the real, the fiction and the embodied audience reaction to those fictions. Tim Ingold contends that:

perception and imagination are one: not however because percepts are images, or hypothetical representations of a reality “out there”, but because to perceive, as to imagine, is to participate from within in the perpetual self-making of the world. It is to join with a world in which things do not so much *exist as occur*. (14, original emphasis)

In Fantastika of course there are multiple worlds. These worlds however also “occur” in the mind of the perceiver and are brought to life through the power of the imagination. There is a breakdown of binaries: inside/outside, real/imagined, read/created and this is one of the joys of the genre. Fantastika requires us to transport our imaginations elsewhere whilst immersing it at the same time in the grounded here and now. And whilst this can be said for most fiction, Fantastika and its sub-genres of horror, sci fi, the Gothic, the Weird, are characterized by this dichotomy. The landscapes of Fantastika cannot be too far away (unrecognisable) or too near (merely everyday and mundane). There must be a melding of the two: a fusion of the real and the imaginary. In relation to affect theory Gregg and Seigworth argue that:

almost all of the tried-and-true handholds and footholds for so much critical-cultural-philosophical inquiry and for theory – subject/object, representation and meaning, rationality, consciousness, time and space, inside/outside, human/nonhuman, identity, structure, background/foreground and so forth – become decidedly less sure and more nonsequential. (4)

And if this works for theory, it also creates space for the non-real, the imagined and the nearly-real encompassed in the fluid genre of Fantastika. Recently Xavier Aldana Reyes in a chapter entitled “Gothic Affect” claims that: “the purpose of the gothic – to scare, disturb, or disgust – has often been neglected”, and says that: “this is detrimental to areas such as...horror fiction, which commonly rely on corporeality or non-cognitive (somatic) or instinctive human reactions” (2015, 12). Here it is the body that instinctively reacts to the fictions; with horror, fear or disgust. This instinctive, non-logical, embodied reaction is an important part of the Fantastika genre too. The texts of Fantastika move the audience and demand reaction. We should not underestimate the affective power of the fictions of Fantastika and the articles in this issue trace some of the affective landscapes that are so important to the genre.

“Locating Fantastika” Articles

The essays collected in this issue explore, test and question the topographies of the fantastic. We begin with Hannah Boaden’s article which is about a specific type of boundary – the doorway. Boaden looks at the emotional and affective reaction of the audience to the cinematic depiction of doorways in *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002). In both the game and the film, doorways are borders which represent uncertainty, dread and anticipation. Doors both conceal and reveal spaces, bordering two locations in a liminal and uncanny manner that both creates and at the same time collapses the binary of inside/outside.

Thomas Tyrrell looks at a collapse of a different sort – in relation to time. His essay traces the influence of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* on the construction of the DC Comics Universe. Tracing unexpected connections Tyrrell looks at a range of popular contemporary texts that parallel and incorporate Miltonic themes and spaces. Tyrrell equates the Angels with the superheroes of the DCU and argues that: “Hell has become a standard location for DC comics”. The essay follows Neil Gaiman’s series *The Sandman* and Mike Carey’s *Lucifer* as well as

considering other texts. Tyrrell looks at a tradition that is on-going and vitally intertextual: the imaginative landscapes of Milton's universe live on and are incorporated into the genre of Fantastika.

Rachel Fox moves to locations that at least appear to be more cultivated in her exploration of the "other garden"; the Faerie spaces in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market". Fox looks at the Faerie space/world as a heterotopia – an other or counter-site of liminality that has crossed the border of the real but which still reflects it. Here is another place of Fantastika where binaries are collapsed. The abjected and rejected still resides besides and within the "normal" and the "real" but it is at a slant – just out of view. Fox describes these spaces as "patchwork" and as palimpsests. Arthur Rackham illustrated both texts showing a faerie world that "transgresses boundaries" in the *Peter Pan* text and a Goblin world of beauty, decay and violence in "Goblin Market". These, Fox argues, are not safe spaces.

Nik Taylor turns to look at performance magicians and the temporary, ambivalent spaces they create for their audience through the practise of what is termed "Bizarre Magick". A truly intertextual practice, Bizarre Magick uses fictional and cinematic tropes and signs to purposely affect (most often scare) the audience attending the performances. Taylor argues that the magicians align themselves "more closely to an occult practitioner" blurring boundaries between the real the imaginary. Taking performance pieces from different eras, Taylor looks at how ritual practice is melded with performance in order to heighten emotion and create certain tangible effects for the audience. It is the task of the magician/practitioner transport the participants into an ambiguous space of uncertainty and possibility.

Nick Hubble further explores transgressive spaces in his essay on Naomi Mitchison's imaginary world in her novella *Travel Light*. Hubble traces Mitchison's attempts to create a feminist fantasy space, noting some of her early, less successful efforts. He follows her quest to represent some form of female agency, looking at her writing in relation to her domestic situation as well as contextualizing it within wider societal changes. Hubble argues that *Travel Light* finally fulfils Mitchison's potential and her desire to write a progressive and transgressive feminist text. This is a text that writes-back to traditional folklore tales that curtail space for women and, Hubble argues, allowed Mitchison to write-back to her own conventional domestic life.

Rob O'Connor turns to look at the excessive urban spaces in China Miéville's *The City and the City*. Taking a considered approach from psychogeography, O'Connor looks at Miéville's conflation of the genres of crime and fantasy, using them to envisage the cityscapes as sites of politics and power. Miéville stretches and breaks genre boundaries and O'Connor argues that this is reflected in his representation of the two cities where topographical boundaries are also indistinct and uncertain. Questioning issues of observation through the figure of the flâneur and the way that the characters in the novel are taught to "unsee" the other city, Miéville highlights instances of wilful blindness to poverty, violence and injustices in our own urban spaces. O'Connor argues that: "*The City and the City* becomes a text rooted in contemporary urban commentary" in which repression and violence reside in dark politicized spaces.

In the final essay in this issue Vladimir Rizov continues the examination of the seen, the unseen and the urban environment (here Paris) in his exploration of documentary photography. Continuing the argument about the porous boundary between the real and the fantastic, Rizov suggests that historical documentary photography exemplifies the ambiguity of the visible and the invisible. The equation of photography and magic has been of long-standing and Rizov argues that it has occult associations with alchemy and other transformative practices as well as with magic objects such as mirrors. Rizov argues that documentary photography lays claim to authenticity and “truth” yet what emerges are ghostly portrayals that reveal uncanny spaces. Thus the photograph is an image of the “delicate standstill, dialectically formed by the interplay of forces that both precede and succeed the particular moment”; a continuing interplay between the fantastic and the real.

Throughout all the essays in this fascinating issue it is this correlation, the cross-fertilization, the porous bleeding between the real and the fantastic that is of central importance in discussing Fantastika. Todorov claims that “[t]he fantastic occupies the duration of ... uncertainty” (75); the lingering doubt about the relation between the real and the un-real or imaginary. This creative space is explored in the articles here and they provide some wonderful and unexpected connections and ways to locate Fantastika.

Notes

1. Rosemary Jackson distinguishes between what she terms as the “marvelous” in relation to topography as opposed to the “fantastic” (41-60). However the papers at the conference and the articles collected here do not reflect this distinction as both come under the umbrella of “Fantastika”.

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Resident Evil & Doorways:

An Exploration of Transitional Spaces in Visual Culture

HANNAH BOADEN

Human beings distinguish any one thing through categorisations, which are themselves defined by how they differ from something else or “other”. This inquiry has been documented extensively in philosophy with key references including “Aristotelian Realism” and “Kantian Conceptualism” that continue to inform current theory (Thomasson, “Categories” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2013). These categories often form opposites such as light and dark, which become a dominant way of considering much of our human experience. However, I wish to focus on doorways. They exist between two spaces, refusing to belong wholly to either of them, and consequently introduce an instance of transition.

Many artworks use the icon of a doorway to create ambiguity, uncertainty and apprehension. An example is the horror film trope of a door that creaks such as in *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931), or the unpredictable revelations in *Dr. Who* (BBC, 1963 - present) every time the T.A.R.D.I.S. door opens. Of course, not all doorways inspire such an emphatic reaction, so I intend to illustrate how this is achieved through an implied narrative that is hinged upon the doorway. In both examples indicated above, the emphasis is on discovering what would be on the other side of the door, therefore on the indefinite potentialities of something unknown which suggests that traversing through to the new space will bring change that cannot yet be fully understood.

This paper will examine the film *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002), adapted from the videogame by Capcom, which features heavy use of doorways for emotional provocation. Before proceeding, it is worth noting that the sorts of doorways focused on in this paper are those that exist as part of a wall, floor, or ceiling where the surrounding surface is opaque and thus has the attribute of concealment. Furthermore, although a significant part of this exploration also refers to doors as part of the doorway concept, doorways without doors may also be considered relevant. The main difference in the addition of a door is that reactions are heightened by a greater provision of uncertainty and concealment, as well as emphasising a point of exit and ingress. To develop this concept, one must first acknowledge the work of European philosophers such as Gaston Bachelard on the subject of space and Martin Heidegger’s phenomenological discourse on anxiety.

Contextual Overview

The treatment of doorways in philosophy is often rooted firmly in the larger concepts of space. Henri Michaux talks about “this horrible inside-outside that real space is” (Michaux in Blanchot 324), which addresses the immensity of space and thus the impossibility of locating its vastness. Although inside and outside are often

posed as opposites, Bachelard, in relation to Michaux's text, argues that: "outside and inside are both intimate" (Bachelard 217), which affords these spaces some familiarity. Yet whilst the issue of defining intimacy with exterior space is the result of it being an "ambiguous space [where] the mind has lost its geometrical homeland and the spirit is drifting" (218), the intimacy present with interior space is not the antithesis of the outside. Rather, it is the product of other existential phenomena, such as memory and time. The interior spaces of a home, for example, are filled with commodities in accordance with both the preferences of its occupants and each room's function. As well as creating visual associations, living habits over time produce more connections, which relate memories to specific items and areas in a structured way that differs from external spaces. Rather than simply contrasting openness with the enclosing effect of walls, these interior spaces are adapted to become purposeful. Bachelard affirms the notion of "asymmetry" by noting that: "nor can one *live* the qualifying epithets attached to inside and outside in the same way" (215), but nonetheless, they converge upon one another through boundaries.

To progress from inside to outside, one must acknowledge the traversal of a border. To begin to understand what such borders represent means understanding the nature of transitions in general. Aristotle's clarification, as defined by Victor Kal of "a specific transition from potentiality to actuality" (Kal 79) provides the most relevant type of transition for this discourse. Thus, the transition takes place both spatially and temporally, so in terms of a doorway, there is an anticipation of what is through the doorway, and the moment when this other space is fully realised. Concerning space in relation to architecture, Barry Curtis states that the "negotiation of thresholds is anxiogenic, symbolizing the liminal border between life and death" (Curtis 148), suggesting that the ultimate temporal transition of life to non-life becomes imprinted upon spatial transitions, in this case thresholds.

In "Architecture and the Poetry of Space" (1981), Louis Hammer provides a broader view of the house, as an example of a building, where the binaries of "of lighting and darkening, [...] of storing and using up" (Hammer 382) become manifest within a structure of physical boundaries. The utmost of these embodies the core of human experience and relies upon the function of a doorway; when you enter a building or room, you are "aware that you can leave it" (382). Therefore, self-awareness becomes intrinsic to the iconography of the doorway, which relates to the existential phenomena previously referred to. Hammer explains that we are "noticing ourselves dwelling in the structure, by observing the connections between the boundaries of our space and our ways of perceiving, thinking, and feeling" (384). In *Resident Evil*, one example occurs through the emphasis placed on the main characters passing through the doorway to an underground complex that connects to the automatic lockdown, and the resultant state of fear and entrapment. This claustrophobic sense corresponds to the characters' awareness of the locked doors, which will be discussed below.

Anuj Soni's article, "Understanding the Poetics of Architecture" (2010), similarly supports this idea, stating that "in a building the symbols are defined by how people experience them or people's past experiences with it" (Soni 4). Doorways then, do not merely represent current emotions and perceptions, but utilise our

memories, both collective and individual, when eliciting current reactions. This secondary distinction, that it is “a socio-cultural phenomenon but it is also a very personal experience” (Soni 19) implies that at least some sensations may be experienced *en masse*, and it is these that visual culture seeks. The intent is to indulge the consumerist gaze, which “may not keep up with the pace of linear narrative, but it may feed on other registers of time and experience” (Hansen in Turner 413), so that the associations formed are shared amongst viewers. This can be as basic as a doorway depicted in a shadowy setting which for most audiences will resonate with childhood stories of monsters in the dark, and in so doing induce a perturbed response.

Continuing on the subject of experiencing spaces, self-awareness within a space has become more problematic due to urbanisation and developments made in telecommunications. Due to the lack of necessity of physical presence for electronic communications and technologies such as digital surveillance, protecting one's privacy has become a more complicated issue. In “Telecommunications and the City - Electronic Spaces, Urban Places” (2002), Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin propose that “accepted notions about the nature of space, time [and] distance [have come] under question” (Graham and Marvin 1) in recent years. This is because telecommunications “transcend spatial barriers” (1) meaning that space may be invaded without the necessity of physical presence. Moreover, if we are to accept that: “this sense that the home is isolated from the rest of the social world is changing rapidly” (208), then one's sense of privacy may also be questioned. As a result, structures such as doorways become a site of uncertainty; when a door is closed it is assumed that entrance can be denied to those outside, but this security is eroded to a degree by the possibility of virtual intrusions. *Resident Evil* is an excellent example of how this erosion may be exploited to produce a thriller narrative.

The very nature of doors in that they may be opened, and that boundaries may thus be breached, attests to Amanda Vickery's assertion in *Behind Closed Doors* (2009) that “apertures symbolis[e] points of human vulnerability” (Vickery 33). If this concept is added to the pervasiveness of telecommunications, then the instability surrounding doorways becomes significantly heightened. Doors do not completely deny access, due to their ability to be opened, which enables the potential for physical intrusion. Telecommunications do not require access to physical spaces in order to intrude, therefore rendering the door ineffective, exposing another form of vulnerability. Consequently, doors become unreliable as a boundary that prevents access, because they cannot be consistent in this capacity. It becomes increasingly obvious how emotive associations can form as a result. I previously alluded to transitions as a process of potential outcomes when proceeding from one space to another, but now I will clarify how feelings of anticipation advance into stronger emotional responses. A good point of reference is George Pattison's discussion on Søren Kierkegaard's theory of the “anxious self [who] is a self caught up in a process of development, poised vertiginously in the moment of transition from innocent ignorance to free self-consciousness” (Pattison 66). Anxiety is cited by a number of theorists (Buben, Heidegger in King, Kierkegaard in Pattison) in relation to anticipation and therefore the crux of the matter lies with the future as something unknown.

It is important to acknowledge both Heidegger and Kierkegaard for their extensive writing in the realm of anxiety and the related concept of dread. Dread is not to be confused with fear which, as Kierkegaard explains: “refer[s] to something definite, whereas dread is freedom’s reality as possibility for possibility” (38) and thus cannot be fully accounted for. Embodying “the dizziness of freedom” (55), dread represents how people feel lost and disoriented by the prospect of the unknown; we are free to wonder, but denied certainty of what is beyond the doorway. Since the potential has not yet been realised, it exists only as “something which is nothing” (39), and therefore as an opposite to the core of a person, as a real being thing.

Dread means to “anticipate with great apprehension” (*Oxford Dictionaries*), the intensity of which is exacerbated by the doorway because it acts as a visual stimulus when it comes into view. This stimulus in turn reminds us of our own insufficient grasp on what could happen, once it has been established that an indeterminable change may take place. In “Blake, Kierkegaard, and the Spectre of Dialectic” (2009), Lorraine Clark similarly concurs that: ““potential” is fundamentally ambiguous” (54), therefore, the more ambiguity the doorway provides, the greater the emotional response. She explains that this anxiety surrounds our “freedom to realize any one of an infinite number of possibilities through decisive action” (54). By juxtaposing personal choice with these potentialities, anxiety can be related to a sense of responsibility. In films, such as *Resident Evil*, where the film focuses on the experiences of the main protagonist, viewers can feel connected to the character’s choices as if they were their own. In this way, doorways cause a communal anxiety for the viewers, because whichever potential is actualised is the responsibility of those perceiving it.

In “Dread in Kierkegaard” (2007), Michael Duffy suggests that: “if [people] are seized by dread, they are seized by something that has a relationship to a knowledge that they do not know” (Duffy), which indicates another factor. People are not simply faced by an opposing non-thing, but are connected to it through their observance of the doorway’s presence. Furthermore, the viewer is not merely responsible, but must be participatory. The process of reaching actuality, in Heidegger’s words, requires “dislodging his Dasein” (*The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* 173), and actively seeking to cross the border, or traverse the doorway. This act, in its firm commitment to the transition refers to allowing oneself to become changed, consciously deciding to enter a state where the self cannot remain the same. In “Heidegger’s Reception of Kierkegaard: The Existential Philosophy of Death” (2013), Adam Buben describes how “Dasein pulls itself out of its standard (in the sense of a default-setting) fallenness and takes possession of itself” (980), therefore it is in a state of alteration that one passes through the doorway to unveil potentiality. This space is one of instability for both knowledge of self and surroundings, within which anxiety for that which is uncertain may emerge.

Heidegger provides a more detailed analysis of these ideas in his writings in *Being and Time*, with particular emphasis on the presence of anxiety when concerned with future events. By establishing that: “Anxiety ‘does not know’ what that in the face of which it is anxious is” (*Being and Time* 231), uncertainty about the future becomes synonymous with anxiety. Furthermore, by specifying that a self “comports itself towards its potentiality-for-being”(279), the feeling of anticipation is afforded a greater sense of preparation that could result

in physical manifestations such as becoming tense, in the most extreme of circumstances. This exploration is part of Heidegger's broader theoretical understanding of human existence and our concern for time as a progression towards death. However, to expand on this further would be to deviate away from the pertinent specificities of doorway narratives, and it is important to recognise its value in relation to other theorists.

Just as Hammer describes the house as a "spiritual structure of hiding and revealing" (Hammer 382), Kierkegaard refers to "an anxious dread of an unknown something" (Kierkegaard 17). The emphasis on the presence of an unknowable component is a recurring motif not only in theory, but also applied research. For example, in *Italian Women Writers* (2014), Katherine Mitchell makes the observation that conversation through doorways "typically signifies a possibility, a hypothesis, or a threat, or it details an unhappy event, a change in circumstance, a premonition, or something forbidden" (76), and so they become a plot device.

Therefore, I will demonstrate that, in conjunction with narrative function, doorways play a vital role in *Resident Evil* to provoke an emotional response, be it negative or positive. There is a conviction that committing to the transition from one side to another will instigate a shift from actuality to an indeterminable potentiality. Providing this distinction enables the significance of the narrative to become easily discernible. The narrative aspect of a doorway comprises of a temporal element, such as memory, storyline, or implied narrative by visual associations. These narrative properties can be just as effective whether they are real, created by the artist or inferred by the viewer's imagination, and as discussed above, they can be both a shared and personal experience.

Resident Evil

In this section, I will illustrate how doorways in the film *Resident Evil* present anxiety as described above, as well as other emotional responses. To place this film in context, I will first discuss the videogame *Resident Evil* (Capcom, 1996) from which it is adapted, and consequently shares structural similarity. When faced with a doorway, the viewer of either the film or videogame is hovering before the prospect of alteration. They are suspended within the actuality of reality, and a future yet to be realised that will remain undefined until they choose to commit themselves to the new space. It is undefined precisely because the doorframe withholds areas from view, thus concealing unfathomable possibilities. Videogames have the freedom to construct any scene the creator wishes, which incorporates any number of unpredictable variables and naturally induces apprehension, especially within the horror genre. As a result, doorways become synonymous with emotions such as trepidation and caution.

The *Resident Evil* survival horror video game (Capcom, 1996), focusing on the first of the series, provides a good illustration of how this concept may be enacted. The game follows two elite task force members, one who is controlled by the player, who are investigating the disappearance of another team member in an old mansion teeming with monsters, predominantly zombies. Opening with a corridor and doorway framing a man in

silhouette, the camera stalks forward, zooming into his face, now screaming in horror, before an extreme close-up of his eye. This aggressive image, so dramatically portrayed, becomes instantly associated with other doorways through the visual aesthetics of the shot. Thus, the iconography of the spatial presence of the doorframe gains the temporal 'memory' or narrative of threat and hostility. The focus on the eye emphasises how this experience will be conveyed through vision. In relation to the consumerist gaze discussed above, the player is made aware of their participation as a sequence of looking and reacting to what the game displays. The gaming experience is not only influenced by the narrative, but by the doors as visual stimuli, the individual's associations with this imagery, and their emotive responses to seeing them. Originally, the main uses of imagery of doors in the game was to disguise the loading screens between different rooms, however these had now become invested with emotion and quite suitably created tension for the player.

The introductory exposition that begins the plotline of the game sees a group of characters escape the monsters on the outside by entering a mansion. The cut scene ends with passing through the mansion doors, thereby creating a connection between the images of monsters and doorways, which the player knows remain outside. In this way, associations are formed by means of narrative, so any door now acts as a site of potentiality for hidden monsters (actuality). The anxiety surrounding the unknown contents of the spaces beyond each door is further heightened by the varying constructs of doors, including in which direction, inwards or outwards, or to which side they swing open. The presence of doors also draws upon the effects of being a person in control and consequently responsible for the "potentiality-for-being" (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 279), which enhances the anxiety experienced.

Additionally, some doors do not open, or require the player to solve a puzzle, some are hidden, and others trigger traps. These doors have become personified by hostility and deception. The result of these negative associations and experiences is that the player is in a heightened state of awareness whenever approaching a door or, indeed, encounters similar visual structures. Scenes are often composed in corridors whose rectangular framing echoes that of a doorway, immersing the player in a field of oppressive uncertainty. One specific compositional feature evident is how the character is first captured in front of the door they have just been through. This obscures the unknown scene around them, which will only be revealed as the player progresses further into the room. Although the character is located in an open space, the combination of framing and camera angle presents a constricting scenario.

Before moving on to analyse the first film, I wish to draw attention to the words 'Resident Evil' themselves. The associations of such a condemning title include that of a home or domestic environment, but the connotations of "resident" do not emphasise home; they infer something merely dwelling or existing. Something evil, a menace instils the building with hostility, creating a personal threat. The proximity of this danger is appropriately felt throughout both game and film. Although the film is only loosely based on the video games, there are unmistakable allusions throughout its texture, especially in relation to doorways.

The science-fiction horror film *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002) follows the protagonist Alice (Milla Jovovich) as she works with a special military unit to ascertain what has happened in an underground genetic research facility called the Hive. The group alongside Alice consists of Matt (Eric Mabius) who initially introduces himself as a police officer and special military operatives, as well as Kaplan (Martin Crewes), J.D. (Pasquale Aleardi), and Rain (Michelle Rodriguez), who she meets soon after Matt in the mansion. They are later unexpectedly joined by Spence (James Purefoy) whilst travelling towards the Hive. Upon uncovering an outbreak of the T-virus, a flawed artificial mutagenic virus, they must neutralise the super-computer codenamed Red Queen (Michaela Dicker), and battle infected scientists in order to escape, whilst simultaneously aiming to contain the virus. The opening to *Resident Evil* begins with the scene in the centre of the frame surrounded by a thick black border. The camera then zooms in so that the scene expands, directly referencing the loading screens of the video games. In so doing, all of the emotions related to the original narrative have already been conjured into the minds of those familiar with the game. Those who lack such experience do not have to wait long before they begin to recognise themes that become structurally integral to the film.

After the virus becomes airborne, the building is plunged into lockdown so that all doorways now become barriers. This establishes automatic locking systems, which tie in with a larger fear of technology. This plays on the concept of removing control over our own environments as part of urbanisation that was previously discussed, whether it be commanded by someone else's will, or by these systems gaining sentience. Fear, in this case, arises from technology's inability to empathise and the extent of its domain that incorporates any communication with the outside world. The people are left feeling indefinitely trapped, with attempts to plead rendered futile, and isolated away from any external aid.

However, these fears are far from irrational; the group in the elevator start to pry apart the doors with little effect. It almost seems like a punishment for their efforts when the woman becomes trapped with her head outside of the lift, which is soon severed quite graphically, serving to symbolise the friction that will ensue with future encounters with doorways. The following scene introduces Alice, who, despite being unacquainted with the preceding events, moves with hesitancy between rooms; her obvious lack of memory has enabled increased uncertainty. A person normally feels a sense of security in a room that they have previous experience of because they have acquired knowledge through familiarity over time. Her memory loss decreases this initial level of information, and thus accentuates the amount of unknown possibilities for what she may encounter. As she leaves the room we observe her through a point-of-view shot from the surveillance camera, her shadow appearing before her, which only serves to exaggerate the dwarfing effect of the camera's high angle and the doorway's extravagant size. Her appearance in this composition thence delineates an exposed, vulnerable state and the lighting causes the doorway to hang in ominous darkness, weighing heavily over her.

Alice's hesitancy is captured in more detail as she moves to exit the building. She opens the door, which creaks as one might expect with a horror film, hesitates, and then withdraws again to find the light switch before re-opening the door. This simple action demonstrates how we attempt to combat anxiety through the comfort of

knowledge. In *Doorway* (2007), Simon Unwin describes the difference between two spaces is substantial in terms of how “the atmosphere changes [where] your eyes have to adjust to the new light level [and] the different quality of [...] air” (76). Here, Alice is attempting to reduce the amount of alterations that crossing beyond the door would cause, by revealing the outside space through sight, before she is forced to exchange potentiality for actuality.

At this point, doorways exemplify vulnerability, initially through a sense of peril when crossing between spaces. Just as the woman’s head was severed, doorways succeed in forming other sites of struggle when various characters are grabbed whilst trying to run through, or when they are unwillingly pulled back unexpectedly. Firstly, Alice is dramatically pulled back into the mansion shown through the use of a jump cut shot, which is juxtaposed with a close up shot and a loud orchestral stab in the music. We discover that she was pulled back by Matt who proves to be an ally and not an assailant, which shows that it is the unknown that provokes anxiety as opposed to the certainty of a threat. Whereas later on, when the military operative, J.D., enters the code to unlock a set of doors, they open to reveal a horde of zombies behind him. He remarks “see how easy that was” before promptly being snatched out of sight. These two antithetical incidents in effect duplicate one type of action, in this case, being seized, which is a motif that reoccurs in other scenarios in the film that will be discussed later.

The final struggle of the film occurs when Alice tries to administer the anti-virus to Matt after he contracts the virus and is beginning to mutate. This takes place in a doorway as Alice wrestles with scientists in lab coats and whilst Matt is being abducted. The sequence uses shots fading to white as she is subdued providing an antithesis to the gloom of the hive’s blackened spaces. This consequently illustrates that even the most prominent pairs of opposites of black and white or light and dark cannot be assumed to correlate to only positive or negative possibilities. The uncomfortably ominous white, shown only in the last section of the film, surprises the viewer, thus recapitulating the film’s theme of caution and uncertainty when dealing with doorways. Moreover, the helpless image of Alice in a doorway aesthetically mirrors our own inadequacy, as well as that of the characters, when determining whether an opening will be safe before it is revealed.

A second version of vulnerability victimises the subject through a predatory gaze. In addition to the previously described shot with the surveillance camera, numerous scenes are established from a location not shown before, with the characters not yet in view. This occurs with the lift shaft, and later with a hatch, but two occasions meriting longer contemplation are when they enter the Hive complex, and the room of the red queen. Upon the military operative, Rain, announcing that they have reached the Hive, the sequence cuts to a shot from within the Hive as the door rises and reveals the task force stood pointing guns towards the viewer. The disorientation felt by presenting new space in this way separates the spectator from the group because they have been denied a gradual revelation, and instead feel conscious of their position as an observer. A reverse shot realigns the audience with the group’s view of the impenetrable black interior, allowing us to share in their

anxiety for the unknown. In so doing, this scene conveys the sense of being watched, alongside the anxiety of insufficient knowledge.

A similar situation transpires in this aforementioned room of the Red Queen. Beginning with a static camera facing the closed door, it establishes a wholly unfamiliar location, whose overt central position lends the space a sense of autonomy. This self-awareness is a conscious reference to the theme of surveillance by non-human entities such as artificial intelligence, which is underscored by the noticeable passing of seconds before the door opens. Unlike the previous example, the lingering time spent alone before the door's movement and the position of the camera are exceedingly distinctive. Firstly, it is framed as a long shot in an illuminated environment to which the viewer acknowledges no point of reference to previous scenes and proceeds to try to interpret the *mise en scène*. This moment emphasises that the room has not just been dormant and awaiting human interference; rather, it communicates the potent existence and independence of the Red Queen. The second effect of the long shot is that when the door opens, the group appear small and somewhat less powerful than before. Over the course of their journey, they have been transformed from the confident specialist heroes at the beginning to a hesitant group of fallible survivors.

Another important aspect portrayed in *Resident Evil* is that doors are deceptive. When the unit begin their mission with Alice, they enter through a hidden pair of doors disguised as mirrors. The doors' unexpected presence conveys to the audience that they cannot trust appearances. If knowledge is unreliable, then even less certainty is permitted. This deception progresses from a visual property to a physical one when Rain tries to open the transport door as they travel towards the Hive, claiming it is "sealed shut", only to be proven wrong when another military operative, Kaplan, successfully opens it. Not only this, but when opened, a man, Spence (James Purefoy), unknown and unexplained at this point, falls through suddenly. The emotions this sequence creates are surprise and curiosity at his success, followed immediately by a mixture of being startled, perturbed and subsequently alert and wary. The curiosity is borne out of a desire to know what is beyond the door in an attempt to reveal more of the narrative; the other emotions arise as a result of the realisation of an abrupt outcome. In this case, deception yields more intense emotions due to the urgent requirement to deal with misleading information.

The final section to shed light on the experience of doorways in this film is during a climactic clash with the monster whose aggressive mutation has rendered it a superior threat. Doorways have operated both in favour and adversely for the group, but always in the capacity of their function. In this scene however, the creature crashes through the doorway, thereby weaponising the door as it slams into one of the group, Matt, who falls to the ground, despite the preceding shot showing him bolt the door. However, doorways cannot be considered hostile, only ambivalent. The creature is vanquished by opening doors in the floor, and as it plummets, the doorframe is thus implied to have an ability to save through this dispelling act. Therefore, the scene exemplifies how doorways can act as a device for both positive and negative consequences, which are equally

hard to determine without allowing potential futures to become actuality. This pinnacle moment of transition is one of uneasy anticipation for an outcome we can never fully control.

Conclusion

Doorways have a physical presence as either an obstruction or enabling access between spaces. Although doorways seem relatively unobtrusive in most visual culture, they can be transformed into an iconic device when placed into conversation with the narrative of an art piece. The surveillance of the A.I. unit in *Resident Evil* epitomises the fear of being watched, a fear that is not uncommon within contemporary society. However, it is not necessarily the secret act of observation that is so distressing. The fear arises from the possibility that the knowledge gained by the observer may be used against them, and subsequently their inability to thwart this. Fear is part of the dread for potentiality that cannot be determined, predicted or otherwise fully known before a transition takes place. Significantly, this anxiety only exists when the transition causes awareness in those approaching that the crossover will bring the possibility of alteration, for which they must take responsibility.

Films are particularly useful because, as a temporal medium, they can exploit the doorway to demonstrate the complete effects of a transition as part of a narrative sequence. *Resident Evil* expands on this with doorways that gain autonomy. Their actions threaten the protagonists by confining the group, releasing hostile monsters, allowing them to be attacked, and even becoming a weapon when a door is thrown at Matt. However, the slight redemption of the doorway that vanquishes the ultimate opponent, amongst other mildly benign actions, provides enough uncertainty so that doorways come to signify anxiety and dread, rather than themselves being a thing to fear. This ambiguity thus emphasises that it is the unknown, the other side that is the source of such emotions when a narrative context triggers awareness that potentiality may bring considerable, and indeterminable, alterations upon current actuality. The invisibility of artificial intelligence, and by extension, virtual technologies is thus influential upon our spatial experience of these types of doorways, which, as a product of more recent developments, proves to exacerbate already prominent trepidations from centuries past.

Clearly, the iconography of the doorway not only holds powerful symbolism in contemporary visual culture but also demands increasingly critical inquiries to investigate the complications posed by telecommunications and cyber technology. As technological advancements occur, our perceptions of both virtual and physical realities are transformed. They have rapidly evolved over the past century, which means that their effect on perceived traditional concepts such as borders, barriers and spaces must be updated. The crux is that doors most certainly do not stay closed, and other methods of intrusion, such as surveillance, render them even less effective. If the majority of doors are open, or access is always on some level achievable, perhaps new research should grow to study the process of opening, and what new spaces mean. Whether our compulsive curiosity is due to concerns with the anxiety such accessibility provokes, or just an indulgence into the fascination

we share for the indefinite state of the boundary of the doorway, is difficult to ascertain. It is certainly a rich area of questioning that demands further scrutiny as an integral part of our visual environment.

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“I didn't say it. Milton said it. And he was blind”: Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman and *Paradise Lost*.

THOMAS TYRRELL

While William Shakespeare's influence on popular culture has been constantly recognised, feted and celebrated, John Milton's has declined considerably since his eighteenth-century peak. Unlike the Shakespeare's works, frequently described as “timeless”, Milton's prose works are irrevocably bound up with their seventeenth-century contexts, while his poetry is so entangled with key Christian stories and psychic locations that it sometimes becomes difficult to distinguish the influence of *Paradise Lost* (1667) from that of *Genesis*, or Milton's Hell from that of Virgil, Dante or Hieronymus Bosch. Despite this, *Paradise Lost* remains influential in many arenas: among other things, the poem is a prototypical work of science-fiction, featuring heroic interstellar voyages and speculations into the workings of the universe. Critical consideration of this influence tends to concentrate on C.S. Lewis's *Space Trilogy* (1938-45) and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000), and these novels, conveniently enough, mirror a factional divide between Milton scholars. C.S. Lewis's interpretation of the poem, as explicated in his *Preface to Milton*, is orthodoxly Christian. On the other hand, Philip Pullman favours a distinguished critical line which argues that Satan is the poem's secret hero and which includes William Blake, Percy Shelley and William Empson. Aside from these two novels, essays tracing the influence of sophisticated readings of Milton in popular fiction have been few in number.¹

In this essay I will examine how the developing mythos of the DC Comics Universe (or DCU) came to incorporate a distinct and clearly legible line of Miltonic influence.² I will begin by identifying those aspects of *Paradise Lost* which present the most parallels with the comic book narrative, notably the War in Heaven as related to Adam and Eve by the Angel Raphael, and which forms the bulk of Books V and VI in *Paradise Lost*. In the second part, I examine how Miltonic material was first incorporated into the DCU in Alan Moore's “Footsteps” and how it proved integral to shaping the recurring character of Lucifer in Neil Gaiman's comic book series *The Sandman* and his short story “Murder Mysteries”. In my final section, I examine the presence of Miltonic themes in the spin-off series *Lucifer* (2000-2006) and *John Constantine: Hellblazer* (1988-2013) and in Grant Morrison's *JLA* (1997-2006), before bringing my narrative up to the present day.

In the epic tradition of *in media res*, to begin at the beginning is to begin in the middle, and it is in the middle of the fifth book of *Paradise Lost* that the angel Raphael descends to Eden from Heaven, and relates to Adam the events of the War in Heaven, a confrontation between the adherents of God and the followers of Satan. This leads to the expulsion of the latter with all his angels from the borders of Heaven. It is the only martial episode in a poem whose central action, notoriously, is the eating of a piece of fruit. Its critical standing has decayed a great deal over the centuries.³ Joseph Addison, one of Milton's great eighteenth-century popularisers,

thought that the War in Heaven was the pinnacle of Milton's sublimity: "that wherever he speaks of it, he rises, if possible, above himself" (191). His reaction was one of awe and wonder at the scale and spectacle of the epic combat, but superhuman conflict is not to everybody's taste. Later on in the century, in tones of lofty dismissal strikingly similar to the early critical dismissal of the comic book medium, Samuel Johnson would declare that: "The confusion of spirit and matter [...] fills it with incongruity; and the book in which it is related is, I believe, the favourite of children, and gradually neglected, as knowledge is increased" (109). For Johnson, the mechanics of combat between ethereal adversaries are too far removed from real life to interest an adult sensibility.

Modern critics have found in Book V elements of the mock-heroic and the farcical and portrayed it as a subversion of the familiar tropes of epic warfare. For instance, on the first day of battle the weapons are the familiar to anyone who has happened to glance into *The Iliad*: sword, shield and spear. By the second day, Satan's angels have excavated metals and minerals from the soil of Heaven, and invented cannon that throw God's host into confusion. Things escalate quickly as Michael and the angelic army regroup and retaliate by throwing mountains at the opposing side - whereupon the whole war becomes a mountain-slinging match. Arnold Stein memorably refers to this as "a giant custard-pie fight" in *Answerable Style* (1967) - yet it is also a tremendously destructive conflict, and it becomes evident that even the empyrean firmament cannot take much more of this kind of punishment. God has a plan, however, and sends in a literal *deus ex machina*, in the arrival of the Son within the Chariot of Paternal Deity. At his command the uprooted hills retire to their places; he routs the rebellious angels and forces them to the very brink of the abyss:

The monstrous sight
 Strook them with horror backward, but far worse
 Urged them behind; headlong themselves they threw
 Down from the verge of heav'n, eternal wrath
 Burnt after them to the bottomless pit. (VI. 862-6)

At this point the narrative comes back to where the epic began, with the fall of angels into Hell.

As should be evident even from this brief précis, there are certain parallels with the simpler kind of superhero narrative. Both feature a Manichean conflict between a set of heroes and adversaries unable or (in the case of the Son) unwilling to land a death blow. Even when Michael's sword cleaves Satan in twain, the archfiend is only briefly inconvenienced, for "The grinding sword with discontinuous wound / Passed through him, but the ethereal substance closed / Not long divisible" (VI. 329-31). Satan feels pain for the first time in his existence, and is briefly disabled, but soon returns to the fight.

Though the angels possess in an eminent degree the two superhero characteristics of mission and powers, they lack the important distinctions of costume and identity (Coogan, 2006). As the quote above makes clear, they are beings of spirit rather than matter, and do not have the impermeable solidity of Superman or Wonder Woman; rather they possess fluid abilities of second-stringers such as Metamorpho or Plastic Man. When

the angel Raphael descends to visit Adam and Eve in Eden, Adam's curious questioning uncovers the fact that beings of pure spirit can not only eat and drink, but also enjoy a kind of sexual congress: "if Spirits embrace, / Total they mix, union of pure with pure / Desiring; nor restrained conveyance need / As flesh to mix with flesh, or soul with soul" (VIII. 626-9). The physicality of Milton's angels is explicitly worked out, albeit in the kind of detail that DC comics largely leave to fan fiction.⁴ They wear material armour to protect their bodies from the pain of division and recombination, but this itself can become a weakness if the armour is crushed upon them.

As in the comic book narratives, War in Heaven is both visually spectacular and horribly destructive but its consequences are easily passed over. Just as Superman's home town of Metropolis appears to be able to absorb and repair spectacular damage in the twinkling of an eye, so the mountains of Heaven return to their former places and leave no trace of the catastrophic conflict that first saw them wrenched from their roots. The Deus ex Machina performs its function of exiling and containing - rather than annihilating - the threat to the status quo. Even though Hell appears to have the same revolving door release policy as Arkham Asylum, the escape-prone institution responsible for incarcerating maniacs in the *Batman* series, Milton at least has the excuse of divine providence to account for Satan's escape from perdition and arrival in Eden. In the examples below, I will show that these similarities were not overlooked by comic book writers.

Hell has become a standard location for DC comics, and everyone from the Justice League to the Secret Six has paid a visit, but when the British Writer Alan Moore brought his hero there in *Saga of the Swamp Thing* #49-50, it was still new territory for the comic book. Those stories draw more on Orphean and Odyssean myth patterns, however, and it isn't until 1987, with Moore's "Footsteps" in *Secret Origins* #10 that the Miltonic War in Heaven first made its appearance.



Figure 1. Elements of symmetry. "Footsteps"

The *Secret Origins* series was created to recount the well-worn tales of how each superhero came to be, but the origin and purpose of this issue's star, the Phantom Stranger, deliberately shrouded in mystery from his first appearance. The editors decided to preserve that mystery by commissioning four competing origin stories that share the same comic book. "Footsteps", the third of these stories, takes up only ten pages. The first eight pages are divided between two narratives: firstly, the contemporary tale of an unnamed man, torn between the Subway Angels and the Sewer Survivalists; secondly, a version of the War in Heaven from the point of view of an angel who refuses to commit himself to either side. This is followed by a two-page contemporary epilogue. Some of the elements of artistic and thematic symmetry between the two narratives anticipate Moore's later work with these elements in *The Killing Joke* (1988) and the *Watchmen* (1987) issue "Fearful Symmetry", particularly in the first two pages. Here, the story's title and motif of "Footsteps" is made explicit as the first panel of both pages opens with an image of feet. On the first page, these are the shoed feet of the Phantom Stranger, with the figures of Otis and the unnamed main character visible in the background. On the second page are two pairs of bare feet belonging to the Stranger and the angel Etrigan, who are talking with each other before the Fall. In both pages, another three panels are devoted to a conversation between two characters. Then there is a larger lower panel depicting, in the first page, the Phantom Stranger about to descend into the subway, and in the second, the Stranger and Etrigan about to soar into the skies of Heaven. The Phantom Stranger's narration, like Satan's soliloquies in *Paradise Lost*, is solitary and tormented by introspection, and the framing of the conversation between the man and Otis emphasizes the sympathy and community he has lost.

In the empyreal narrative, Moore avoids Milton's contentious use of the Son as the catalyst for the War in Heaven and makes Satan's rebellion proceed from "Yahweh's dangerous scheme to make the clay sit up and talk" (4). The Fall of these angels seems due to superior angelic force rather than the direct interference of the Son as *Deus ex Machina*. On Earth, we also hear a paraphrased version of the one line of Milton everybody knows, "Better to rule in Hell than serve in Heaven" (l. 263) when Otis says "You think about that man. You're spending your life sweepin' the trash up above when it's better to rule down here" (3) emphasising the parallels between the grungy urban narrative and the epic of the fall from the Heaven. The unnamed character's story parallels that of the Phantom Stranger, caught between the icy righteousness of the angels and the savagery of the fallen. This explores a folk element missing from Milton's work: the story of those who neither stood nor fell but simply sat on the fence, and were denied a home either in Heaven or Hell. In some folk-tale "origin stories" these become fairies; in Moore's work this is a solitary and unnamed angel who, by the time of the second narrative, has become the Phantom Stranger.

The comic closes with Josh's banishment and the Stranger's loneliness relieved in some measure, as they walk together through the streets of the city, the claustrophobic panels re-opening to a wide closing image of the city at night. The Stranger remarks:

Lonely inside our separate skins, we cannot know each other's pain and must bear our own in solitude. For my part, I have found that walking soothes it, and that, given luck, sometimes we find someone to walk beside us... at least for a little way (10).

The tentative hopefulness of the conclusion parallels the upward note on which Milton concludes his epic, after Adam and Eve have been banished from the earthly Paradise and everything has changed utterly:

Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon,
 The world was all before them, where to choose
 Their place of rest, and providence their guide,
 They hand in hand, *with wandering steps and slow*
 Through Eden took their solitary way. (XII. 645-9, emphasis mine)

For both writers, human companionship eases the pain of banishment into exile, but Moore's brief tale stands apart from the conventional narrative in its concern for those who take no part in the Manichean conflict and find themselves isolated, victimised and alone in consequence. In this it anticipates some of the alterations to the Miltonic myth pattern and comic book narrative that we will see in the works of Neil Gaiman.

Running for seventy-six issues from 1989 to 1996, Gaiman's *The Sandman* operated from within the same fictional universe as the DC superheroes whilst rarely using the characters or the usual conventions of storytelling. Also unusually, it came to a definite and final conclusion, disposing of the central character rather than preserving him for a different creative team. Asked to sum up the story of his seven-year run of *The Sandman* in a single sentence, Gaiman opted for "The Lord of Dreams learns that one must change or die, and makes his choice". (Gaiman, 1996) Throughout the series, Dream, one of the seven Endless, is bound by his changeless sense of duty. This reaches its height in the collection *Season of Mists*, where having been convinced by his fellow Endless that he was unjust in sentencing Nada, the girl who jilted him, to Hell for all eternity, he immediately goes to rescue her despite considerable ill-timing and personal risk.

As the overarching narrative of *The Sandman* develops, it becomes clear that Lucifer is the dark shadow of Dream; beginning as his implacable adversary, he comes to represent the possibilities that Dream's sense of guilt and responsibility will not allow him to consider. He successfully abandons his set role, shirks his responsibilities and reinvents himself as a free agent, and the series closes with him amusing himself by managing a Los Angeles nightspot. The multiple new opportunities ahead of him are explored in Mike Carey's spin-off series, *Lucifer*. In the afterword to the final issues, collected as *Lucifer: Evensong*, Mike Carey provides a striking description of his brief: to furnish "the next instalment of his story, after the chapters already told in the Bible, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and Neil Gaiman's THE SANDMAN" (Carey, 2007). Would anyone consider such a striking mixture of texts in this way but a writer of comic books, long apprenticed to the art of maintaining the continuity and integrity of an on-going character, often across several different series, while artists and writers come and go? The author here is not in anxious Oedipal conflict with his

predecessors, or inheriting their work through a notion of familial descent, but curating the development of an on-going character, and this sense of curation is vital to Gaiman's use of Milton's materials.

When Dream first visits the abode of the damned in *The Sandman #4: A Hope in Hell* (collected in *Preludes and Nocturnes*), Lucifer seems a conventional, if not to say rather colourless, portrayal of the Devil. In despite of the fact that the rulers of Hell are now a triumvirate (a change foisted upon Gaiman by the editors at DC) there's little doubt where the true power lies. There is an abstract sense too, of a grudge held against Dream for not supporting him in the War in Heaven. But overall, Lucifer is surprisingly helpful and rather detached from Dream's struggle to reclaim his helmet. The final attempt to trap him in Hell, together with the oath that 'One day, my brothers... one day I shall destroy him' seem oddly weak. But in Chapter One of the later story, *Season of Mists*, something revolutionary happens. Lucifer quotes Milton: not in the paraphrase we hear in Alan Moore, but literally. 'Still, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven". And he follows up with an attribution. "We didn't say it. Milton said it. And he was blind" (58).



Figure 2. Lucifer makes an attribution. *The Sandman: Season of Mists*

The quotation Lucifer so despises comes from the speech Satan makes after escaping from the Lake of Fire and viewing his surroundings for the first time. At greater length, the quote runs: "in my choice / To reign is worth ambition though in Hell: / Better to rule in Hell, than serve in Heav'n" (l. 261-3). By displacing these lines onto Milton rather than accepting them as his own, Lucifer tries to dismiss the "blindness" of Satan, who could only perceive the binary choice of ruling or serving.⁵

Influence here is not only between authors but between literary characters. Even down in Hell, Lucifer has taken the time to read Milton. Despite being the premier scholar of influence, Harold Bloom is not the first critic one would spring to when writing a defence of the comic book medium; however, there is a passage in *The Anatomy of Influence* (2011) that goes a great way towards explaining the significance of a pivotal moment in the story. Bloom compares the soliloquies of Hamlet with those of Satan in *Paradise Lost*, and observes that the two characters are similar in that we neither see what Hamlet was before the crisis of his father's death, nor Lucifer,

who in Milton's epic is Satan's unfallen self, before his name was blotted from the Book of Life. According to Bloom:

what is missing [from *Paradise Lost*] is an actual representation of the Shakespearean moment of soliloquy in which Lucifer overhears himself and through that shock changes into Satan... what is lacking is the *moment of change*, a Shakespearean invention from which Milton shies. (120)

In Gaiman's story we see that Shakespearean invention in effect. Lucifer is no longer a mere collection of conventional diabolical poses. There is a vivid contrast between the slightly fey ruler of Hell he appeared to be in his first appearance and his commanding appearance in these panels, and one which cannot be laid entirely at the feet of the artist. Lucifer has become a character who exists independently. He no longer derives from Milton's Satan; it becomes plain that he has watched the world beyond Hell, read and absorbed Milton's portrayal of him, and is now prepared to supplant him. For the first time, perhaps, since his soliloquy to the sun at the beginning of Book Four of *Paradise Lost*, the Adversary breaks the mould and does something radically different. Both Milton and Gaiman, within their very different media, have succeeded in restoring a sense of character and animation to a supernatural being whose role often seems static.

Dream enters Hell expecting a fight: one of the visually spectacular Manichean clashes familiar from the Justice League comics. Instead, he finds Hell empty and unguarded; Nada, the woman he has come in search of, is gone. Hovering in the centre of Hell, he tries to force a final, possibly fatal confrontation with Lucifer, who deflates the whole scenario with the opening line: "Hello, Dream. Take off that silly helmet and we'll talk" (72). As their conversation unfolds, it becomes evident that Lucifer has resigned from the monarchy of Hell and emptied his realm. As Dream and Lucifer wander through Hell together, sealing all its doorways, he begins to discuss his motives. And again, we return to the time before the fall:

I cared so deeply back then, in the cold at the beginning of all things. In the Silver City. I suppose that was why everything began to go wrong. You know... I still wonder how much of it was planned. How much of it He knew in advance. I thought I was rebelling. I thought I was defying His rule. No... I was merely fulfilling another tiny segment of His great and powerful plan. If I had not rebelled, another would have, in my stead. Raguel, perhaps. Or Sandalphon. (79)

The three-panel flashback which follows, uniquely, shows Satan falling alone and arriving in Hell alone, a moment that slips between the cracks of *Paradise Lost*, where the opening found the devils already chained on the fiery lake, and Raphael's retelling only takes us up to the eviction of Satan and his angels from Heaven. The moment of despair which Milton delayed until the famous soliloquy on Mount Niphates at the beginning of Book IV occurs visually here, dramatising the moment Lucifer realises he can never regain what he has lost.

The suspicion which Lucifer directs towards God may also have its roots in Milton. At the opening of *Paradise Lost*, the poem announces its lofty purpose to "assert eternal providence / And justify the ways of God

to Man" (l. 25-6), but critics have often been puzzled why, given this stated goal, Milton's God is such an unsympathetic character. Milton dared much dramatically in getting the Almighty to speak *in propria persona*, because such an act necessarily makes the reader suspicious of God's foreknowledge. It seems strange to many that God, knowing of the Fall before it happens, will still let Satan escape from Hell, wing his way through Chaos and enter Eden relatively unhindered. The complex interactions in the poem between free will, foreknowledge and fate have left many readers and critics baffled or frustrated.

It scarcely seems surprising that when the Devils in Hell come to reason "high / Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate, / Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute" they find 'no end, in wandering mazes lost" (ll. 558-61). William Empson is the Miltonist critic most hostile to the divinity; his book *Milton's God* (1951) finds the poem a success for the same reason many other critics judged it a failure - its portrayal of God. Dividing the early twentieth-century critics into those "attackers who find it bad because it makes God bad and defenders who find it all right because it leaves God tolerable, even though Milton is tactless about him" (13), Empson attempts to rehabilitate the Romantic position of Blake and Shelley, most pithily expressed in Blake's famous comment that "the reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of angels and God, and at liberty when of devils and Hell, is because he was a true poet, and of the Devil's party without knowing it" (75). In short, Empson lifts the weight of moral culpability from the shoulders of Satan, Eve and Adam, and assigns it in large measure to Milton's God: a character he does not find quite as grizzly as the traditional God of the Scriptures, but quite objectionable enough. He argues that the poem is good because it makes God bad, and is not afraid of the ramifications of this conclusion.

His argument proved simple and influential enough for inclusion in the introductions to many editions of Milton and it is possible Gaiman was aware of Empson's interpretation when he was reading the epic. Certainly Gaiman's use of the Miltonic material has something akin to Empson's conclusion that the towering strength of *Paradise Lost* is Milton's ability to "accept and express a downright horrible conception of God and yet keep somehow alive, underneath it, all the breadth and generosity, the welcome to every noble pleasure, which had been prominent in European history before this time" (276-7). This 'breadth and generosity' is seen in *The Sandman* after the grizzly scenes in Hell, when the action switches to Dream's palace and the genre to high comedy as embassies from various squabbling pantheons and entities seek ownership of Hell, now left in Dream's keeping. However, this lighter note overlays the bitter moral dilemma pondered by Dream in his solitariness. To whom will he grant the key to this ultimate abomination? He is half-tempted to leave the place empty, as it serves no good purpose, but the competing bribes and threats of the various opposing factions leave him torn with indecision.

Dream's dilemma is resolved by the angels Duma and Remiel, who originally descend from the Silver City purely as observers, but towards the close of the negotiations deliver a message directly from the Creator:

There must be a Hell. There must be a place for the demons; a place for the damned. Hell is Heaven's reflection. It is Heaven's shadow. They define each other. Reward and Punishment; hope and despair. There must be a Hell, for without Hell, Heaven has no meaning. (176)

The Creator assigns Remiel and Duma to rule Hell as his representatives: something which even Remiel, whose first concern is for himself and his purity, recognises to be wrong, and which brings him almost to the brink of rebellion before he realises that if he rebels, he has nowhere else to go. He is forced both to rule Hell *and* serve Heaven, forced into the Lucifer's role without the consolations of his autonomy and freedom of action.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton dismisses Satan in Book X, when he returns to Hell to address an exultant parliament of demons about his successful temptation of Adam and Eve and the new road just built from Hell to Earth. Instead of the plaudits he expects, however, he is surprised to be greeted by a loud hissing. In vengeance for their misdeeds, God has turned all the inhabitants of Hell into serpents and condemned them annually to take that shape and chew on ashy, bitter fruits, thus wounding them in their most sensitive part - their pride. It is the kind of heavy-handed Miltonic humour that critics mostly dislike, and tend to ignore for the sublimities of the earlier books - except for Empson, who avouches it as further evidence that Satan's character does not degrade over the course of the book, but that God degrades him by manipulating him into a series of humiliating positions and impossible dilemmas.

The poem itself closes two books later with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, in a scene that is more touching than tragic. Gaiman's blackly ironic ending to *Season of Mists* has far more in common with Book X's humiliations than Book XII's consolations. Here Remiel, soaring above the demons and tortured souls, considers his new realm and what he can do with it:

The flames of Hell, Remiel muses, have become refining fires, burning away the dross, leaving purity and repentance and good. Remiel hears the screams, and it smiles. Perhaps, it thinks, it judged too hastily. After all, this is part of the plan, is it not? Then how could it *not* be for the best, in this, the best of all possible worlds... Perhaps events have ended happily, after all. Happily. Ever after. In Hell. (217)

The note of Voltairean satire here is palpable, mixed perhaps with the Empson's horrified rejection of Aquinas's notion that the inhabitants of Heaven delight in divine justice, and therefore rejoice at the tortures of the damned. Gaiman retains the conception of Hell as a place of torture and torment, whilst showing his scepticism of any cosmology that exhibits cruelty on such a scale.

Themes from *Paradise Lost* arise once again in Gaiman's short story "Murder Mysteries" which has also appeared as a radio play and in the inevitable comic book adaptation.⁶ There is nothing to formally bind this story into *The Sandman* canon as no DC trademarked characters appear, and the comic book version was published by rival company Dark Horse, but they share identical conceptions of Heaven as a Silver City, and the portrayal of Lucifer is consistent with what we see of the character in *The Sandman*. Structurally, the short story is similar to

Paradise Lost in that its central section is a narrative of events in Heaven before the Creation of the World, told by an angel to a mortal. However, Gaiman's frame story begins in Los Angeles in December in the 1980s, not in Eden before the Fall, and while Milton harnessed the power of Homer and Virgil to write of an epic War in Heaven, Gaiman writes a murder mystery set before Lucifer's revolt. The number one suspect - and, of course, the biggest red herring - is Lucifer himself.

The epigraph to the short story is not Miltonic, but from the Chester cycle of medieval mystery plays.

The Fourth Angel says:

Of this order I am made one
 From Mankind to guard this place
 That through their Guilt they have foregone
 For they have forfeited His Grace;
 Therefore all this must they shun
 Or else my Sword they shall embrace
 And myself shall be their Foe
 To flame them in the Face. (339)

Though this play actually deals with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden rather than the time before Creation, the epigraph is appropriate in more ways than one. It adumbrates the method of execution used by Raguel, angel of Vengeance and narrator of the central story, who kills the guilty angel Saraquael by burning him until not even ash remains. It also foreshadows the essentially dramatic nature of the crime and its arrangement.

Milton's early notes preserved in the Trinity Manuscript at Cambridge inform us that *Paradise Lost* began life as a play or a closet drama. Indeed, Satan's great soliloquy at the beginning of Book IV has often been marked as belonging to this stage of composition, before the author turned towards the epic. "Murder Mysteries" a work which has also gone through some transposition of genres from short story to radio play to graphic novel, sets itself up in response to Milton's self-assigned task of justifying God's ways to man, and questions God's culpability in the Fall of Lucifer. As Raguel says in "Murder Mysteries", "nothing occurs without reason; and all the reasons are Yours" (366). Despite the confusion of leads, motives and red herrings as the story progresses, it is self-evident that in any murder before the creation of the world, before the Fall of Adam and even before the Fall of Lucifer, the reason must, at some remove, lie with God.

The deity who emerges from behind the curtain at the tale's conclusion, however, is not quite the bitter divinity with the mocking laughter that Empson finds in *Paradise Lost*. His choice to disguise himself as Zephiel, one of the senior designers of the Universe hints at a kind of humility never shown by the proud patriarchal deity of *Paradise Lost*, who is enthroned in glory upon a panoptic mound in the very centre of Heaven. Milton never dares to describe his God in concrete terms, whereas Gaiman's Deity is tired, with "old, old eyes" (366). When He condescends to explain a small aspect of his plan to Raguel, He speaks "gently, almost teasingly, as an adult would

pretend to make conversation with a tiny child” (366). He acknowledges the sacrifices involved in his machinations, and shows signs of pity for his instruments:

Lucifer must brood on the unfairness of Saraquael’s destruction. And that - among other things - will precipitate him into certain actions. Poor sweet Lucifer. His way will be the hardest of all my children; for there is a part he must play in the drama that is to come, and it is a grand role. (366)

God’s plan here takes the form of a drama, a play arranged for unknown purposes. While hope for free will remains - God acknowledges that “The problem with creating things is that they perform so much better than one had ever planned” - the plan itself remains a mystery beyond the ability of the angelic protagonist to decipher. (366) Raguel, like Milton’s readers, hopes for a final justification of God’s ways. But here, as in the epic, they are left obscure. As Raguel leaves “I hoped He would call me back, explain every detail of His plan to me, somehow make it better. But He said nothing, and I left His presence without looking back” (367). The Creator may be more sympathetic here than in the Epic, but his ways are still mysterious - and to many, cruel or unfair.

The spin-off series that developed from the works of Moore and Gaiman preserve each author’s take on the Miltonic cosmogony. Developing a character introduced in *Saga of the Swamp Thing*, *John Constantine: Hellblazer* ran from 1988 to 2013. A running theme was the struggle of the eponymous antihero, caught between the malice of the demons and the rigid purity of the militant angels. Running from 2000 to 2006, Mike Carey’s *Lucifer* took the newly independent adversary of Gaiman’s conception to its furthest extremes, depicting a new Edenic story in a permissive Satanic universe, and concluding with a new War in Heaven where God abdicates and Elaine, the daughter of the angel Michael, becomes the new deity.

Meanwhile, the Miltonic myth structures Moore and Gaiman had introduced to the DCU were being capitalised upon in the mainstream superhero narrative, such as Grant Morrison’s mid-nineties *JLA* run and Mark Millar’s spin off series, *JLA: Paradise Lost*. *JLA* #6-7 saw the introduction of the angel Zauriel, who aided the Justice League in combat against the rogue angel Asmodel (in the Lucifer role) before becoming a full member of the League in later issues. The machinery and the spectacle of Milton’s epic are present, but God is sidelined, as are complicated issues of free will, predestination and the goodness of God.⁷ These issues mark the point where the epic machinery of *Paradise Lost* made its mark on the pivotal figures of the DCU, but it’s hard not to conclude Morrison’s true interests lay elsewhere. Indeed, in recent years the Judeo-Christian narrative of origins has been largely displaced by the metafictional origin story of the Multiversal Monitors and the Overvoid which Morrison developed in *Final Crisis* (2008) and the ongoing *Multiversity* series (2015-).

Heaven and Hell remain actual locations within the DCU (the latter more visited than the former) but the Miltonic elements in their portrayal are now negligible. The end of the *John Constantine: Hellblazer* run in 2013 and the reincorporation of a younger version of the character into the DCU at large has largely spelt the end of the distinctive cosmology the series developed. A recent nadir was achieved when Constantine visited the borders

of Heaven in a *Justice League Dark* comic, where the *Vox Dei* (or Voice of God) was portrayed as a small Scottie dog.

At the time of writing, then, it might seem the ideas which *Paradise Lost* brought to the DCU have been mined and exhausted. On the other hand, the fabric of the fictional universe is distinctly richer for the Miltonic element interwoven with the melange of legendary, alternate-historical, science-fictional, fantastical, original and derivative elements that form a part of the overall continuity. Four centuries of scholarship have shown that the questions Milton posed are far from being definitively answered. The opportunity remains open for a new writer to take up where Alan Moore and Neil Gaiman leave off in re-examining the seductive charisma of Satan and the arbitrary righteousness of God, the place of the human in this immortal drama, and whether it remains in any sense possible to justify the ways of God to man.

Notes

1. See *Milton and Popular Culture* (2006) for a range of recent readings.
2. I explore the literary element of the comic book rather than the artistic element, but this essay might profitably be read in conjunction with Lisa Beaven's "Someone to Watch Over Me: The Guardian Angel as Superhero in Seicento Rome" in *Super/heroes: From Hercules to Superman*. 252-62.
3. For a more detailed overview of this critical heritage, see John Leonard's *Faithful Labourers: A Reception History of Paradise Lost, 1667-1970* (2013) 266-325.
4. Larry Niven's 1969 article "Man of Steel, Woman of Kleenex" looks into the problems of Superman's dating life. The splash page of *Metamorpho* and the android Indigo caught *en flagrante* in *The Outsiders* #20 is probably the closest DC comics have come to addressing the subject.
5. Cf. Ryan Netzley's "'Better to Reign in Hell than Serve in Heaven, is that it?' Ethics, Apocalypticism and Allusion in *The Devil's Advocate*" in *Milton and Popular Culture* (2006) where a more flippant Satan is confronted with this quotation.
6. The references throughout are to the version of the short story collected in *Smoke and Mirrors* (2013). The graphic novel stays extremely close to the original text.
7. The rogue angels sent in pursuit of Zauriel are beings of spirit, adapted to the vibrational physics of the DC universe but modelled upon Milton's own semi-permeable angels, and the scene when Superman wrestles with Asmodel has something of Milton's epic combat.

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“The other garden”: Palimpsestic and abject faerie spaces and species in J. M. Barrie’s and Arthur Rackham’s *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market”

RACHEL FOX

This article examines heterotopic faerie spaces as they are constructed within the texts of J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market”, paying especial attention to Arthur Rackham’s illustrations for these two texts. I argue that heterotopic faerie spaces are composed of the palimpsestic and abject characteristics evident in the narrative and material components of these works. With an emphasis on how written and visual renditions of faerie spaces and species are constructed within the texts’ narrative, this essay makes reference to a specific material copy of *Kensington Gardens*: an illustrated Edition-de-Luxe first small quarto edition, published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1910.

The essay begins with an exploration of the construction of “the other garden” as that which constitutes faerie in *Kensington Gardens*. The phrase “the other garden” is adapted from Michel Foucault’s use of the term “the other city”, which he uses to refer to the cemetery (as heterotopia) in his essay “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias” (6). I will then go on to consider the dangers which are associated with trespassing into this faerie space, and explore the threat posed by the equally desired and monstrous faerie species that reside in “the other garden”.

Mapping and Illustrating Heterotopic Faerie Spaces

J. R. R. Tolkien stipulates that: “Faërie cannot be caught in a net of words; for it is one of its qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible. It has many ingredients, but analysis will not necessarily discover the secret of the whole” (10). Faerie, as a ubiquitous realm, is a composite of a variety of different ingredients, of a variety of narratives and different textual media, of which the faerie spaces located in *Kensington Gardens* and “Goblin Market” represent but two.

Tolkien’s position is reinforced in Neil Gaiman’s and Charles Vess’ *Stardust: Being a Romance within the Realms of Faerie*, which notes:

Faerie, after all, is not one land, one principality or dominion.... each land that has been forced off the map by explorers and the brave going out and proving it wasn’t there has taken refuge in Faerie; so it is now... a most huge place indeed, containing every manner of landscape and terrain. (61)

Faerie is not only a composite of various locations, but is also still expanding. While this exposition is taken from a fictional work, I find its conceptualisation of Faerie useful for the purposes of this article and I would suggest that it adds body and definition to Tolkien’s assessment of Faerie as that which is incomprehensible in its entirety, not

just within any singular story, but across all narrative and visual renditions of Faerie. Faerie comprises of a network and, growing exponentially, might be perceived as a utopian space, where “the equivocal image of significations... [is] contrary to the concept of limit” (Marin 12). Faerie is a virtual, infinite space, and we cannot discover the whole of it for, by its very nature, it is as yet incomplete.

However, I propose to exchange the definition “utopia”, as it applies to Faerie, for that of “heterotopia”. Foucault describes heterotopia using the analogy of a mirror, in which his reflection is “at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there” (4). To trespass into Faerie is to step across the boundary, the “virtual point” that divides not just the faerie and mundane spaces, but which also constitutes the boundaries between different textual media.

A heterotopia is a liminal synchronous time-space that exists as a counter-site at the edges of society. In “Of Other Spaces”, Foucault specifically makes note of “heterotopias of deviation”, which house persons whose behaviour is non-normative to the pre-eminent culture of society, such as in the case of psychiatric hospitals or prisons (5). Thus, the threat of deviance is located in a synchronous, but marginal and enclosed, space with restricted access. In the case of Faerie, the collective faerie species constitute a dangerous “Other” located at the margins, expunged from the “acceptable” circles of society.

The cemetery stands as an example of this type of liminal space, as the cemetery’s location is removed from the centre of constructed civilisation due to the decay and threat of illness that is associated with it. Foucault refers to this space of the cemetery as “the other city, where each family possesses its dark resting place” (6). Foucault’s estimation of the “dark resting place” can be taken as the location of “refuge” that Gaiman’s narrator conceives Faerie to be in *Stardust* (61). Faerie, as “the other garden”, comes to represent the place of refuge, the final resting place, of the deviant faerie species who have made their appearances amongst a plethora of texts and media from across time. Indeed, in his definition of heterotopia, Foucault also introduces the concept of heterochrony, in which the heterotopic location “indefinitely accumulate[es] time”, in much the same way as a museum does (7). Faerie therefore represents an archival construct, which “enclose[s] in one place all times, all epochs, [and] all forms” (Foucault 7). Faerie, as heterotopia, is composed from a patchwork of narratives and textual media, of which the spaces represented in *Kensington Gardens* and “Goblin Market” are but two examples.

Returning to the example given of the cemetery, Foucault argues that the graveyard operates as a heterochrony in which the individual therein resides in a state of “quasi-eternity in which her permanent lot is dissolution and disappearance” (6). “The other city”, or “the other garden”, operates a time-space that infinitely preserves the dissolution of the deviant “Other”: the Other is rejected and expunged from society (or is killed), but their existence is preserved (or memorialised) in this space that it located at the city-limits. Faerie is a heterotopic location of “quasi-eternity” which, as a synchronous time-space, exists as “an alien space *within* a

familiar space”, a scheme that allows for the space to be “constructed and deconstructed at the same time” (McHale 45-6). To qualify: in a state of “quasi-eternity”, Faerie, as graveyard/heterotopia, favours neither life nor death, construction or deconstruction, but rather “[l]ife out of death”, construction *and* deconstruction (Rossetti 19).

I affiliate the conjunction between these interwoven spaces of construction and deconstruction, and of living and dying with abjection. Julie Kristeva states that the abject is that which is “opposed to I” (1). The faerie spaces and faerie species represent a location and beast that is “Other” from the normative centre; the fantastic is opposed to the mundane... it is opposed to “I”. However, what is most disturbing about the abject is not this opposing position in relation to the individual (human) self, but the intrusion of this abject “Other” into the fabric of normativity. Abjection “does not respect borders” but is, in fact, “in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (Kristeva 4). Abjection is thus qualified by both an imposition and an interruption of borders and boundaries. As an ambiguous, abject location, Faerie is typified by the flux of faerie and fantastic spaces that disqualify any sense of order or system, but construct a wholly composite piece of patchwork.

In the case of “the other garden” in *Kensington Gardens*, this abject interweaving of location manifests through the palimpsestic relationship between words and images, and within the construction of the material text. Faerie (“the other garden”) in *Kensington Gardens* stands as an example of the fantastic. Tzvetan Todorov qualifies the fantastic as the moment of hesitation that is experienced by the individual before they decide if what they have observed is a natural event (uncanny), or supernatural (marvellous) (44). Building from Todorov’s model of the fantastic, Rosemary Jackson argues that “[i]n fantastic art, objects are not readily appropriated through the look: things slide away from the powerful eye/I which seeks to possess them thus becoming distorted, disintegrated, partial and lapsing into invisibility” (45-6). The fantastic therefore occurs just out of the reach of the human eye and the inability to perceive the fantastical occurrence in its entirety indicates, or produces, the moment of hesitation, which represents the purest form of the fantastic (Todorov 44).

Jackson’s account of the fantastic as something that is “disintegrated” and partially (in)visible corresponds to Kristeva’s exploration of the abject as something that is “composite” and “in-between”. Further still, Jackson’s positioning of the fantastic as opposite the “eye/I” resonates with Kristeva’s description of the abject as being that which is “opposed to I” (1). In *Kensington Gardens*, “the other garden” and the faerie species that resides therein, as fantastic phenomena, are abject not simply for their disqualification from normative society, but for the ways and means through which they are presented in Barrie’s and Rackham’s illustrated novella.

Visualisations (and illustrations) of the fantastic can be qualified as such because they fail to meet the standards of what is constituted as mundane. In *Kensington Gardens* the hybrid of writing and visual art constitutes this space (and form) as abject. This composition of words and images also qualifies the text as a palimpsest, constituted out of “a process of erasure and superimposition” (Dillon 12). The palimpsest, which

results from a process of deconstruction and reconstruction, proves not only abject but also “spectral” and is therefore reminiscent of Derridean modes of deconstruction (Dillon 37). Similarly, Faerie in its entirety, “wide and deep and high and filled with many things” (Tolkien 3), is also composited out of a variety of palimpsestic layers that transpire across different narratives and forms. These temporal-spatial extensions and layers in Faerie transgress the boundaries between texts, as will become evident in the exploration of Rackham’s faerie-themed illustrations, which were also included in Rossetti’s “Goblin Market” and William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

In particular, the narrative of *Peter Pan* lends itself to the exploration of Faerie as abject and palimpsestic. *Peter Pan* is a highly composite and hybridised text (and character), and the faeries in Barrie’s literary and Rackham’s artistic incarnations of *Peter Pan* belong to a realm that is much darker than those spaces constructed and popularised by Disney. The perhaps better-known *Peter and Wendy* (1911), the novelisation of Barrie’s play (1904) is not the first textual appearance of Peter. Siphoned from the adult novel *The Little White Bird* (1902), *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906) introduces the eponymous character as “a Betwixt-and-Between”, not a fairy in the traditional sense, but half-human, half-bird (29). Regardless, in *Kensington Gardens*, as in “all his incarnations, Peter is akin to and in league with fairies” (Purkiss 19). Peter Pan represents a composite character, filtered through a multitude of written textual, dramatic, and visual incarnations.

Faerie in *Kensington Gardens* is the eponymous London Park, which is mapped out on the inside covers of the small quarto Hodder and Stoughton edition of the text (see figure 1). As part of his narrative in *Stardust*, Gaiman asserts that, given Faerie’s continual growth and hybrid layers, “[m]aps of Faerie are unreliable” (61). However, despite the limits of mapping the fantastic space, maps persistently appear in fantastic fiction. The process of mapping might represent an attempt to delimit a space that is entirely and infinitely without limits. And yet, “[e]ven after we mark the page, there are blanks beyond the borders of what we create, and blanks in what we create” (Turchi 29). Maps are therefore made up of partial (in)visibilities which, if we recall Jackson’s exposition of the fantastic, represents the fantastic space insofar that it is visually distorted; you cannot access (or witness) all that is there. The identification of these blank spaces is particularly of note given that, in the earlier folkloric period, these blanks were “fill[ed] with a variety of beings... all recognisable as fairies” (Purkiss 11). According to these premises, faeries inhabit, or are even forced into, the blank, unmapped space.

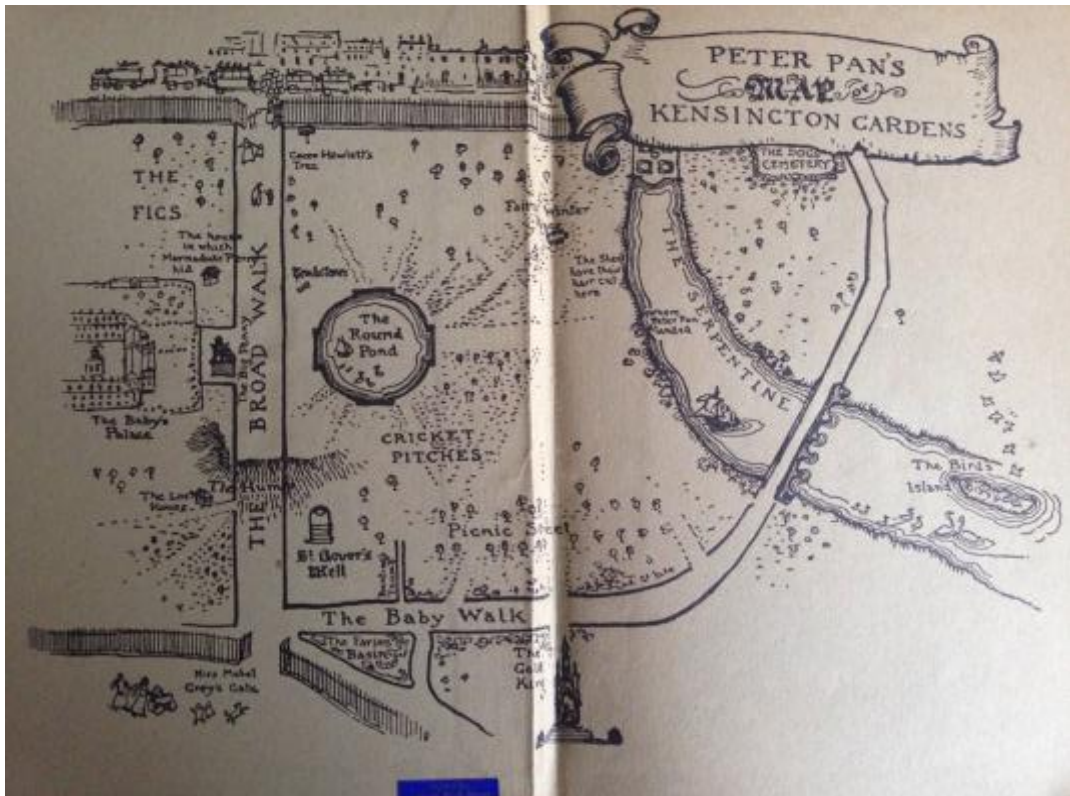


Figure 1. J. M. Barrie. "Peter Pan's Map of Kensington Gardens". *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*.

The map of Faerie that appears on the inside covers of *Kensington Gardens* visualises the faerie space, but also includes narrative landmarks. The map is contextualised by the story that it frames. The possessive apostrophe in the map's title – "Peter Pan's Map of Kensington Gardens" – marks a faerie space that is visualised within the context of Barrie's written narrative on Peter Pan. For instance, the map identifies the location "where Peter Pan landed" and even goes so far as to feature an illustration of Peter in his boat. Eric Bulson argues that the purpose of the map in literary fiction is to "make space of the world and its literary representation legible" (6). However, by replicating, or rather, visualising, selective moments from the text's narrative, the map can be accused of being merely supplementary. Derrida specifies that "what is supplementary is in reality *differance*, the operation of differing which at one and the same time both fissures and retards presence" (Derrida, "Speech and Phenomena" 88). The map may represent a supplementary visualisation of the written text, but, following Derrida's definition of the term, the two mediums intersect in more complex ways than one simply copying the other.

The first chapter of *Kensington Gardens* gives the reader, as per the chapter's title, "The Grand Tour of the Gardens" (Barrie 1). The visual map apes much that is expressed in this chapter, visualising the space that has been constructed within the written exposition. As supplement, the visual map that represents the Gardens operates within the realms of Jacques Derrida's *differance*, a location of "temporalization and spacing... space's becoming-temporal and time's becoming-spatial" ("Differance" 136). The map appears in congruence with the first chapter of *Kensington Gardens* and the events of the book as a whole, supplementing the written narrative. As an enactment of "temporalization and spacing", the narrative, as a written disclosure of time, expands into the

visual sphere, while the visual space is composed out of narrative-temporal indicators. The appearance of the yacht within the frame of “The Round Pond” on the map is informed by the narrative prescription that “[y]ou always want to have a yacht to sail on the Round Pond” (Barrie 10). The activity of sailing the yacht is a temporalizing moment, and the appearance of the boat on the map allows for the “becoming-temporal” of the visualised space while simultaneously visualising and, thus, allowing for the narrative to also become spatial. The map therefore constitutes a hybridised, composite faerie space. Kensington Gardens (“the other garden”) is an abject space constructed out of the trespasses between written narrative and image, the temporal and the spatial.

The borders of the faerie spaces in both *Kensington Gardens* and “Goblin Market” are distinctly temporal, with barriers constituted, respectively, by “Lock-out Time” (Barrie 55) or “Evening by evening” (Rossetti 2). As an abject space, these borders of Faerie can be trespassed, as becomes clear through an examination of the palimpsestic nature of the written and visual compositions of these texts. In *Kensington Gardens*, “Lock-out Time” forms a barrier between the mundane and faerie gardens, creating a layered (and spectral) palimpsest. Marking the transition into “Lock-out Time”, we hear a “*clang*, then from another part *clang*, then *clang, clang* far away. It was the Closing of the Gates” (Barrie 85). The reverberate echo and performative onomatopoeia of the italicised and, therefore emphasised, “*clang*” adds an auditory layer to the written text, aspiring towards an increasingly three dimensional space. This space is further emphasised by the capitalisation of the “Closing of the Gates”: as a pronoun, the distinctive, named event hails the movement into a new time-space. This transition marks a presupposition posited in Foucault’s definition of a heterotopia, which operates “a system of opening and closing” that allows admittance through a series of set parameters and rituals, pointing towards the gated location as a typically isolated space (7).

This written exposition on the “Closing of the Gates” in relation to the visualised map of the Garden in which the gates stand open results in a temporal-spatial depiction of Kensington Gardens as layered and, as such, palimpsestic. The two forms (visual and written, with open and closed gates respectively) are “different and incongruous, [and] coexist in a state of both collision and collusion” (Dillon 52). The visual map is supplementary to the written narrative, but the open gates also represent an instance of deferral/differing that resembles an operation that “fissures and retards presence”, as it is behind the closed gates that the “other garden” resides (Derrida, “Speech and Phenomena” 88). However, the fissure generated by the disparity between these two layers actually serves to accentuate the fantastic qualities of the written text rather than hinder them. The blank space between the opened and closed gates, between the map and the written text, qualifies an in-between space where the faeries linger. This blank space, rendered as a consequence of layered temporal-spatial text and media, is not only indicative of the abject, ambiguous faerie space, but also representative of Todorov’s qualification of the fantastic in its “pure state” as a blank space that is “not readily appropriated through the look” and is, in fact, spectral (Todorov 44; Jackson 45-6).

At first an apparent antinomy to this notion of the “blank space”, Rackham visualises “the other garden” in his illustrations for both *Kensington Gardens* and “Goblin Market”. An illustration is typically understood as that which “translates what is being said in written words into graphic images” (Hodnett 15). As a mode of transposition, the illustrative form fulfils the role of the supplement insofar that it arguably “adds only to replace” (Derrida, *Grammatology* 145). However, I argue that Rackham’s illustrations add, but not to entirely replace. The reason for this position is twofold. In the first instance, Rackham’s illustrations, while in part connected to Barrie’s narrative, focus on the faerie spaces and species far more than on plot points. Arguably, while Barrie crafts the narrative, Rackham crafts the world, so to speak. In the second instance, the position that the illustration is a supplementary form is disrupted if Rackham’s illustrations are taken to be layers that composite a palimpsest: adding, not replacing.

The process through which a palimpsest is constructed “is one of layering – of erasure and superimposition” (Dillon 52). And yet, the spectre of those other layers persists, thus constructing an archival heterotopia, a multi-faceted composite of faerie spaces. I will examine this palimpsestic process as it unfolds on the first two pages of the first chapter in the Hodder and Stoughton small quarto edition of *Kensington Gardens* (see figure 2). Here, when reading in a linear direction, the first line that is encountered is the caption that reads: “The Kensington Gardens are in London, where the King lives” (Barrie 1). This line paraphrases Barrie’s words which appear on the following page, and is further iterated by the shadowed outline of Rackham’s illustration, detectable beneath the tissue-guard and thus demonstrative of a very literal palimpsest. As palimpsest, “the (spectral) subject can only be the effect of iterability, of a repetition that is never quite the same” (Dillon 37). This is evident in the scene of the King walking in Kensington Gardens, which is iterated and repeated, but never in quite the same way, thus forming a palimpsest: the caption is paraphrased from Barrie’s words, and the illustration is a shift in medium. The effect of the palimpsest is further accentuated by the action of turning the tissue-guard over. In turning the tissue-guard, the reader can perceive the illustration in its entirety while Barrie’s words, in fact all words, are obscured beneath the tissue-guard. The words become spectral. The written word or illustrated image superimposes itself onto the other, enacting the same motion as the closing gates that were referred to earlier. The tissue guard and the gates represent the “virtual point” through which one might trespass into the heterotopic space. In both scenarios, the visual-spatial and narrative-temporal spaces are fissured but, as spectres, they linger; the faerie space is constructed out of composites between textual media, the components of which refuse to be entirely replaced.

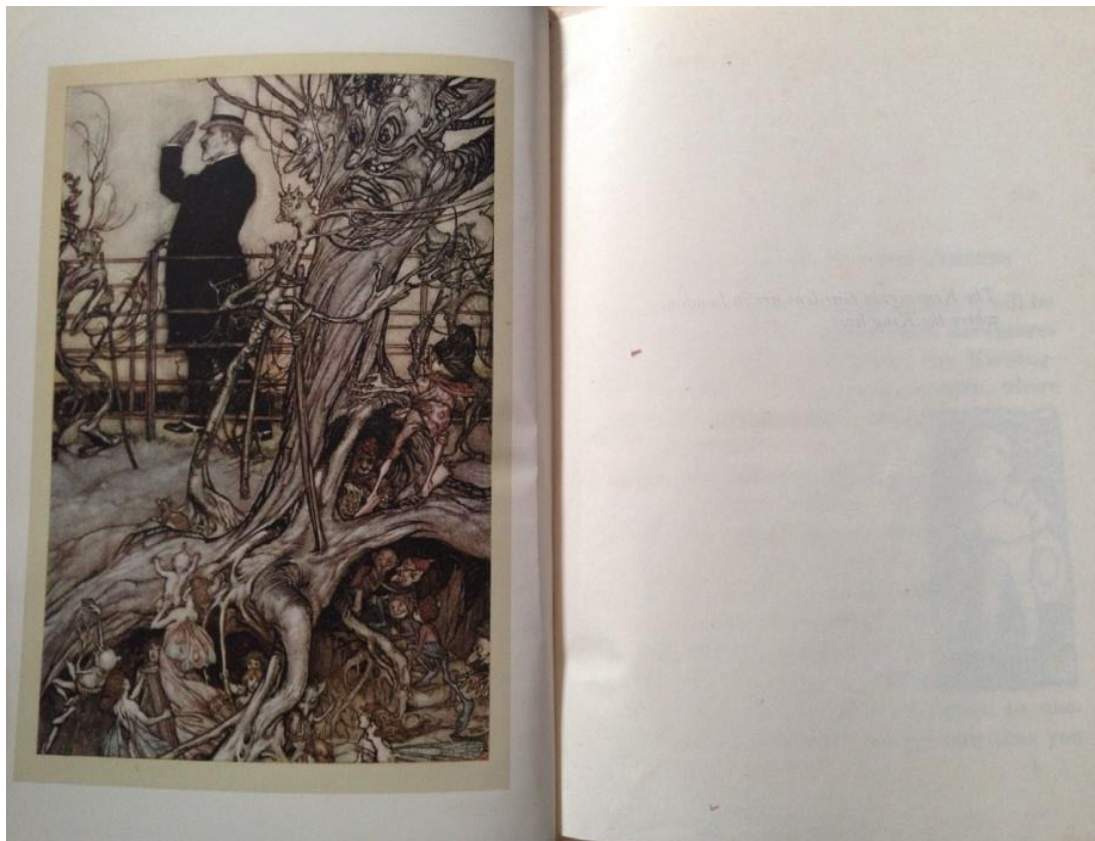
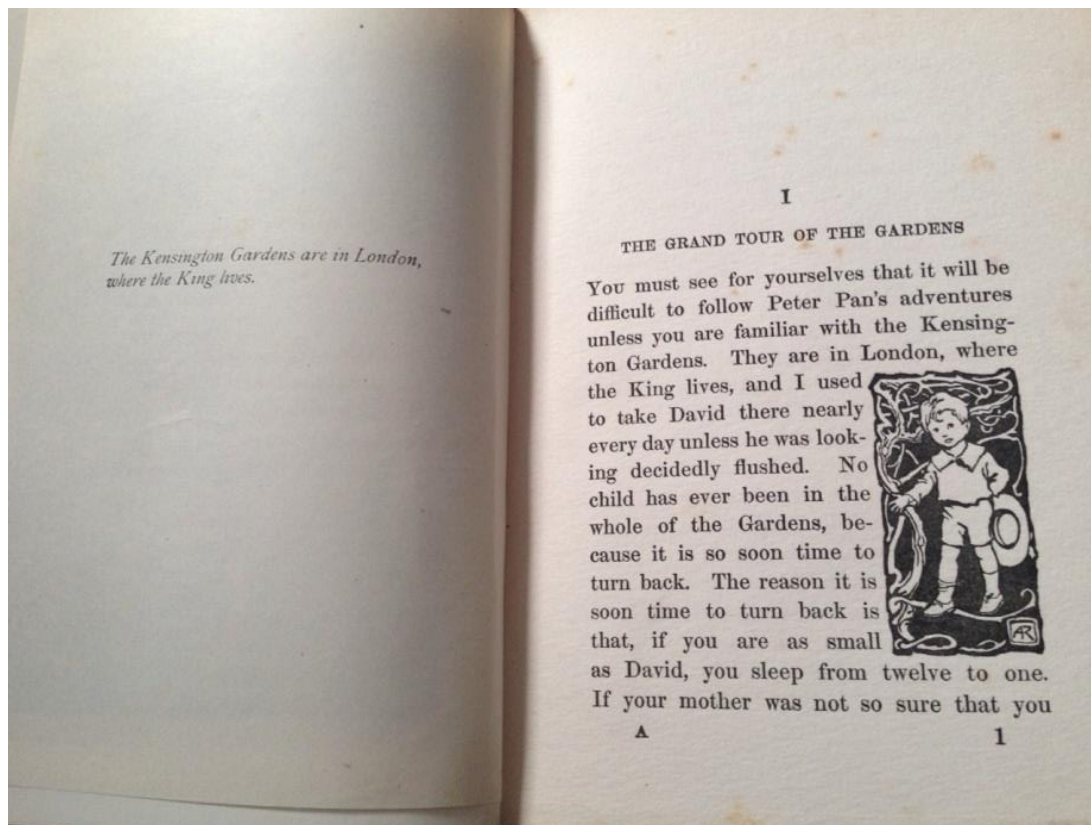


Figure 2. Arthur Rackham. "The Kensington Gardens are in London, where the King Lives". Illustration. Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens. J. M. Barrie. 1.

Cankorous, Cancerous, and Degenerative Faerie Species

To trespass into “the other garden” is a transgressive act, and the space arguably represents a heterotopia, which Foucault classifies as a space of “deviation” (5). In the case of Faerie, this deviant location is populated with the fantastic, abject, and dangerous “Other”: the faerie species. Kristeva qualifies abjection as “a terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it” (4). The faeries that occupy Rackham’s renditions of Faerie are an abject species, far from the world of pink-tutus and magic wands. According to Diane Purkiss, the faerie “has a lovely face, a face of promise, and a hideous face, a face of fear” (4). Purkiss’ exposition on the faerie species correlates to Kristeva’s description of abjection: “a hatred that smiles” lures the unassuming victim into the sinister faerie species, whose danger is pronounced by the very fact that they are deceptive and ambiguous (4). As creatures that appears simultaneously lovely and hideous, faeries are a palimpsestic species.

The palimpsestic (and ambiguous) nature of the faerie species is especially evident in those faeries that recur across a variety of narratives. For example, the “Tooth Fairy”, a prominent character or role is rendered in a multiplicity of ways: the bird-like, sweet-hearted Tooth (Isla Fisher) in DreamWorks’ *The Rise of the Guardians* (2012) is oppositional to the rabid bone and flesh-eating tooth fairies that devour a room full of people in *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* (2008). However, despite the differences, renditions of the “Tooth Fairy” often include semblances that correspond to previous understandings of what constitutes the “Tooth Fairy”, formulating a palimpsestic, spectral character. This can similarly be seen in the various adaptations and characterisations of the hybrid Peter Pan, and also in Rackham’s faerie illustrations.

As has been previously stated, Rackham’s faerie-themed illustrations transgress the boundaries between texts to appear in *Kensington Gardens*, “Goblin Market”, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, to name but a few. The varied textual bodies in which Rackham’s renditions of faerie spaces and species appear results in part of the composite formation of the archival faerie heterotopia that is “the other garden”. This also extends beyond the relationship between written words and illustrated images where, in the “Nutcracker Suite” in Disney’s *Fantasia* (1940), the faeries appear as “Rackham’s fairies after a Maybelline makeover” (Purkiss 306). Rackham’s influence is especially evident when one of the dancing faeries steps delicately onto a spider’s web, poised in a position very similar to Rackham’s illustration that appears in *Kensington Gardens*, entitled “The fairies are exquisite dancers” (see figure 3). These two actions, one illustrated, the other mimetic, reflect one another almost exactly, composing a palimpsest aesthetic. *Fantasia*’s makeover of the faerie space at once collides with, and distinguishes from Rackham’s demure colour tones, in favour of a bright, luminescent and florescent colour scheme. Thus, the faerie space and faerie species of Rackham’s illustrations are spectres, iterated over by the florescence and animation of the mimetic film media that renders the faerie space.



Figure 3. Arthur Rackham. "The fairies are exquisite dancers". Illustration. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. J. M. Barrie. 68.

The florescence of the *Fantasia* faerie space differs from the earthy tones of Rackham's illustrations. In the illustration, "The Kensington Gardens are in London, where the King Lives", the King is separated from Rackham's faeries by a fence, thus dividing the mundane and faerie spaces. The King walks along the path, a constructed space, while the faeries reside in 'the other garden' amid the roots of the tree. The faeries therefore hail from a natural space that we might choose to consider in light of Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding of degradation as that which "means coming down to earth" (21). The faerie species, as composite, is constructed out of a palimpsestic process of "[r]epresentation, reiteration, repetition" (Wolfreys 68). Further still, this (spectral) iteration can be traced to regeneration as par for the course of degradation, which is "to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more", simultaneously constructed and deconstructed as an epitome of "[l]ife out of death" (Bakhtin 21; Rossetti 19). In Bakhtin's terms, this process of degradation is a regenerative and positive process, with a precedent for rebirth, taking place in the space in-between life and death.

However, while Bakhtin views this process as having regenerative potential, this same iterative (and degenerative) process can also be corrupt and abject. In "Goblin Market" Laura falls victim to the goblins' deceit, but recovers from her ordeal and is revived from "[d]eath's door" (Rossetti 12). However, this is one of few exceptions to the rule. The earthy overtones of Bakhtin's positively invested degradation are literally poisoned at their roots as the goblins, a bestial faerie species, offer their "cankorous" fruits (Rossetti 11). This corrupted faerie

space (as it is conceived across the works of Barrie, Rossetti, and Rackham) comes to wholly represent a heterotopia of “deviation” (Foucault 5). The deviant “Other” occupies this space, but as an abject species, their presence and iterations linger inside the palimpsestic reformulations and representations of the faerie space. These spectres (and the goblin’s consumable food) represent a symptomatic “structure within the body, a non-assimilable alien, a monster, a tumor, a cancer” (Kristeva 11). Faerie spaces and species, as constantly appropriated locations and creatures, that simultaneously invade and are invaded, are abject, composite, and cancerous.

These abject faerie creatures are made all the more so for their deceit, characterised by a “hatred that smiles” (Kristeva 4). The degenerative, sinister tumour resides just beneath the surface of the seductive, enchanting smile. In her exploration of Rackham’s seductive and sensual dancing fairies, Leslie Atzmon argues that “[f]emale fairies are animals undercover” (77-8). Atzmon’s identification of the animal characteristics present within the faerie species corresponds to Kristeva’s exposition of the abject as being that which “confronts us... with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*” and “*primal repression*” (12). This interpretation of the abject faerie species is traceable to the theory of degeneration, which develops in light of Darwin’s theory of evolution. As Roger Luckhurst notes, if “[t]he animal... lurk[s] very close to the human”, this opens up the possibility of devolution from human to animal (xx). While the coy and deceitful morals of the seductively dancing female faeries in Rackham’s illustrations might resemble an example of this degeneration, so too does this devolution into the animal, physically embodied by the goblins in Rossetti’s “Goblin Market”: “One had a cat’s face, / One whisked a tail” (3). It is this cancerous threat of infection from the degeneration and devolution embodied by the faerie species that locates these creatures as deviant “Others” that must be removed from society.

The deviant threat of Rackham’s faeries is enclosed in “the other garden” by marked temporal-spatial barriers, by “Lock-out Time” or “Evening by evening” (Barrie 55; Rossetti 2). However, much like the female faeries that Atzmon identifies, the goblins in “Goblin Market” are also undercover. The goblins shield their hatred and terror with abject smiles, corporealised through their seductive and lyrical chant, which begins:

Come buy our orchard fruits,

Come buy, come buy:

Apples and quinces,

Lemons and oranges... (Rossetti 1)

The repetitive rhyme and rhythm entices and seduces both the reader and Laura, offering a cacophony of succulent fruits with “a voice like voice of doves” (Rossetti 3). Typically “victims of the abject are its fascinated victims – if not its submissive and willing ones” (Kristeva 9). Laura explicitly falls into this category, seduced by

their fruit and rhyme, and this seduction on the part of the goblins is a demonstration of how the faerie species is essentially “Janus-faced” (Purkiss 4).

Lizzie’s encounter with the goblins, in a bid to rescue her sister, also serves to emphasise the dangers of the faeries’ seduction. To recall Kristeva’s qualification that abjection can be distinguished as “a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it” (4), the goblin’s acts of seduction towards Lizzie do not inflame, but rather abuse her. In Rackham’s illustration, entitled “White and golden Lizzie stood” (see figure 4), the goblins’ true colours are revealed. One creature blends into the tree bark’s colouring, demonstrating the faeries’ morphic and deformed nature, as well as their affinity with earthiness. Trespassing into this space, Lizzie is subjected to the violence of the goblins that, in turn, violate her body as the corrupted and poisoned fruit is “squeezed... [a]gainst her mouth to make her eat” (Rossetti 15). The violence that is afflicted upon Lizzie also bears implications of sexual assault, as those same fruits that serve to seduce the victim are then forced against her skin and mouth. The violence, captured by both the aesthetically charming rhyme and illustrations in “Goblin Market”, is transmitted through a medium that metaphorically smiles.



Figure 4. Arthur Rackham. “White and golden Lizzie stood”. Illustration. Dinah Roe. “An Introduction to Goblin Market”. British Library.

Haunted Gardens, Rotting Brooks: Spectres, Thresholds, and Tombstones

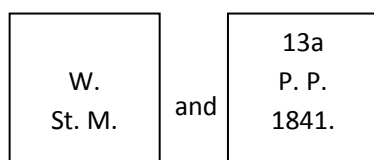
The faerie spaces (“the other garden”) and their inhabitants, presented in the works of Barrie, Rossetti, and Rackham, are palimpsestic. Nicholas Royle argues that “a text is an... impure, open, haunted thing, consisting

of traces and traces of traces” (78). These traces and spectral layers of various textual media form a palimpsest that is “intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other” across each textual rendition (Dillon 4). In this sense, Faerie constitutes the archival space of a heterotopia, which is constructed out of an “assemblage” or a “web” of layers (Derrida, “Difference” 131). The spectre of (re)appropriated spaces and species corresponds to the definition of abject as a “*symptom*” that is cancerous, an alien “structure within the body” (Kristeva 11).

This threat that is represented by the abject qualifies these faerie spaces as “heterotopias of deviation” (Foucault 5). To trespass into this space is to put oneself at risk of infection by the abject tumour. The threshold of the heterotopic location, the “virtual point”, is open only to those who meet certain parameters: “[e]ither entry is compulsory” or “gestures and rites performed” (Foucault 4, 7). In the case of the texts examined in this essay, the threshold into “the other garden” opens up to those individuals who are “Betwixt-and-Between” (Barrie 29). This not only includes the abject faerie species, but also to those who are on the verge of death, in a state of “quasi-eternity” which is, itself, a form of “Betwixt-and-Between” (Foucault 6; Barrie 29).

Trespassing into Kensington Gardens after the gates have closed, or visiting the goblins at the brook, is to be put at threat and/or (literal) infection from the deviant and degenerative faerie species that already reside in these spaces. Despite Laura’s restoration later in “Goblin Market”, she is the exception, and Lizzie remembers “Jeanie in her grave” as but one victim to the goblins’ poisonous fruits (12). Faeries, as I have established, while not necessarily all bad, certainly represent a deviant, and even dangerous “Other”. Even in *Kensington Gardens* we can identify moments where faeries pose a threat to humans.

The *Peter Pan* texts constitute a continually (re)appropriated abject space: a composite of written words and illustration, of different narrative versions, of physical books and performances on stage. These composite layers, evident on a micro level through my examination of the Hodder and Stoughton small quarto edition, construct a heterotopic palimpsest, an “other garden” that is layered and spectral. And yet there remains a spectre that is not layered, but is infused into both the written and visual spaces of *Kensington Gardens*. On Barrie’s map there are labelled two “Tombstones” which also appear within the text as a fusion, as opposed to a fissure (to recall Derrida’s explanation of that which supplementary), between writing and image:



(Barrie 126)

The tombstones, unlike Rackham’s illustrations, which are distinctly separate from the text, are embedded within the body of the text. They are not supplementary, but actually complete the end of the unpunctuated sentence that appears before them, the full stop apparent at the end of the second tombstone.

This final section of *Kensington Gardens* confronts the reader with an oxymoron: these are “the sweetest little tombstones” (Barrie 126). In this instance, the victims were not even seduced by the faeries, as Laura is in “Goblin Market”. Rather, the children die for no other crime than for falling out their prams, accidentally trespassing into “Lock-out Time”. Peter, the “Betwixt-and-Between” is implicated as the one responsible for these deaths as the narrator comments: “I hope that Peter is not too ready with his spade” (126). Faeries and Faerie are abject and dangerous creatures and spaces: “a hatred that smiles” (Kristeva 4). While the goblins sing and Peter plays his games about the gardens, the tombstones represent a stark reminder of the death from which the transgressors, who are but children, cannot be restored or revived. In Foucault’s analogy, the cemetery represents “the other city”, or “the other garden”, a heterotopic space, a synchronous, liminal time-space that exists as a realm of spectres. And it would appear that the abject faerie species are all too happy to further populate this already haunted, palimpsestic space with the spectres of those who trespass past their borders.

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“Strange Ceremonies”: Creating Imaginative Spaces in Bizarre Magick

NIK TAYLOR

The guests are seated in the study ... The Mage explains that one of the most powerful of the Old Gods is Pan, the Guardian of the Woodlands. “If one is fortunate, the Horned One will grant their innermost wishes. However, if one’s presence offends him in any way, only the most hideous and frightful fate will befall them.” (*The Great God Pan* 20)

The above is an excerpt from *The Great God Pan* written by Tony Raven in 1974 and further revised in 1982. It is a performance magic piece designed to shift the imaginations of the guests out of the magician’s study, where the piece is set, and (re)locate the imaginative experience within fictional realms of fantasy and horror. For the duration of the performance, the imaginative space inhabited by the guests is ambiguous in that it is neither real nor unreal but rather a boundary space where real magic may exist. This article discusses how performance magicians experiment with a creative form known as Bizarre Magick, which, by borrowing from themes within popular fiction, allows them to take their audience on an experiential journey through fictional, fantastic and magical landscapes. The article will examine a threefold relocation through the practice of Bizarre Magick; the physical re-embodiment of the performance space, the relocation of the audience’s awareness into places where the distinctions between fact and fiction are blurred, the shift from the performance of a stage magician to the idea that the practitioner is a genuine mage, demonstrating real magic. In order to illustrate these relocations this article will examine four Bizarre Magick effects.¹ The first two examples illustrate the audience’s relocation into this ambiguous space through an involvement with a heightened piece of experiential theatre, and the final two demonstrate the relocation of fantastic fiction into previously mundane spaces that through the power of the magician/Mage apparently become charged with meaning.

First, I want to place Bizarre Magick within the context of performance magic practice. Today an audience may be familiar with the tropes of performance magic found on television, at children’s parties, at weddings, or in live venues. They may be aware of popular television magicians such as Dynamo, Derren Brown, David Copperfield, Kris Angel, Paul Daniels, Doug Henning or even David Nixon. However, this belies the existence of a wider “magic assemblage” where we can identify performance magic as a far more complex performance form with many sub-genres (During 66). Some of which are more visible and popular than others. Close-up, big box illusions, mentalism, and con-games are forms with which the reader may be familiar. Lesser-known forms from within the magic assemblage are those that blur the edges between the real and the unreal experience of magic, and Bizarre Magick is such a form.

Bizarre Magick was, and still is, an underground form of performance magic. Practitioners such as Tony Raven, Tony Andruzzi and Doc Shiels initially pioneered the practice in the 1970s. Shiels believing that Bizarre Magick should “authentically scare people” and practitioners of the form used storytelling, intricate props and often complex hidden methods in order to achieve these scares in their performances (Shiels, *Bizarre* 20). Performers drew heavily from the fictionalised histories of science fiction, horror and the supernatural to create site-specific “strange ceremonies” locating Fantastika in everyday physical locations through the creation of a charged sense of space where illusion was played as real.² Raven and Shiels coined the name “Bizarre Magick” in the inaugural issue of the *Invocation* in July 1974. However, experiments in this form occur much earlier, which I shall refer to as the proto-bizarre. According to Stephen Minch, the genre rose “... wraithlike from the sod of two specialised schools of magic: pseudo spiritism and mentalism” (Minch, “A Vivisection of the Bizarre” 58). The form grew and *Invocation* magazine 1974-78 and *New Invocation* 1979-1996 became the hub for Bizarre Magick practice in printed form and this generated a large volume of material for the Bizarrist to explore.

In 1985 the magazine announced that “a magician's credibility is in direct inverse ratio to the number of sequins on his suit” (Andruzzi 342). Hence, Bizarre Magick established itself as a performance practice finding impetus in a rebellion against established or traditional practices of conjuring by relocating performance magic into a darker occult, and apparently more realistic, magic(k)al tradition. This new work was reframed as serious occult study and typical props such as playing cards, jewelled boxes, and stencilled images of rabbits in hats were discarded. While the genre of Bizarre Magick is just as prop heavy as the practice it rebels against, the ritual paraphernalia it uses originates from pagan, voodoo and other magick practices, rather than in the glitz and glamour of traditional stage magic. This ensures that the work retains an inherent dark theatricality. It offers new stories and new narratives that characteristically evoke darker times, hidden histories and Gothic landscapes, and draws heavily from popular fiction and cinematic tropes. Eugene Burger argues that, at its height, the concerns and interests of the Bizarrists were the creation of weird and bizarre magical effects; stories and other forms of presentational motivation; the provocation of audience responses other than laughter and applause; exotic props; the creation of atmosphere and mood; a willingness to appear to “lose control” of powerful magic energies; the exploration and generation of a sense of mystery; and an interest in exploring performance styles that raise the question, “Is this real?” in the minds of the audience (Burger 96; Burger and Neale 9). Furthering a move away from traditional performance magic, it was common practice within the bizarre movement that the magician was rarely called a *magician* at all, and the audience was rarely called an *audience*. Terms such as *guests* or *participants* were more usual; with a *Mystery-Entertainer*, *Paranormal-Entertainer* or *Mage* guiding them through their experience.

At its heart, there is a blurred relationship between the real and unreal embodied in this performance practice. In its purest form, many practitioners of the bizarre appear to perform their magic pieces as real, often choosing to remove any suggestion of trickery within their practice. In so doing, they borrow freely from Gothic, goetic, pagan, spiritualism, psychic sources and popular fiction (Taylor and Nolan 131). Practitioners often favour

grisly effects based on, for example, the stories of writers such as M R James and H.P. Lovecraft. The work becomes interplay between the serious and playful. This is a performance form that aligns closely with Mangan's notion of magic triggering the "grown-up" sensation of the uncanny (Mangan 94). Ultimately, *Bizarrists* reimagined their performance practice and sought to discover a new darker mode (Taylor, "Impersonating Spirits" 164).

In the darker mode of Bizarre Magick, the magician performs a balancing act between the real and the imaginary by aligning the role of magician more closely to an occult practitioner. Practitioners of Bizarre Magick locate their work in a region between the real and the imaginary, the received truth and the actual truth. The performer becomes a magician whose power is derived from "secret, and conventionally rejected knowledge" (Burger 35). However, commentators on this mode of performance, such as Tony Raven, warn those who draw inspiration from works of popular fiction against playing corny characters from bad horror movies. Raven advises practitioners to take things seriously, and, at the very least, play the role of the dabbler or of an interested party demonstrating what they may, or may not, know (Raven, "An Analysis of the Presentation of Bizarre Magick" 290). This leads to a performance mode that Tony Andruzzi later calls "the Van Helsing Approach" (Magus 17). According to Burger, Van Helsing is portrayed as "one who may, or may not, know what he is doing! Van Helsing here leads us into areas that perhaps he can't handle, that he perhaps cannot control. We are led to the *edge* of credibility" (Burger 35, emphasis in original). Practitioners of the Bizarre attempt to fully exploit the relationship between the real and unreal by pushing the towards to the edge of credibility as far as possible. This is emphasised by Tony Shiels, who argues for a carefully mediated performance practice based on both established fictions and real magic(k). He argues that a bizarre magician can steal plots from films and books, but should also be familiar with "dusty grimoires and books of shadows, with the learned tomes of occult philosophy" becoming "a force to be reckoned with" (Shiels, *Bizarre* 41). Thus, practitioners work towards making the fictions evoked in the performance feel real in the minds of the audience.

To illustrate the experiential nature of this movement, I will next examine two effects that bracket the genre of Bizarre Magick. The first effect *The Fairy Goblet* (Smith and Lyons) is an important pre-cursor to the Bizarre Magick movement and a truly experiential piece. Similarly, although published much later, *Hunting Mammoths in the Rain* (Strange 3–13) takes the participants on an experiential journey back to primal shamanism and apparently into "real" magic.

The Fairy Goblet by Lew Smith and L.V. Lyons (1941) relies on the careful construction of a ritually charged atmosphere to create a seemingly real experience within the minds of the audience. Based partly on the real Luck of Eden Hall (now in the V&A), a Fairy Goblet is seen glittering and glowing during a candlelit ritual in a "weird and uncanny manner" (Smith and Lyons 761). The performer invites the guests to form a circle and take part in an unusual experiment that is neither "... auto suggestion, telepathy, nor spiritualism, but something which, as we proceed, you will realize as being far beyond your imagination" (Smith and Lyons 761). The goblet is then solemnly introduced:

It is said that the wishes of the fairy queen are: that the past shall not be forgotten, and therefore at the proper time by the wave of a magic wand Queen Titania will bring back to the memory of whomsoever is looking into the goblet, some memory of a past and forgotten event which never again will be forgotten (Smith and Lyons 762).

A traditional verse is recited and the ritual begins; each guest is invited to step forward and, by interacting with the goblet, experience a deeply personal vision of a past memory or emotion. After the ritual has been drawn to a close, the performer offers a chance for a guest to share their recovered memory with the rest of the group. The performer becomes a facilitator sharing a magical gift with the guests, allowing them to take part in a piece of powerful experiential magic designed to evoke strong personal emotions. As way of a warning, the editor of the *Jinx* (where the routine first appeared), Theodore Annemann, adds his own footnote to the work, urging the reader not to be tempted to devalue the experience by adding recognisable performance magic tropes, stating “if you can't finish with something of a truly mysterious and oddly accomplished miraculous nature please forget the whole thing and throw these pages away” (Annemann 762–763).

Sixty years later, mystery performer Caleb Strange published *Hunting Mammoths in the Rain* (2005) where a group of participants, after a day exploring an ancient ceremonial landscape “rich in stones and stories and strangeness”, suddenly find themselves involved in a dark primal ritual (Strange 3). The participants are led to a space surrounded by ancient stones bearing megalithic cup and ring marks. They suddenly find themselves accompanied by drumming and dancers, and surrounded by a circle of fire. This ritual theatrical happening continues through the twilight and into the night where the participants witness the ancient lines carved on the rocks that surround them “twist”, “curl” and “swirl” (Strange 6). This hypnogogic experience signals the beginning of an intense trance-like journey for one of the participants. The performer, again acting as a facilitator, uses the “ragbag” of a “modern Siberian shaman” to induce visions in the participant in an attempt to reveal; “pre-historic memories – tribal experiences lost in the ancient centre of the brain” (Strange 5). During their vision, the participant acts as a conduit with their consciousness apparently falling back in time and able to share with the group a tangible feeling of “the rich, stinking earth”, “the shaking ground”, and the primal hunt itself. The final section captures the intensity of the experience: “then quietly you ask, ‘What did you remember? What was your memory?’ [the participant] looks at you, with eyes moist but bright, and whispers, ‘I was hunting mammoths in the rain’” (Strange 8).

These two examples bracket the genre of Bizarre Magick from proto-bizarre to the modern bizarre, and, as I suggest above, there is a rich and deep continuum of this type of work from its early incarnation in the 1940s to the present day. The key to the experiential nature of these effects is the relocation of the imaginative space from the mundane to a place where apparently real magic can happen. Within the genre as a whole, there is a playfulness in the Bizzarist’s use of relocation, taking non-traditional theatrical spaces, using themes from popular fantastic fiction, and making them, at least for the duration of the performance, a tangible experience. By relocating the audience into a space that is both real and unreal, Bizarre Magick moves performance magic away

from its physical home in conventional performance spaces and removes the labels and the obvious signifiers of the traditional magician. While it relocates the practice into the seemingly mundane reality of the living room or the library, the very act of magic causes these spaces to apparently become charged with meaning based on popular fictional narratives. As a consequence, performance magic relocates itself through the act of storytelling and (re)emphasises the need for a character other than the traditional magician with which to tell the story. The following two examples play with both the idea of the magician and the creation of the fictive world they and the audience inhabit for the duration of the performance.

The Great God Pan by Tony Raven is based on Machen's *Great God Pan* (1864) and *The White People* (1909/22). The piece begins with the "guests" sitting around a table in the Mage's study. The table is laden with ancient tomes of the black arts and curios of the occult. On the table is a brass plaque bearing an inscribed pentagram and at each point of the symbol there is a small candle in a brass holder. The Mage opens the piece with a warning that if, after summoning the Great God Pan, anyone's presence offends him in any way, only the most "hideous and frightful fate will befall them" (91). However, the Mage promises to try to mitigate the possibility of this happening by introducing an effigy of the "summoner" into the ritual. The Mage explains that if Pan is offended in any way he will wreak his wrath upon the effigy (a wax figurine of a nude woman) and not upon any soul in the circle. The effigy is set within the pentagram, the candles are lit, and the remaining light in the room extinguished. The flickering flames cast weird shadows around the circle and play upon the Mage's face as he stands at the head of the table and speaks:

Please be cautioned that the ritual we are about to begin offers no danger to you, the beholders, so long as you remain silent and do not move from where you are sitting. Remember, no matter what happens, do not utter a sound or move from your place for fear of your mortal soul! (21)

From an ancient *Book of Shadows* a chant is intoned. The chant itself is the infamous *Eko Eko Azarak* chant that appears in Gardener's occult novel *High Magic's Aid* (1949) and, according to the Raven's script, the chant is repeated five times, with the Mage extinguishing a candle at the end of each repetition, until the room is in total darkness. Thirty seconds of silence follows and then, as if from a great distance, the faint sounds of the Pipes of Pan can be heard. The sounds become gradually louder as if the god is approaching and then the music suddenly stops. Within the space there is total silence broken only by the breathing of the guests in the circle. The guests suddenly become aware of the scent of a forest that fills the room and seemingly out of nowhere there comes a loud crash, the table shakes and there is an ear-piercing scream followed by a deadly silence. The Mage calls for the lights to be put back on and there at a table, in the centre of the pentagram, is the wax figure broken into pieces. To all it appears as if something of great power had struck it down. It becomes apparent that Pan was "offended" in some way and unleashed his wrath on the offender, in this case the wax effigy. The performance piece ends with the Mage making it clear how lucky the sitters were not to be subjected to the wrath of The Great God Pan.

The second example *The Stigmata of Cthulhu* by Stephen Minch places the magic in the fictional universe of weird fiction writer H.P. Lovecraft. The performer takes the role of a “Sorcerer” who ushers his “initiates” (the audience) into a dim library “where amongst the ancient tomes of sundry and eldritch lore, queer and bestial countenances and unwholesome forms brood from niches and crannies with the shifting shadows of the place” (13). The initiates are seated round a table in the middle of the room and the only light comes from a single candle in the centre. The sorcerer takes his place at the head of the table, the incense is set smouldering and the ritual and purpose of the gathering is explained:

We are gathered here this evening to call up to our plane one of the Old Ones Dread ruler of the seas and oceans CTHULHU from his slumber in the sunken ruins of R’lyeh. I will ask you all to remain quiet and still as I summon mighty Cthulhu and prepare the way. Any disturbance made during the ritual will close the gates and doom our purpose (13).

The sorcerer begins the ritual, a ceremonial dagger is taken up and a Tetragrammaton traced in the air above the table. The sorcerer then lays down the dagger in the centre of the Tetragrammaton and takes a piece of parchment and a pen. He draws upon it The “Mark of Cthulhu”, which consists of two concentric circles with three spikes or horns on the outermost circumference. The sorcerer then holds the marks before him and chants “some heathen spell” in which can be discerned the words “Cthulhu” and “R’lyeh”: “*Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn*”. As with *The Great God Pan* this chant is taken directly from extant fiction, in this case from Lovecraft’s “The Call of Cthulhu” (Lovecraft 140).

As the sorcerer chants, each repetition becomes more powerful and the guests hear the slow sound of water and bubbles rising. The sounds become louder and louder and suddenly a female member of the audience collapses to the table, and the parchment with the mark of Cthulhu written upon it catches fire and vanishes. Instantly the water sounds fade away and the sorcerer makes it clear to all assembled that the ritual has been disturbed and the gates have closed between the sorcerer and the great Cthulhu. However, Cthulhu was with them for just a few moments before the gate shut. Minch notes “for each and every member of the group has the MARK OF CTHULHU upon him! The marks are found on hands, arms, shoulders, necks, foreheads, feet, and (?) These are the STIGMATA OF CTHULHU!” (15). The structure of the piece with the Mage apparently losing control of the ritual aligns closely to the *Van Helsing Effect* described earlier. In addition the ending is intensely theatrical, with the panic at its conclusion chiming with the sideshow tradition of the “blow off” where a final scare moves the audience out of the space still accompanied by the lasting memory of experiencing an alternate reality (Nickell 76).

These two examples represent the glory days of the Bizarre, a period characterised by experimentation and complex production values which allows for an increasingly complex interaction with the spaces in which the work is performed. It is this complexity that has since led to a concern amongst practitioners that the sheer amount of material being published moves Bizarre Magick towards becoming a “literary exercise” rather than a

“practicable theatrical movement” (Minch, “A Vivisection of the Bizarre” 60). Creators of Bizarre Magick attempted to draw from more fictional landscapes and in turn gave less thought to the theatrical possibilities of the Mage character and the practical workability of the effects in performance. Many published pieces were seen as un-performable, resembling fan fiction rather than attempts to further experiential work. Practitioner Max Maven, in his introduction to the collected *New Invocation (Volume 2)* in 1986, states “in this compilation of the first thirty-six issues you will find a wide range of material – Most of it is crap” (i). I believe Maven intends fond humour here, even if a large amount of Bizarre Magick writing moved towards the literary rather than the performable there are many examples of Bizarre Magic effects that successfully “gave back to magicians their identity”. They also significantly allowed performers experiment with magic set in the realm of Fantastika and thus to (re)imagine performance magic as “real” magic (Minch, “A Vivisection of the Bizarre” 61). In order to move the audience successfully into this imaginative space it is the reframed character of the magician as Mage who must attempt to move themselves and the audience seamlessly between the worlds of the real and the unreal. This is, of course, is likely to occur to different degrees, the extent of which is usually signified by the degree and frequency of movement between these worlds. To illustrate this, I will now explore further the role of the traditional magician alongside that of the Bizarrist.

For the traditional magician, the movement between the real and the unreal is a regular pattern and often embedded into the form itself. Magician and theorist Robert Neale calls this pacing “monkey movement” (217). To illustrate this Neale draws on the traditional Japanese image of a monkey swinging from a branch that hangs over a lake. The monkey is looking down at a reflection of the moon in the water and so sees the illusion of the real moon shimmering just below the surface (the unreal). Then, when the monkey reaches for the reflected “moon” he disturbs the surface of the water. The illusion is dispelled (the real) at least until the water is still and once again the monkey looks down at the moon’s reflection and enjoys the illusion. For Neale, the experience of performance magic is this playful movement between illusion and disillusion. The work of a traditional magician, who may play the trickster, often adopts this role by presenting magic (real) but ultimately framing the performed magic as tricks (unreal). This is an accepted trope of the performance magician, and something against which that the early Bizarrists fought. This is not to deride the traditional magician, but theatrically in the context of the Bizarre it is not very challenging. It is trickster magic, something Hass refers to as “reversal and disruption” (Hass, “Life Magic and Staged Magic” 22).

In comparison to the above, both *The Great God Pan* and *The Stigmata of Cthulhu* raise the theatrical stakes as, at the moment of performance, the participants are offered a gateway into the unreal and this experience is not reversed. Here magic's performative intention is deliberately blurred, inducing something Hass terms “visceral cognitive disturbance” and it is this that allows the performer to enable the audience to awaken “another realm of experience; the magical dimension that lies behind and beyond all experience” (Hass, “Magic & Theatre, Part 1” 21; Burger and Neale 24).

The figure of the Mage is intrinsically important to this end, protecting the guests from unearthly wrath, bringing dark forces under control and making all present safe. Many effects in Bizarre Magick explore the notion of the magician as a protector located within a circle cast and secured by a pentagram or some other magical object. The act of magic becomes a process that has been born out of learned study and not the endless practice of sleight of hand or trickery. Thus, the Bizarrist moves further away from the established view of the magician. Early Bizarrists and indeed proto-Bizarrists recognised this distinction, for example, Steven Fabian's image of the magician/Mage was highlighted by *Invocation Magazine*, here the magician is seen as a skilled practitioner of ritual, able to command elemental forces and summon demons, and many of the key Bizarre Magick effects of the time appeared to achieve this very thing. This image was so popular that Fabian's illustration graced the cover from Issue 5 (July 1975) for over four years until the publication became the *New Invocation* in October 1979.

Bizarre Magick as a performance form continues today, occasionally in the pure form discussed in this article, or in areas across the wider field of performance magic where its techniques are applied. This experiential relocation is used outside of performance magic and across other forms of fringe entertainments such as mediumship, spiritualism, storytelling, fortune-telling, the new age movement, hoax and LARP. The techniques of the Bizarre Magician can be employed within a performance space wherever the intention is that unreal themes, particularly those exhibited, in popular fiction become relocated in reality. As a practitioner of Bizarre Magick, I have found it useful when devising work of this kind to refer to Mangan (2007) who, in turn, is drawing on Rosemary Jackson's definition of the Fantastic (1981) by borrowing from the science of optics to identify the "paraxial region" as a useful metaphor for the "imaginative space in which the [...] performance of magic takes place" (Mangan 56). For Jackson this "imaginary world is neither entirely 'real' (object), nor entirely 'unreal' (image) but is located somewhere indeterminately between the two" (Jackson 19). Mangan extends this notion in his discussion of early modern magic in the 17th Century by describing it as "multifocal" and "able to contain paradoxes and contradictions" (57). My own rehearsal notes remind me "clouds [can] both make rain and be dragons" ("Out of Tricks" 98). I feel that Bizarre Magick as a performance practice can be just as "creative and playful" as Mangan suggests the experience of performance magic was in the 17th century (56–57).

Through a performance practice that plays with the boundary between the real and imaginative space, Bizarre Magick plays this as paraxial, that is both real and unreal, allowing practitioners to re-enchant performance magic and to re-discover an experiential theatricality based on material derived from unreal and fictive landscapes and locations. Within this space, the candle, the idol, the dagger and the smouldering incense are all charged with meaning that when combined with a strange ceremony can re-locate performance magic out of theatrical (or non-theatrical) spaces and transform them into charged magic(k)al spaces where fictions appear to become reality. In Bizarre Magick the magician/mystery-entertainer/facilitator/Mage places themselves in a performative grey area that blurs the distinction between the magician as actor, and magician as Mage. This means, according to Doc Shiels, that the performer does not simply appear as an actor playing the part of a magician, but rather "an awesomely and demonstrably *real* cantrip-casting magician!" (*Cantrip Codex* 19,

emphasis in original). The ultimate aim for Bizarrists is to challenge “the spectator's sense of reality”, testing “the spectator's perceptions against the cognitive structures which allow those perceptions to make sense” (Mangan xv). Hence, Bizarrists work with story-telling, hauntings, the Gothic, Fantastika, and popular perceptions of the supernatural strive to facilitate an atmosphere where all traditional magical tropes are absent and through a guided process, re-locate participants into a space where fictions become real and strange ceremonies may occur.

Notes

- 1 “Effect” is a term used by magicians to describe a trick, or performance piece.
- 2 I borrow the term “Strange Ceremonies” from the title of Eugene Burger’s examination of early bizarre *Strange Ceremonies* (1991).

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**“The Kind of Woman Who Talked to Basilisks”:
Travelling Light Through Naomi Mitchison’s Landscape of the
Imaginary**

NICK HUBBLE

Naomi Mitchison (1897-1999) was a prolific author, poet and essayist, active across most of the Twentieth Century. Following my introduction, I will outline in the first half of this essay how Mitchison made repeated attempts during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s to write fiction that supported the expression of an unconstrained female agency. In the second half, I will argue that this struggle culminated successfully with the creation of a space outside the patriarchal order in her 1952 fantasy novella, *Travel Light*. This was originally published by Faber and Faber but has been subsequently reprinted in a variety of editions including one from the feminist publishing house, Virago, in 1985. The novella is the story of Halla, a princess who is abandoned at birth to grow up with bears and dragons in the northern country of Finmark before eventually following the advice of Odin the Allfather to “travel light” (57). Her journeys take her, via Kiev, all the way to Micklegard (the Viking name for Constantinople) where she has various adventures involving talking animals and corrupt priests. While there she falls in with a man called Tarkan Der from Marob, a country bordering the Black Sea. Together they travel north again, back past Kiev, and then on with other men towards Holmgard (the Viking name for Novgorod). As they go, Tarkan Der becomes more interested in talking to the men than Halla, who gets scolded and lags behind talking to mythological creatures: “When she told Tarkan Der about the basilisk, he was worried, almost angry with her. It was as though he did not want her to be the kind of woman who talked to basilisks” (127). In fact, he wants her to be the kind of woman who is married to him and lives in a small house waiting for him to come home but Halla thinks, “No one can travel light with a house on their back, not even a snail” (129). The story does not end with Halla and Tarkan Der marrying and living happily ever after. Instead it twists, ending after the expected resolution, in a manner that I will argue makes clear it is intended as an alternative version of the Oedipus story.

In January 2014, the writer, poet and critic, Amal El-Mohtar, wrote about *Travel Light* for the “you must read this” section of the NPR website, in which writers recommend their all-time favourite books. El-Mohtar actually begins her column by telling us about falling in love at age seven with J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* (1937) and how she made up her own adventures in Mirkwood with Gandalf, Beorn and the Elves. After reading everything she could find by, and about, Tolkien she decided she would also be a writer: “In many ways I can trace much of my life’s trajectory to that encounter with a single book at a delicate age” (np). However, it is precisely this understanding of how a book can guide someone towards being “one self rather than another” (np) that informs her recommendation of *Travel Light*:

I say this because almost 20 years later — sitting on my bed in a cold, damp room in Cornwall, floundering toward the end of a second graduate degree — I read Naomi Mitchison’s *Travel Light*, and suddenly felt as if I were seeing my life thus far from a great height. I felt, very powerfully, that I had been waiting for it, and that it was telling me the story of the person I might have been had I read it when I was a child. (np)

El-Mohtar explains the delight of reading a fable-like story that resists conventional structures or didactic moralising and thereby allows the protagonist to remain “always and utterly herself” (np). She was surprised and delighted to find out that there were good reasons to think of *Travel Light* and *The Hobbit* as two sides of her “heart’s coin” because Mitchison and Tolkien had been friends. Mitchison read the volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-5) in proof and supplied the wonderful and enigmatic quote that the novel was “super science fiction”, which was to grace the inside leaf of the dustjacket of the hardback editions for years to come. They corresponded about dragons in 1949, Tolkien writing to her that “Fáfnir in the late Norse versions of the Sigurd-story is better” (Carpenter and Tolkien 134) than the one in the Beowulf story and was an influence on his depiction of Smaug in *The Hobbit*. This relative classification is reflected in *Travel Light* when Halla and the overtly-Norse dragon, Uggi, are “visited by the Grendel family, curious-shaped and rather watery folk” who are still indignant about the treatment of their grandmother and uncle at the hands of Beowulf “all because they had punctually taken their tribute – and no more – from the hall of the King of Denmark” (26). Earlier, Mitchison informs us that Fáfnir has been brutally murdered in cold blood by a young man named Siegfried, “who, however, came to no good end himself” (21). It is clear from such gently irreverent reference to mythic lore that Mitchison and Tolkien shared a sense of humour and an understanding that such archetypal stories could be subverted.

El-Mohtar was also surprised to find out that *Travel Light* was not a one-off achievement and that Mitchison, in the course of a long and active life, had written over 90 works of science fiction, historical fiction, nonfiction and poetry and yet not only was she unknown within the canon of genre fiction, “but in the course of three English degrees — almost 10 years of studying literature — I had never even heard of her” (np). In fact, not only was Mitchison a prolific writer, she was also at the centre of many of the key literary circles and networks of Twentieth-Century Britain, being friends with, variously, Aldous Huxley, Wyndham Lewis, Stevie Smith, Storm Jameson, W.H. Auden, Walter Greenwood, Stella Bowen and Olaf Stapledon (see Hubble 76). Her relative invisibility until recently (outside Scottish literary criticism) serves to demonstrate the hitherto conservative, and predominantly masculine, focus of the Modernist canon.

El-Mohtar speculates on what kind of paths she could have been led down if she had read *Travel Light* at the age of seven instead of *The Hobbit* and whether that seven-year-old girl still remained inside her “waiting to be beckoned onto a path of luggage-less travel, of dragons and Valkyries, languages and air” (np). Implicit to her article is the idea that greater exposure to a larger array of women’s writing, and the alternative pathways it offers, both in subject and style, may have supported her own writing and interests in a more symbiotic nature

than a conservative masculine canon. However, as I will argue below, Mitchison's achievement in writing *Travel Light* was, in itself, the result of a long and protracted struggle to find a space in which to live and write outside of the patriarchal order.

Born into the Haldane family, whose lineage extended back through eight centuries of Scottish history, Mitchison grew up at the centre of British political, intellectual and scientific life. Her father was the scientist J. S. Haldane and her brother, J. B. S. (Jack) Haldane, would go on to become a leading geneticist and Britain's premier Communist public intellectual. As Jill Benton notes: "For much of her childhood, Naomi was raised with boys and educated to think, behave and compete like a boy herself" (11). This period came to an end when Mitchison was twelve, after which she was taught at home by various governesses. On the one hand, the fact the family lived in Oxford and were connected to the intellectual elite meant that she still gained an unusually good education for someone of her gender at that time. On the other hand, because this classical education was not intended for someone of her gender but for the sons of the ruling class, it caused issues for Mitchison. Having grown up with no alternative but to participate in the world of her male peers, it is unsurprising that she sought to incorporate her own consciousness within the typically masculine classical settings of her novels. The inevitable distortion of the classical model that resulted from this is often disturbingly melodramatic. For example, in her first novel, *The Conquered* (1923), both male and female viewpoints are fused by having her female protagonist commit suicide in her brother's arms:

Fiommar drew her knife, Meromic caught her to him with his left arm, sobbing, "Don't, don't!" She pulled his head down on her to breast and held tight, stroking his hair and singing ...

Meromic, with his eyes shut, warm against his sister's soft heart-beating, felt her suddenly quiver all over; he looked up; she smiled at him with all the colour ebbing out of her cheeks; her hands fluttered for a moment over his face; she fell on her side (79-80)

Henceforth in the novel, Meromic doubles as the "female" point of identification in the text; sexually attracted to other men and unable to choose between his loyalty to Gaul and his individual love for a Roman Centurion. In theory, this gendered manoeuvre enabled Mitchison to challenge the patriarchy inherent to the classical tradition that still heavily underpinned the values of the society she was living in. In practice, however, her fictional experiment demonstrated that even when female consciousness was given the advantage of a male body, it still remained caught between social dilemmas that could not be resolved within the limitations of individual subjectivity. At the end of the novel, Mitchison is only able to generate a resolution by having Meromic magically transformed into a wolf: thereby returned to a state of nature and freed from social constraints.

In her substantial novel of 1931, *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* (also reissued by Virago in the 1980s) Mitchison managed to create a fictional woman who challenged the patriarchy around her: the witch, Erif Der ("red fire" backwards), who represents for the Corn King, Tarrik, an alternative way of life to both the traditional village culture of their native Marob and the philosophical detachment of the stoic philosopher,

Sphaeros. The novel is also about the utopian aspirations of the Spartan King, Kleomenes, and amongst these competing narrative strands, Erif Der is often sidelined and powerless despite her obvious strength as a character. In Mitchison's next major novel, *We Have Been Warned* (1935), she turned to contemporary Britain, in which she explored feminist preoccupations including birth control and rape, against the backdrop of rising fascist agitation. The narrative is even more complex than that of *The Corn King and the Spring Queen*, with the consequence that Mitchison again employs the device of witchcraft. However, what is permissible in the ancient world is rather more controversial in a contemporary setting; especially when combined with sex and politics. The book was rejected by a number of publishers and eventually only released in a censored form. Unlike *Travel Light* and *The Corn King and the Spring Queen*, Virago did not reissue the novel even though Mitchison wanted it to be (see Murray x). In fact, even the back-cover blurb of the recent reissue of *We Have Been Warned* in the Naomi Mitchison Library describes it as "over-written, hectic and unbalanced ... poor". This suggests that the novel's combination of revolutionary socialist politics, women's sexuality and fantasy was not so much ahead of its time, as an expression of such radical alterity that it still remains unassimilable by mainstream culture to this day. The vehemence of the contemporary response to the novel so frustrated Mitchison that she temporarily abandoned her attempt to write a space for women's agency and turned instead to a philosophical undertaking.

In *The Moral Basis of Politics* (1938), Mitchison sets aside the question of gender in order to work through the implications of her own class position from first principles. This book accounts for her transition from someone with "a strong bias in favour of existing or *almost* existing (for we hoped for amelioration on a number of specific points) social forms" (vii) to someone who can look back and criticise her former attitude to the General Strike with an extended dialogic discussion of how to live and what constitutes goodness and right relationships between people (240). She accounts for her own conversion and such forms of political conversion in general, by referring to the historical examples of the political murders of Joan of Arc and Thomas à Beckett. The acceptance by both of these two of their martyrdom triggered observers into recognising their own complicity in the murder and thus caused them to repent and change their ways. Mitchison develops her argument by suggesting that: "[t]he same thing happens when we watch tragedies on the stage – *Hamlet* or *Oedipus*. We are the audience and we insist on the carrying out of the tragedy" (114). She concludes that in order to transform the unsatisfactory social relations of the contemporary world it is necessary to look upon them as a form of tragedy in which the audience must first acknowledge their complicity before undergoing a process of catharsis and change of heart. It is clear how this idea might appeal to one of her class background because it offered a purpose and potential leadership role for someone prepared to take on the role of the tragic king:

It may be that leaders and led should always have this "tragic drama" relation between them: that no leader should be tolerable to the led unless he or she has made the act of acceptance, has experienced the change of focus ("rebirth") and is prepared if necessary to be the sacrifice. (288)

From Mitchison's perspective, this relationship seemed to provide the natural way forward from hierarchical societies, in which the notions of cultural and moral value are patterned on the interests of the propertied few in

power, toward non-hierarchical societies in which values are orientated towards universal happiness and a Kantian notion of the “Kingdom of Ends” (60), in which people are never regarded as means to an end but only as ends in themselves.

Difficulties arise for Mitchison in the gap between her concept of happiness and her concept of transcendental good. Her concept of happiness depends on everyone being able to fully express themselves, which in turn means them satisfying the maximum number of their appetites. However, the relationship between this notion of value and her idea of transcendental good, as embodied, for example, by, Gandhi is problematic – as she acknowledges (360-1) – because this kind of transcendentalism is achieved precisely by rising above appetites. This leads her to speculate that we need a provisional morality to live by on an everyday basis, which needs to give way, in due course, to something orientated towards higher ends: “I have suggested that certain ideas are transcendent – that is, not to be achieved with present material. But these transcendent ideas are in our minds; we have them voluntarily and use them for direction” (291). Translated back into the language of *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* or *We Have Been Warned*, the suggestion seems to be that the solution to the problem of society not providing space for the desires of Erif Der or Dionne to be met – and, therefore, the problem of society not allowing women like them to be happy – is that these desires will eventually be philosophically transcended and forgotten.

The difficulties identified in *The Moral Basis of Politics* form the subtext for her 1939 novel, *The Blood of the Martyrs*, which bears certain affinities to *The Conquered*. The later novel’s protagonist, Beric, functions similarly to Meromic as a “female” point of identification. In an ingenious synthesis of the opposed goals of “appetites” and “ends”, Beric, who is the adopted son of a Roman Senator, finally satisfies his desire to find equality with his mostly male slaves not through sex but by joining their clandestine Christian sect and then washing their feet in a state of delirious ecstasy. In similar vein, the novel ends with Beric eaten by a wolf in the Colosseum while being watched by one of his former homosexual pick-ups, who subsequently decides to convert to Christianity too. This resolution works symbolically because the key passages can simultaneously be read as scenes of sexual satisfaction and sublimation. However Mitchison is no closer to opening up a fictional space for women’s agency than in her first novel.

The intervention of the Second World War drastically altered the social playing field. Mitchison moved with her children to the Scottish Estate that she had bought with her husband in 1937. During the War, Mitchison kept a diary (see Sheridan) for the social research organisation, Mass-Observation, which she had been involved with since its formation in 1937. Karen Meschia observes that Mitchison’s diary reveals that one effect of the war was to make Mitchison even more painfully aware of “gender asymmetry” (Meschia 7). Although Mitchison noted her contacts with the great and the good ranging from Leonard Woolf to Nye Bevan, and poured considerable effort during the early months of the War into setting up a local branch of the Labour Party, she became gradually more encumbered with domestic responsibilities over the years. Finally, her husband’s selection as the Labour candidate for Kettering in the 1945 General Election relegated her to “the role of supportive, submissive wife”

(Meschia 8). This seems to have marked the end to Mitchison trying to participate as a man in the symbolic order of patriarchal society.

In her postwar historical Scottish novel, *The Bull Calves* (1947), Mitchison returned once more to the device of witchcraft that she had employed in *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* and *We Have Been Warned*. Here, the struggle for female agency reaches hitherto untouched heights of melodrama as the protagonist, Kirstie, narrates in flashback how she participated freely in “Witches’ Sabbaths” and joined a coven in order to kill her first husband, a minister of the Church. Eventually, Kirstie reaches the point of perceiving a knock at the door to be the devil (the “Horny”) coming to commit her to eternal damnation. Rather than reach out for the Bible, she gets up and opens the door willingly:

The shape came walking into the room [. . .] it sat down opposite me with the width of the hearth between us, and I, a Minister’s widow, in my shift only, and my hair over my shoulders [. . .] and I waited for the Horny to open his mouth and to bid me serve him for all eternity, and to have his dealings that would bind me to hell, and for myself to say Yes to it all. (168-9)

However there is more than a perverse pleasure in macabre situations at work here; what subsequently takes place is no sacrificial exchange but a moment of mutual recognition. The “shape” is the highlander, Black William, back from exile in the Colonies and with his own dark secrets concerning time spent living with a “savage” Native American tribe. This recognition of a similar darkness between the two of them allows them to come together in their difference and achieve a genuine relationship that is not itself overtly perverse or melodramatic. At the end of the novel, Mitchison posits this idea as a way forward for society in general, and Scotland specifically:

It was at such times that the appearances had mostly come between one light and another, the images of corruption. And maybe they were in everyone, the creatures of the dark sea in which folks must swim or drown until they can find their own image or opposite. The same for everyone but not all allow themselves to perceive them. (404)

Arguably *The Bull Calves* represents a final abandonment of the attempt to reconcile female experience with the patriarchal order and the role of the tragic king, which so strains – albeit often in exhilaratingly exciting ways – Mitchison’s earlier fiction. Here, the forces of the imaginary break free and open up new opportunities. It was now possible for Mitchison to write a female agency that would be true to itself. This is precisely what she did in the form of the fable, *Travel Light*.

Travel Light begins with the new Queen seeing the old Queen’s baby daughter, Halla, and telling the King that “the brat must be got rid of at once” (11). However, before Halla can be left, like Oedipus, on a mountainside to die, her nurse transforms into a bear and runs off with her. Hibernation requirements result in Halla’s subsequent adoption by the dragon, Uggi. Thereafter she grows up on Dragon Mountain, being taught fire, geology, and economics, and getting to dress up in as much jewellery as she likes. The only problem, of course, is

men and their propensity in particular to send heroes – such as George, Perseus and Siegfried – to interfere with dragon-princess relationships. But mostly “the dragon made good and all ended for the best” (21):

Sometimes Halla played at Princesses and Dragons, pretending to be tied to a tree and then waiting for one of the young dragons to rush at her with his mouth open, drenching her in delightful tickly flames [she has been fire-proofed!]. And there would be no horrible hero to interfere. Sometimes Halla found herself wishing she was a real princess, so that it could all genuinely happen. (21)

Here, the fictional doubling within the story – a Princess wishing she was a Princess – mirrors the identification process of readers, or children having the story read to them, wishing themselves to be the Princess. Jenni Calder, one of Mitchison’s biographers, notes that the book is “obliquely for and about her daughters” (217). However one can also read the book as being about Mitchison herself. These layered-in levels of awareness within the story function as a means to tell, or remind, the reader or listener, and, indeed, the writer of the story something they already know but have forgotten or, at least, are not consciously aware of: that their subjectivity is actually different from the one that they are officially being interpellated within.

While Halla, and her readers, are therefore brought to understand that her role in life is not simply to wait for the right hero to happen along, both they and she are also forced to confront the disappointment that she is nonetheless not going to grow up to be a dragon. This becomes apparent when Halla asks Uggi to teach her to breathe fire:

Uggi sighed, a hot, hot sigh that burnt a small patch of lichen that had survived so far on the side of the rock. He felt that, in spite of the way he had brought Halla up as a dragon, the moment was come when she must learn the facts of life, hard though it would be for him to tell them to her. (23-4)

The unwelcome truth is that she is no more a dragon than Mitchison, despite growing up with the freedom to roam and read like her brother, had ever been a man. Frustrated by the apparent lack of a desirable adult role for herself, Halla finds some consolation in Uggi’s treasure hoard: if she cannot be a dragon, she can at least be “dragon-minded” (25) enough that she need never go back to living with people. This dragon-mindedness leads to her being called “Halla Heroesbane” (26) and subsequently results in her turning down an offer to become a Valkyrie on the grounds that she would not like the key component of the role: “You’re always choosing heroes aren’t you – touching them? And I hate them!” (31). The feminist subtext here becomes manifest when Uggi is slain by a prince and Halla is brought before him by his followers:

He looked at her grinning and asked her what she was called; she named herself Halla Bearsbairn, since she could not, for shame, speak her other name now. “It is clear you know the way of bears,” said the King’s son, “and after supper I shall teach you the way of women” (42-3).

However, she is saved *from* this hero by another dragon swooping down and rescuing her at the last moment. Mitchison does not allow her protagonist's identity to be shaped in relation to men but instead allows her to find her own way.

At first Halla recapitulates her childhood by living in the woods again, as she had as a bear cub, and then retrieving some of Uggi's treasure with the intention of making her own hoard in a cave. It is at this point, when she is in danger of retreating completely from the world into a Gollum-like relationship with her precious treasure, that she meets Odin, who – much as Gandalf draws Bilbo out of his hole and into the world in *The Hobbit* – sets her off on her own adventure with the titular advice to “travel light”. This leads her to her meeting with Tarkan Der in Micklegard and the journey back north with him after her escape from a nunnery where a corrupt priest has consigned her. It is at this point that *Travel Light's* alternative version of the Oedipus story – set up by the abandonment of Halla as a baby at the book's opening – becomes apparent. For unknown to her, Halla is returning to the place of her birth just as Oedipus unknowingly returns to Thebes before killing his father and marrying his mother.

As Halla and Tarkan Der sail up a river, they see a house being attacked by raiders and a young woman being dragged off by a bearded man in armour. Tarkan Der kills the man and Halla rescues the woman's father who has been tied up inside the burning house. The young woman is Alfeida and her husband is Modolf, who then tells his family story:

It is said that a certain king had a wife who died, and he married again. And there was a child of the first wife, a baby girl, and the second wife said it must be cast out into the forest and die. And so it was done. And my forefathers and I, God help us, through no fault of our own, are children of that king and that wicked queen. But there has been a continuous punishment and the sins of the fathers visited on the children. (139).

The story comes back on itself as in the Oedipus myth but rather than killing her father, Halla saves the father figure's life and the curse is lifted. In a neat resolution of loose ends, Tarkan Der marries Alfeida thus freeing Halla to continue travelling light. Although she learns that Odin was actually having a game with her by giving her this advice because, in a play on the time distortion effects that would result from faster than light travel, time has passed several hundred years in her homeland during the time she has been away. One consequence of this unexpected historical progress, however, is that heroes are now “getting very rare” (146) and Halla feels able to accept a renewed invitation to become a Valkyrie before riding off into the sunset. Here, the breaking of the Oedipal cycle of patriarchy enables Halla to remain free to roam around the pre-symbolic landscape of the imaginary.

One way to assess the significance of this landscape is through a consideration of John Clute's essay, “Notes on the Geography of Bad Art in Fantasy” (2002). Clute outlines a four-stage model of the “full fantasy story” (114), which begins with a land at peace being interrupted by a “wrongness” (114) as when the Shire is

invaded by Nazgûl, or, as in the case of *Travel Light*, when a new Queen demands that the King dispose of his daughter with the old Queen. The second stage is “thinning” (114): defeat, the breaking of the fellowship, “what happens to the Land when the Land becomes Fantasyland” (114). The world of *Travel Light*, with its talking dragons and basilisks, is a clear-cut example of such a “Fantasyland”. Clute sees such a condition negatively as “a reflection of what happens when Story forgets itself” (115). He goes on to note that “the way to escape the amnesias of thinning is to tell the Story again” (115). This is the function that is fulfilled in *Travel Light* by Modolf’s story, which reminds both Halla and the book’s readers of the full trajectory of her life. According to Clute, such a retelling, or remembering, should lead to the third stage of “recognition” (115), when the hero recognises their own agency, and thereby sets up the fourth stage of “return” (116): the possibility of resuming life as it was without wrongness. However, such a return could be seen as the completion of the Oedipal cycle and the restoration of the patriarchal order. In *Travel Light* this cycle is broken by Halla. It is not that she does not recognise the story; she recognises it at the moment when Tarkan Der complains about her talking to basilisks and starts trying to get her to keep house for him. But what she also recognises, or remembers, is that she has an identity outside the story – one that is unconstrained by the patriarchal symbolic order. Mitchison is unambiguous in her position on the question of what Clute calls “Story”, as is made clear in the chapter of *Travel Light* called “The Story”:

“It was a strange thing,” Modolf said, “that the curse held for so long, and all for the death of one small child. Worse things have been done than that. Yes. Much worse. Yet perhaps the death of the very innocent always carries a curse.”

“Perhaps she did not die, said Halla, “perhaps her nurse turned into a bear and carried her away into the forest. Perhaps she was brought up by bears and dragons. Perhaps it was better for her in the end than being a king’s child.”

“That was never in the story,” said Modolf.

“Forget the story,” said Halla. (140)

There can be no more serious declaration of the intent to abandon the symbolic order and live purely in the realm of the imaginary than this injunction to “forget the story”.

In this context, the fact that *Travel Light* shares the fictional setting of Marob with *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* is perhaps significant. As Janet Montefiore notes, Erif Der’s eventual “metamorphosis into a divine snake has [parallels with] Hélène Cixous’s “The Laugh of the Medusa”” (167). Erif Der was just one of a number of fictional personas that Mitchison experimented with during the 1930s, which was for her a decade of possibilities. By the 1950s she had realised her need to escape the patriarchal symbolic order, which offered mainly a role as a politician’s wife. *Travel Light* was the way Mitchison wrote herself back into the landscape of the imaginary and thus bridged the gap between her novels of the 1930s and her subsequent science fiction. As Jill Benton argues,

what links *The Corn King and the Spring Queen*, *Travel Light*, and *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (1962) is a concept of “the female hero” who transcends binary gender and is “gifted with empathy”, capable of communicating “with all forms of life in the universe” (145).

Today, Mitchison would probably be marketed as a genre writer and that is more or less what she became, publishing a further two science fiction novels after *Memoirs of a Spacewoman: Solution Three* (1973) and *Not By Bread Alone* (1983). All three of these books feature women protagonists and – in the case of the first two certainly – are set in environments outside hierarchical patriarchal society. Her overall career demonstrates a link between the radical literature of the 1930s and postwar science fiction, which can also be found in the transition of the publishing house, Gollancz, from producing the iconic orange covers of the Left Book Club to the yellow dust jackets of its later specialism in genre fiction. In this context, the career of Mitchison offers a possibility for rethinking the history of British literature. She exemplifies a set of continuities that could be used to support an argument that the present-day successors of writers such as Orwell, Mitchison and Greene are Iain Banks, Gwyneth Jones and Ken MacLeod. However, the fact that these continuities are not widely acknowledged tells us in itself that there are factors working to occlude this kind of literary history. As Fredric Jameson argues, fantastika as a whole is subject to “psychic resistance” and is “the target of a kind of literary ‘reality principle’” (xiv n9). Mitchison, who employed the devices of fantastika across eight decades from the 1920s onwards to write variously about socialism, free love, birth control, abortion, and gender politics, should be someone known to all. If this was the case, *Travel Light* would no longer remain a hidden secret waiting to be discovered by adults like Amal El-Mohtar, but be available to all as a gateway to the landscape of the imaginary.

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“A Tourist Guide to Beszel and Ul Qoma”:

Unseeing, the Brutality of Borders and the Re-interpretation of Psychogeography in China Miéville’s *The City and the City*

ROB O’CONNOR

The epigraph to China Miéville’s novel *The City and the City* (2009) reads “deep inside the town there opens up, so to speak, double streets, doppelganger streets, mendacious and delusive streets”. The quotation is taken from the story “The Cinnamon Shops” (1934) by the Polish writer, Bruno Schulz and is an interesting introduction to a text primarily concerned with the psychogeography of urban environments. The inclusion of “mendacious” and “delusive” alludes to the deceptive nature of cities and their ability to not tell the truth. Also, in light of Miéville’s political writing, it is impossible to ignore the allusions to the act of dissembling the streets, the reality of our streets lost behind a cover of social and political falsehoods. Given that Schulz himself was murdered for appearing in the wrong quarter of Nazi-occupied Drohobych during WWII, Miéville’s choice of epigraph highlights the political control of border spaces and the brutality that this can involve.

The definition of psychogeography is extremely fluid, with influence from a wide aspect of sources, including politics, cultural studies, architecture and literature. Short stories and novels by a range of authors such as Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe, Oscar Wilde and Virginia Woolf, all started to explore the urban landscape as being intrinsically connected to the psychology of their protagonists, who were primarily walkers traversing the streets. Postmodern writers such as J G Ballard also explored this connection in the late twentieth century, this time in connection to the growth of the capitalist cityscape. In recent decades cultural commentators such as Will Self and Ian Sinclair began exploring the ability of the walker to recapture urban stories from the architectural signifiers that surrounded them, in turn reclaiming the lost meanings of the cities in which they operate. Psychogeography also became a political stance of the Lettrist and Situationist International movements in France during the mid-twentieth Century. Their objective was to claim back urban landscapes for their inhabitants. The political radicalism of examining urban environments, the exploration of how the art of walking affects our perception of urban space, and the constant reassessment of our personal and social relationship with the cities in which we live all correspond with Merlin Coverley’s useful definition of the term psychogeography as “the point at which psychology and geography collide, a means of exploring the behavioural impact of place” (10). Therefore, we can associate Miéville’s work, which is so heavily influenced by urban space, with psychogeography. *The City and the City* is a highly-politicised novel that uses an exaggerated examination of space, zones and border control as a way of assessing the psychology of individuals that inhabit modern urban environments. Miéville uses the motifs of crime fiction and elements of the fantastic as a methodology for exploring contemporary theories regarding urban space.

However, Miéville's relationship with psychogeography is problematic. Though his work can be examined using the lens of psychogeographical theory, he also shows an insightful wariness to engage with the movement fully. He is suspicious of the recent "celebritisation" of psychogeography, which he refers to in his essay entitled *London's Overthrow* (2012) as "a lazy label for hip decay tourism" (58). He is aware how psychogeography has developed beyond its roots as a tool for social and political examination and needs to be re-evaluated. In *London's Overthrow* and in interviews Miéville argues that psychogeography's political message has been misunderstood by the most recent generation of practitioners and that it is time to refocus our gaze upon contemporary urban landscapes and their need for a new method of political and cultural examination.¹ This is an important consideration in a time of social and economic disparity and psychogeography needs to adapt to reflect this social change.

Miéville explores new methods of examining urban landscapes in both his fiction and non-fictional work. His socialist affiliations inevitably focus his attentions towards the city, as much of the political power-struggle that interests Miéville is visualised in the urban landscapes that are growing in size and stature across the contemporary world. Cities are intrinsically connected to political, social and economic climates and constantly metamorphose to reflect changes within these climates. Cities are ideal conduits, or metaphors, for social, political and economic commentary. This also includes the depiction of their inhabitants, their behaviour, and psychological responses. Miéville's writing makes us ask questions about these new unexplored strata of the contemporary urban landscape, seeking to infuse psychogeographical study with new political and social focus.

What makes *The City and the City* (2009) illuminating in relation to psychogeographical theory is the seemingly-fantastical nature of the novel's setting. Inspector Tyador Borlú of the extreme crime squad in the city-state of Beszel is assigned the case of a homicide involving a disfigured girl found on the outskirts of the city. The crime fiction or police procedural plot serves as a useful narrative device within which to frame Miéville's psychogeographical exploration. Crime fiction and urban landscapes share many similarities regarding shifts in perspectives, as Lucy Andrew and Catherine Phelps explore in their book *Crime Fiction in the City: Capital Crimes* (2013):

Unlike their rural counterparts, cities are in a constant state of flux through decay and regeneration and many crime writers find themselves acting as literary cartographers of an authentic but rapidly changing urban space. (1)

In other words, both urban crime fiction and psychogeography examine the multifaceted and ever-changing nature of the city and how the urban landscape affects the psychology of those people that inhabit these spaces. In urban crime fiction, the mystery is solved by walking the streets looking for the clues. Psychogeographers apply similar techniques to their own examination of the urban. The only difference is that the mystery they aim to solve is not a crime, but the socio-political meaning of the visual signifiers present in the landscape of the city.

In *The City and the City*, Beszel shares the same geographical space with the “twin city” of Ul Qoma but via the volition of their citizens they are perceived as two different cities. From childhood, residents are taught to recognise elements of the other city and then immediately forget their existence. To not comply is known as “breaching” and is punishable (45-46). The result is an indoctrinated method of “unseeing” architecture and people from the other city which is policed by a secret force known only as Breach (14).

In *The City and the City* the protagonist is a detective, literally “walking the beat” in order to solve the crime at the centre of the novel’s plot. In Miéville’s urban landscape, Borlú is a walker, experiencing the city in a primal way from the ground up, assimilating himself into the urban landscape. This is reminiscent of Michel de Certeau’s reflection of New York as a city of voyeurs and walkers whose opposing perceptions of the city are controlled by the dominant urban feature of the skyscraper. The voyeurs, who look down upon the city from the viewing platforms and hundredth-floor windows, are completely separated from the walkers on the streets: “The ordinary practitioners of the city live ‘down below,’ below the threshold at which visibility begins. They walk - an elementary form of this experience of the city: they are walkers” (93). De Certeau’s “walkers”, as well as the detective protagonists of police procedurals (Borlú included) are representative of the figure of the flâneur, an integral element of the socio-political movement of psychogeography.² Although there are automobiles in the twin cities depicted in *The City and the City*, which also have to negotiate the problematic topography, most of the movement in the novel is carried out on foot. Therefore, walking becomes a central factor for deciphering the codification of the twinned urban landscapes in *The City and the City* because of the ability to become more intimate with each city’s unique features and explore the interstitial zones that exist between different urban zones. Borlú is not just a walker, but also a flâneur, divining meaning from the architecture and social structure of both cities as he wanders through their streets.

Miéville shows a keen interest in the concept of the flâneur throughout much of his work, exploring how specific zones affect our personal psychology and what exists in the space in between. In Wasson and Adler’s book *Gothic Science Fiction 1980 - 2010*, Roger Luckhurst reflects upon how Miéville’s work is able to cross genre boundaries and expectations through its direct examination of complex zones and topological concerns:

These interstitial zones, opening at random, shifting and disappearing from the purview of organized space, recur across Miéville’s work... The interpenetration of zones becomes the motor of the plot in *The City & the City*... Miéville’s zones are “impossible” non-Euclidean spaces in which, as Laura Salisbury argues, “generic transgression is figured in terms of topological complexity”. (29-30)

In terms of psychogeography, this is reflected in Miéville’s interpretation of contrasting urban zones and the emotional effect that these zones have upon their inhabitants. The interpretation of physical areas and the spaces between them becomes central to Miéville’s generic considerations. His ideas regarding the blurring of genres are

replicated in his work through psychogeographic exploration of physical space and the way in which topological boundaries can also be blurred.

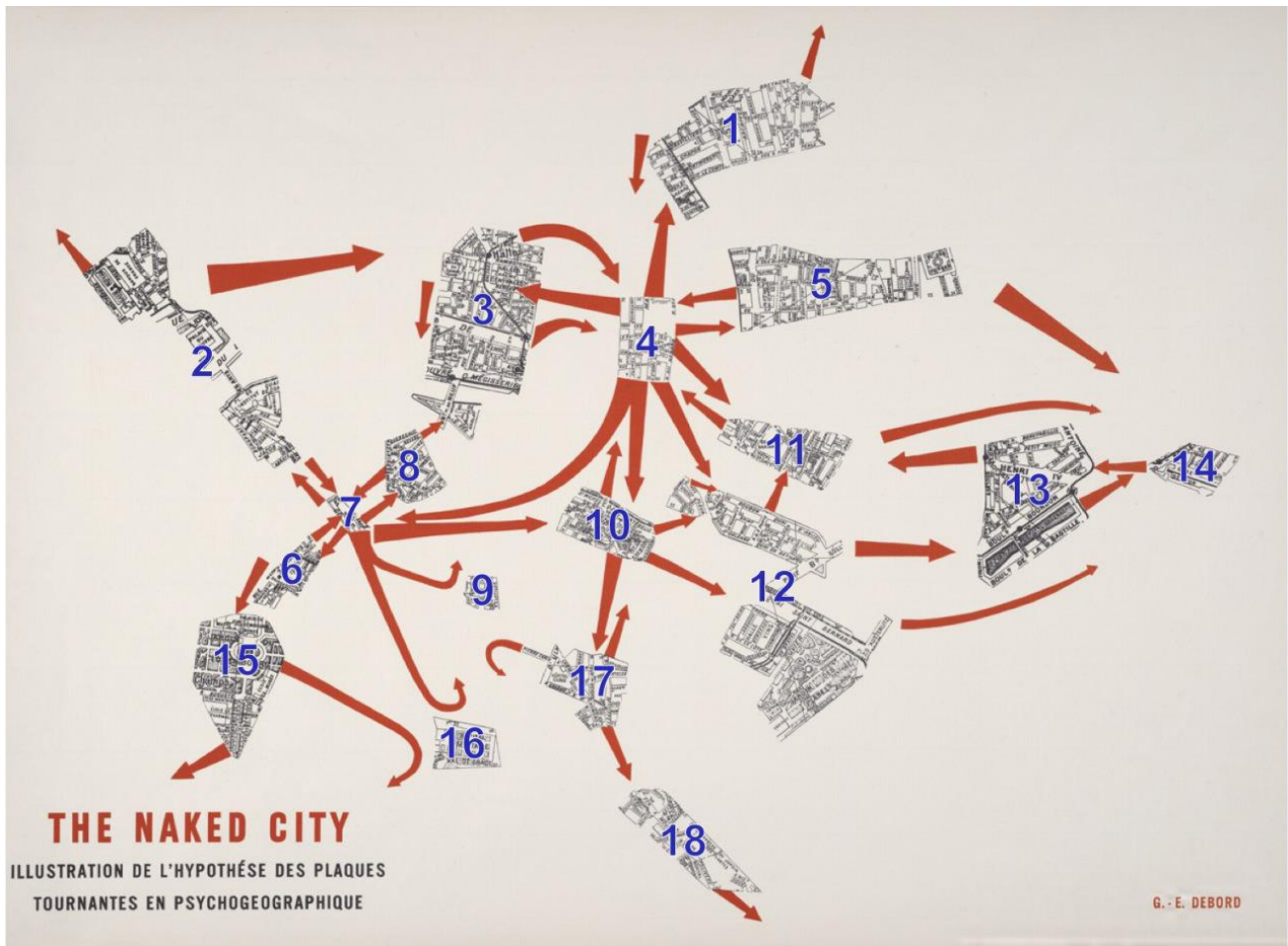


Figure 1. *The Naked City*.

The psychogeographical concept of emotional zones was explored by the Lettrist and then the Situationist International movements as a possible future method of town planning and construction. An early example is Ivan Chhtcheglov's *Formulary for a New Urbanism* (1958) which calls for a new type of architecture that reflects an emotional engagement with its inhabitants; to reconstruct cities into specific psychological zones. Guy Debord, the figurehead of the Situationist International, posited an interpretation of the city as a collection of zones, each with a specific emotional response:

The sudden change of ambience in a street within the space of a few meters; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres... In fact, the variety of possible combinations of ambiances, analogous to the blending of pure chemicals in an infinite number of mixtures, gives rise to feelings as differentiated and complex as any other form of spectacle can evoke. (10)

Debord likens psychogeography to the pure sciences, highlighting the skill at distilling the various emotional ambiances present within any given urban environment. In fact, Debord takes this a stage further, producing a map of Paris centred on this idea. *The Naked City* (Fig. 1 above) presents the capital as a collective of nineteen

sections seemingly dispersed at random. What the arrows on Debord's map suggest are possible routes for the users to follow according to the emotional context they experience within a particular zone. This psychogeographical concept of emotional interaction between people and space is also expressed by Miéville's depiction of "zonal attitudes" within *The City and the City*. Due to the indoctrinated practices of the inhabitants of these twinned cities, they are taught to "unsee", or consciously ignore, the visual signifiers, architecture and people associated with the opposing city. The resulting etymology expresses this detachment, as the zones of each city are described in one of three ways: "alter", "total" and "cross-hatched" (285). Inhabitants of Beszel and Ul Qoma develop a deep-rooted psychological understanding of the different zones within the shared city, able to identify which zone a street exists in with a very quick glance:

Most of those around us were in Beszel so we saw them. Poverty deshabed the already staid, drab cuts and colours that enduringly characterise Besz clothes - what has been called the city's fashionless fashion. (21)

The result is confluence of psychology and geography; an instinctive and intrinsic awareness of place and surroundings. "Total" zones exist entirely within the inhabitant's city and share no physical space with the other. Within these zones the population can act and move freely without worry of retribution. "Alter" zones exist entirely within the other city and, therefore, are off limits and must be completely avoided and ignored. Zones of "crosshatch" are the most interesting to consider. These are streets or public areas that exist within both cities and therefore denizens from both walk side-by-side. It is in these zones where the law of "unseeing" is hardest to maintain as inhabitants must be aware of their distinguishing cues at all times. Borlú's momentary glances at Ul Qomans must be instantly "unseen" and forgotten. These zones are completely a psychological manifestation, with inhabitants making a deliberate, albeit enforced, decision to disengage with the other city. If we apply this to Debord's map *The Naked City* we could imagine it as a cartographic representation of either Beszel or Ul Qoma and the "emotional wandering" of the walker in that particular urban space. The other city does not exist on the map at all.

Miéville's social commentary through the use of "unseeing" is multi-layered. "Unseeing" reflects a prominent condition present in our own contemporary urban landscapes: the conscious and unconscious detachment from our surroundings. It is something that we do every day: the avoidance of the homeless on the street; our disengagement from acts of racism or violence which we witness; our unwillingness to explore the spaces in between our familiar spaces of existence. There is an array of zones and spaces within our urban landscapes that we distance ourselves from. By following Borlú's investigation, and witnessing what he "unsees", the novel forces us to ask the very personal question "what things do I unsee?" As part of the investigation Borlú is granted a pass to enter Ul Qoman zones in order to follow up on leads:

It was a busier city than Beszel at night: now I could look at the figures at business in the dark that had been unseeable shades until now. I could see the homeless dossing down in side streets, the

Ul Qoman rough sleepers that we in Beszel had had to become used to as protubs to pick our unseeing ways over and around. (171)

For a while, Borlú is forced to “unsee” his home of Beszel, to leave behind the familiarity of his city and become a “temporary citizen” of the other. Borlú is forced to observe everything which previously he had “unseen”; a direct psychological shift from normality. The suggested social commentary here is an invitation for the reader to do the same, to engage with the elements of society that we would normally ignore. As a result, *The City and the City* becomes a text rooted in contemporary urban commentary. Borlú’s indoctrinated “unseeing” of Ul Qoma mirrors the elements of the modern city that we do not witness or choose to ignore. The signs of social and economic disparity become lost amongst the barrage of capitalist signifiers in the postmodern city, just as Borlú becomes aware of the Ul Qoman rough sleepers who, until then, had been invisible due to his indoctrinated perception.

This concept of “unseeing” is not an original one in the history of science fiction or fantasy literature. Jack Vance’s *The Dying Earth* (1950), a collection of interwoven short stories, is the first in a series of works depicting an Earth in the very distant future. The Sun is dying, threatening to extinguish itself at any moment. Technology is ancient and discarded and magic has returned, once again, as a dominant force. Civilisation, for the most part, has collapsed and mankind is dwindling. The relevant story to this debate is entitled “Ulan Dhor Ends a Dream”. In this story the titular protagonist is entrusted with a quest by his uncle, Prince Kaldive, to obtain the magic contained within the tablets of the magician Rogol Domendonfors which are lost in the catacombs of the ancient city of Ampridatvir. When Ulan Dhor reaches the city, he finds two opposing factions - Pansiu and Cadzal - each claiming ownership of the streets. What is significant is that the Pansiu are dressed in green robes and the Cadzal dressed in gray and neither faction acknowledges the existence of the other. Ulan is befriended by Elai - a Gray - who helps him to negotiate the streets of Ampridatvir. Ulan soon realises that the greens and grays do not interact:

Some wore green, others wore gray, and Ulan Dhor saw that there was no intercourse between the two... He saw two groups of children, one in green rags, the other in gray... A ball of tied rags rolled from the Gray children into the scuffling group of Greens. A Gray child ran over, picked up the ball from under the feet of a Green child, and neither took the slightest notice of the other.

“Strange,” muttered Ulan Dhor. “Strange.”

“What’s strange?” inquired Elai. “I see nothing strange...” (Vance, 50-51)

The scenario that Vance depicts is clearly very similar to Miéville’s world in *The City and the City* and Miéville’s concept of unseeing likewise echoes the phenomenon occurring in Vance’s short story. The Greens and the Grays subconsciously choose to ignore the presence of the other, referring to them only as “ghosts” and “demons”. In Vance’s world, this conditioning is once again enforced, as monstrous creatures called Gauns, who appear from the shadows much like Breach, whisk away citizens that violate the social system. In Vance’s story the barriers between Greens and Grays collapse and they consciously perceive each other. However, instead of social utopia,

the result is conflict, as the two factions confront each other, rioting on the streets. Although not a direct inspiration for Miéville's novel, he has acknowledged (in his interview for the website *BLDGBLG*) the similarities between Vance's world, and others, to his own depicted in *The City and the City*:

I should say, also, that with the whole idea of a divided city there are analogies in the real world, as well as precursors within fantastic fiction. C. J. Cherryh wrote a book that had a divided city like that, in some ways, as did Jack Vance. (Manaugh)

In both texts, the imagined utopia is always out of reach. The psychological and emotional perception of geographical zones, and the people who inhabit these spaces, is central to the concept and plot of both Miéville's novel and Vance's story. The application of various emotional zones is also the central process in establishing how "psychology and geography collide", as defined by Merlin Coverley (10). This "collision" is instigated by our emotional response to the environment we are in and architectural changes within urban zones can dramatically affect this.

The exploration of zones automatically creates gaps in between that also become matters of theoretical interest. In *The City and the City*, Miéville embodies these interstitial spaces with a sinister undertone. If a citizen disregards the controlled zoning of either city - intentionally or not - then they are taken by the shadowy avatars of Breach. "Breaching" becomes a violent act, associated with brutality. People who breach are torn away from their existence, disappearing into the policed interstitial space in between, sometimes never to be seen again. Crossing the border and being in the wrong zone becomes punishable. In *The City and the City* the first step into the interstitial spaces of Breach is a sensory overload for Borlú, as everything that he has been indoctrinated to "unsee" suddenly becomes visible:

Sound and smell came in: the calls of Beszel; the ringing of its clocktowers,; the clattering and old metal percussion of the trams; the chimney smell; the old smells; they came in a tide with the spice and Illitan yells of Ul Qoma, the clatter of *militysa* coptor, the gunning of German cars. The colours of Ul Qoma light and plastic window displays no longer effaced the ochres and stone of its neighbour, my home... We moved through the crosshatched morning crowd. "In Breach. No one knows if they're seeing you or unseeing you. Don't creep. You're not in neither: you're in both". (303-304)

What before was a limited perspective has been replaced with an awakened perspective; seeing and experiencing everything that once was unconscious. What Miéville explores here are the theories of repression. What Borlú describes here is, in actuality, very familiar to his schema of reference. In his essay "The Uncanny" (1919), Freud describes *das Umheimliche* as "in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (833). Although Miéville is keen to distance Weird fiction from Freud's description of the uncanny he does adopt this examination of the relationship between repression and the uncanny in *The City and the City*.³ Miéville's

approach to uncanniness is much more aligned with the sources for Freud's essay, the work of German philosophers Ernst Jentsch and Friedrich von Schilling. In "The Uncanny" Freud reflects upon Jentsch's essay "On the Psychology of the Uncanny" (1906) and his definition of the uncanny as "something one does not know ones way about in. The better oriented in his environment a person is, the less readily will he get the impression of something uncanny in regard to the objects and events in it" (826). Moving on to discuss the relationship between repression and the uncanny, Freud considers Schilling's definition from the 1856 essay "The Philosophy of Mythology":

This reference to the factor of repression enables us, furthermore, to understand Schilling's definition of the uncanny as something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light. (833)

The actions of Breach and the restrictions of "unseeing" are much more aligned with these interpretations. When Borlú enters Breach, his feeling of uncanniness diminishes as he becomes "better oriented" within his newly perceived environment. The concept of Breach, with the other twin city moving from unconscious to conscious perception, perfectly reflects Schilling's interpretation of the uncanny. The other city feels uncanny because the person realises that it should "remain hidden". The control of the borders between Beszel and Ul Qoma has led to the enforced repression of the other city's existence, resulting in an unsettling feeling of unnerving familiarity when people do breach to the other side.

Freud also alludes to three systems which Miéville explores too. These are the conscious, the unconscious and the preconscious, the latter being the system which operates as a potential gateway between the other two. It is described by Anthony Easthope as: "something you know but are not actually thinking about has to be somewhere else, where you can get hold of it when you want" (25). Unseeing and breaching represent Freud's three systems working in unison. Borlú, when in "total" zones, does not think about Ul Qoma, meaning that it is in his unconscious. When travelling through "crosshatch" areas, his cognition of Ul Qoma moves to preconsciousness as he automatically and skilfully represses any signifiers from the other city. When he does become a member of Breach, his cognition shifts again as Ul Qoma becomes a conscious reality. It is Miéville's exploration of this psychological shift that produces the sense of topological uncertainty and the novel's traits of *fantastika*. It is also the most significant examination of psychogeography within the novel, as a resident's behaviour within a particular zone is controlled by their conscious or unconscious association with it and the repression of the other urban space in question.

Miéville's examination of emotional zones and interstitial spaces is grounded in psychogeographical theory. The spaces in between these zones of ambience present the opportunity to gain a real understanding of our urban landscape, to see our cities as a whole instead of a "breached" environment. It is within these spaces, Miéville's work suggests, that the reality exists. Luckhurst describes Miéville's interstitial spaces as "impossible" and upon first viewing he is partly correct (29-30). They seemingly play with topology, presenting alternative

planes of existence that at first glance seem steeped in fantastical construction. However, Miéville's generic skill and political understanding ensure that these spaces remain firmly rooted within social and political realism and act as important commentary about our own contemporary attitudes and power struggles. The political message of indoctrinated societies - the driving force behind the concept of unseeing - is what *produces* the traits of fantastika that are present in the novel.

Another psychogeographical concern that Miéville utilizes for social and political commentary is the concept of borders and how to police them. Borders create geographical space and zones, encouraging an emotional connection and response from the people who inhabit them. They are areas of geographical space that can become fiercely contested, fundamentally changing the psychological behaviour of the citizens who exist within those spaces. Populations become controlled by the policing of borders, not only in their physical movements around those spaces but also through indoctrinated behaviour enforced through the use or promise of brutality.

"Breaching" becomes an interesting etymological choice. The word "breach" has roots in the Old English word *bryce*, meaning to break or fracture. Contemporary definitions refer to concepts of infringement and fragmentation. The overriding sense of the word 'breach' is one of disruption and chaos, a far-cry from the indoctrination that Breach wish to implement in *The City & the City*. In Miéville's novel, the actions of Breach result in a fragmentation of not only physical space, but the very activity of monitoring the borders that they are policing actually fragments the psychological behaviour of the citizens under their control. The objective of Breach, to ultimately control the behaviour of both populations, is inevitably flawed due to the fractured nature in which these populations exist. By enforcing the psychological separation of the two populations, yet still keeping them within a shared physical space, Breach have created a landscape which no one is able to explore to its full potential. Elements of the psychogeographical experience are always missing.

"Breach" also conjures up the imagery of "breaching the defences", adopting a military connotation of invasion and conquering of space. It becomes a violent act, associated with brutality. Borders take on psychogeographic properties and the people inhabiting border spaces become highly politicised. The threat of brutality creates mass indoctrination of the population concerned. The geography which they inhabit, and the brutal control of its borders, directly affects their psychological condition. "Unseeing" is Miéville's embodiment of this idea. The decision of the citizens of Beszel and Ul Qoma to consciously "unsee" the opposing city is a conscious choice made because of the threat of retribution by Breach. In other words, the physical geography of these two cities is crafted by a dominating force that enforces psychological compliance from the general populace. Both populations are stripped of all sensory interaction: it is not just "unseeing" that is enforced; it also stretches to other senses. Breach, although deployed as a policing force for the borders of these zones, actually have become a dominant imperialist force that explicitly controls the perception of both populations. Their brutal control of the borders has resulted in the perception of Breach becoming fractured itself. Their original role of zonal monitors has become lost and replaced with imperialistic connotations.

In 2013 Miéville visited the West Bank as a guest of the Palestine Festival of Literature. His essay, “Exit Strategy”, published in *Guernica*, the online magazine of art and politics, describes his trip through the border point between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Although written after *The City & the City*, this essay has many connections with the political commentary of the novel. Miéville starts “Exit Strategy” with a reference to the Mohammed Al-Durra incident in 2000, when a 12-year old boy was caught in the crossfire between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian security forces. Caught on camera, the boy was killed as his father waved his hands in surrender. Suggestions that the boy died at the hands of friendly fire were later put forward. What Miéville highlights with this initial reference is the very real brutality of border control and the methods used to ensure that it remains “unseen”. To counteract the opposing views of Israeli and Palestinian forces that the boy’s death had been fabricated, his father, Jamal Al-Durra was forced to open his son’s grave. As Miéville asserts, the objective of his father here was “to prove that this thing we saw happen happened, that the boy we saw die died” (*Guernica*). The father’s actions act as a crucial counterpoint to the enforced “unseeing” performed by the military as they attempt to manipulate the perception of the controlled population, shifting blame and attempting to construct their own “truth”. These real-life occurrences reflect the action of Breach in *The City and the City*, who, through the threat of brutality and punishment, manipulate the visual signifiers of each population in a similar manner to contemporary media communications. Social and political agendas are constructed and controlled through the population’s indoctrinated perception of the landscape that surrounds them. The true picture is never revealed; a whole socio-political narrative existing within the other urban landscape remains forever hidden.

A second comparison is the harsh physicality of the Jerusalem/Bethlehem border, which is reflected through Copula Hall in *The City & the City*. A vast building “much larger than a cathedral”, Copula Hall is the official border checkpoint for passage between Beszel and Ul Qoma (85). A thoroughfare for traffic and pedestrians between the two cities, Copula Hall is a militarised checkpoint such as those seen in destabilised nations around the world, “the waist of an hourglass, the point of ingress and egress, the navel between the cities. The whole edifice a funnel, letting visitors from one city into the other, and the other into the one” (85). The people within this thoroughfare are in a state of limbo, awaiting clearance and “stamped permissions-to-cross” in order to exist again as tourists and visitors to the other city (85). In this initial description of Copula Hall Miéville reveals the inherent problems when indoctrinated “unseeing” is combined with strict border control:

If someone needed to go to a house physically next door to their own but in the neighbouring city, it was in a different road in an unfriendly power... But pass through Copula Hall and she or he might leave Beszel and at the end of the hall come back to exactly (corporeally) where they had just been... a street they had never visited before, whose architecture they had always unseen, to the Ul Qoman house sitting next to and a whole city away from their own building, invisible there now they had come through, all the way across the Breach, back home. (86)

To visit an Ul Qoman neighbour, a Besz citizen would have to pass through Copula Hall and then return to the exact same spot as a tourist, unseeing their own city and their own home in order to avoid the wrath of Breach. To not pass through Copula Hall, to not obtain the correct stamps and authorisation, is a punishable crime. Although an extreme exaggeration, Miéville cleverly highlights the absurdity that such militarised border control inevitably creates, using the concepts of unseeing, breaching and Breach to comment upon the political control of borders that we witness across the contemporary world:

It is based on the absurd idea of Borders - that infinitely thin line that can kill you. On one side of it, your actions are punishable by law, while a few centimetres over you are fine. It is wholly absurd... The novel is an uncanny exaggeration of real-life politics; it is intended as an uncanny extrapolation of the political logic of borders. (Schmeink)

However, he is also keen to highlight that *The City and the City* does not represent an analogy of contemporary political border control but is rather an extreme fictionalised account of it. Initiatives put forward to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have suggested a “Two States in One Space” approach virtually identical to that shown in *The City and the City*.⁴ However, Miéville does highlight that in a real-world context such an idea is “completely demented. I don’t think that it would work at all, and I don’t think Israel has the slightest intention of trying it” (Manaugh). After all, Ul Qoma and Beszel are fictional cities, and to apply their municipal structure in real life *is* absurd. Miéville’s novel is political, but *not* allegorical. In terms of psychogeography, this is an important distinction. Miéville’s exploration of borders, although political, is more focused upon the psychological effect they have upon the populace. Borders take on psychogeographic properties. In other words, the enforced psychological compliance that is policed by Breach is a direct outcome of the politics of border control. Geographical concerns vastly affect the populace and their psychological and sensory experiences.

The imaginative concept of “unseeing”, however, is essentially an anti-psychogeographical idea. The indoctrination of the twin populations in the novel produces a psychological conditioning for individuals to ignore architecture and inhabitants from the opposing city. At its roots, this is an enforced, but conscious decision to disengage with the surrounding environment, which is the opposite message of urban engagement present in previous incarnations of psychogeography. Miéville creates a new form of psychogeographical thought in *The City and the City*. Whereas historically, psychogeography has developed into various different strands over time, Miéville is redefining it for contemporary use by combining the important elements of previous incarnations. The “neo-psychogeography” that Miéville embraces is centred on a political examination of modern urban culture and is one which analyses the unconscious actions of urban dwellers. By assessing the modern city and its inhabitants using psychogeographical techniques, visualised through the lens of fantastical construction, Miéville is able to show us the political uncertainties and troubles that exist in contemporary urban society.

Notes

- 1 One such example of Miéville's views on modern psychogeography was his 2011 interview for the BLDGBLG website:

Some really interesting stuff has been done with psychogeography... I mean, re-experiencing lived urban reality in ways other than how one is more conventionally supposed to do so can shine a new light on things—but that's an act of political assertion and will. If you like, it's a kind of deliberate—and, in certain contexts, radical—misunderstanding. Great, you know—good on you! You've productively misunderstood the city. But I think that the bombast of these particular—what are we in now? fourth or fifth generation?—psychogeographers is problematic.

Presumably at some point we're going to get to a stage, probably reasonably soon, in which someone—maybe even one of the earlier generation of big psychogeographers—will write the great book against psychogeography. Not even that it's been co-opted—it's just wheel-spinning. (Manaugh)

- 2 Charles Baudelaire's often quoted definition of the flâneur figure, in his work *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863), expresses its primary intention: "He is looking for that quality which you must allow me to call 'modernity'; for I know of no better word to express the idea I have in mind" (12). Baudelaire's flâneur uses the act of walking to identify with the burgeoning modernity of the nineteenth century city. Miéville's intention with *The City and the City* is that his flâneur, Borlú, makes us consider the social structures of the postmodern city.

- 3 In his seminal essay entitled MR James and the Quantum Vampire, published in the journal *Collapse IV*:

Hauntology, a category positing, presuming, implying a "time out of joint" ... estranges reality in an almost precisely opposite fashion to the Weird: with a radicalised uncanny – "something which is secretly familiar, which has undergone repression and then returned from it" rather than a hallucinatory/nihilist novum... The Weird is not the return of any repressed... this recruitment to invented cultural memory does not avail Weird monsters of Gothic's strategy of revenance, but back-projects their radical unremembered alterity into history, to en-Weird ontology itself. (112-113)

- 4 Mazal Mualem's article "Can Israel, Palestine Exist in One Space?" summarises the "Two States in One Space" debate very effectively.

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The Dialectics of Documents: The Case of the Real and the Fantastic

VLADIMIR RIZOV

In this article, I will provide an account of two photographers' work. Each of them represents two very particular temporal fragments: the first is Charles Marville (1813-1879), and the second is Eugène Atget (1857-1927). Although their work does not overlap in terms of time, both worked in the central areas of the French capital otherwise referred to as Old Paris. Furthermore, both of them documented change, each in their own way; Marville captured the great restructuring of Paris by Baron Haussmann, while Atget documented the fleeting façades of old hotels, houses, or public spaces, all of which were soon to collapse in on themselves.

Before I go into further detail concerning why I have chosen these two photographers, I will first provide a dialectical argument on the relevance of photography to contemporary understandings of the "fantastic", the real, and the unseen (Armitt 1). I refer here to Marcuse's method of conceptualising history, where he provides an account of the missing parts of a given historical account; where he opposes the material with the ideological, I oppose the visible with the invisible (xii). By way of doing this, I will provide an argument for the relevance of documentary photography in particular. Concomitantly, I will also return to the works of Marville and Atget as a way of transitioning my account of documentary photography into a more particular discussion of images, and their dialectical character (*Reflections* 157).

Through the discussion of the dialectical image, I will provide an argument how both Marville's and Atget's photographs, despite fitting in the definition of documentary photography, provide insight not only into what happened historically, but also demonstrate the fantastical nature of history. In this case, history is meant as the interplay between the real and the fantastic. Through documentary photography, I will demonstrate the ways in which what is real and what is fantastic converge and obfuscate one another through ambiguity. Ultimately, the paper will make an argument for the practice of documentary photography as bearing the potential to illuminate both the seen and the unseen thus positing the existence of a dialectics of documents. I would argue that the dialectics of documents is the interplay between the visible and the invisible, the fantastic and the real. I will demonstrate this on two levels – the historic, in the case of photography's history, and the image, as exemplified by the two photographers.

A Brief History of Photography

As Benjamin writes in his essay "A Brief History of Photography":

The mist that lies over the early days of photography is not quite as thick as the one that still lingers over the beginnings of printing; more plainly, perhaps, than in the case of the latter, the invention's

time had come and more than one person had sensed its approach; people, namely, who were working independently of one another towards the same goal: capturing those images in the camera obscura that had been known at least since Leonardo. (*One-way Street* 172)

There are several implications of this introduction that are present in all kinds of writings on the history of photography. My historical account of photography begins by examining the validity and implications of this quotation. The claim that Benjamin is making in relation to the early days of photography, although apparently true, is somewhat more complex than his introduction bears witness to. It is true that the inception of photography is somewhat traceable through the dating of the various speeches made and presentations given in the specialised scientific communities (such as Arago's in Gernsheim and Gernsheim 29 or Herschel's in Marien 17, or Talbot's in Gernsheim and Gernsheim 27; and Talbot in Marien 17). There is, however, a need for a brief note of elucidation concerning the key figures mentioned above, namely because each of them had a particular relationship with the medium that is vital to the argument at hand. Francois Arago was a French deputy and astronomer who was instrumental in L.M. Daguerre's procurement of a patent for his invention, the daguerreotype, the first fully working photographic method.¹

William Fox Henry Talbot was an inventor who, coincidentally, had been conducting experiments quite similar to those of Daguerre, the result of which became the calotype. Interestingly, Talbot called his invention the "pencil of nature" (Talbot in Marien 30). This is a particularly interesting narrative that formed around the invention of the photographic method. It was often the case that people, both practitioners and non-practitioners, were to a certain extent aware of the photochemistry involved, at least in principle. However, despite this, the narrative of photography as fantastical, magical, or natural (in contrast to technological) was persistent and prevalent (see Nickel 49 and Marien 30). Additionally, Sir John Herschel was a noted polymath, but most known for his astronomy, botany, and, immediately after Daguerre's invention, photography. He was also, as Gernsheim and Gernsheim show, the inventor of the cyanotype photographic process; in addition to making several prophetic claims concerning the use of photography in archiving, micro-slides, and administration in general (27). Awareness of such various photographic processes indicates that even though the official date of birth of photography is 1839, it existed as a method, albeit an imperfect one, for several years prior. The definition of a given date of the invention is a political matter, largely dependent on Daguerre's patron Arago, who pleaded for a patent to the French government. Thus, even at this point it is notable that a historical moment such as photography's announcement into the world bears a great deal of ambiguity.

Such ambiguity can clearly be exemplified through the two dominant narratives: the nationalistic endeavour of ensuring that the fixing of images is a product of the nation of France; and the idea that photography is a magic that has been long hidden as an unknown natural force of the world is put forward in various instances: by photographers (Claudet in Barger and White 1), writers (Edgar Allan Poe in Marien 28), as well as fiction preceding the invention (Nickel 49).² However, although the birth of photography, and its taking root in the academic environments of Western Europe, is widely documented, the precursors of photography are

rarely mentioned in such histories of photography. An approach to the history of photography that begins with the creation of the photographic is justifiable; however, I intend to provide an account of the preceding developments that made photography possible. More importantly, it should be noted that the historical account provided in this section works as an analogy to the dialectics of documents. Rather, my argument is that every visible moment (photographic or historical) is only a “pictorial image”, as Benjamin calls it, which obfuscates and belies invisible forces at play (*Reflections* 157).

Similarly, the foundation of the science on which photography takes root is largely indebted to several other sciences – those of astronomy (Barger and White 89) and chemistry (Talbot in Barger and White 55), but also some more occult quasi-sciences such as alchemy and astrology (Szulakowska 79). Thus, photographic science itself consists of the dual elements of visible and invisible, official and occult. Photography itself as a visual art, as seen in Szulakowska’s work, has often been likened to the alchemical and transformation of reality (Szulakowska 79). Not only this, but as Krauss’s work indicates photography is strongly linked to surrealism and its varied and random character (Krauss 107). Both relations, if explored, reveal particular dimensions of photography that deal with the invisible, the transforming, the aleatory, and the transient.

Examples of these dimensions of photography include the construction of the camera obscura, as used by Leonardo da Vinci, Al-ibn, and others, as well as the creation of the lens and understanding of optics (Lovell 5). The lens and manipulation of light was largely considered to be the space for the manipulation of the elements in general (even in an alchemical sense). The lens was created several centuries before the photosensitive materials were made possible that are used in the photographic process. At that point, however, they were central to the development of the astronomic science and its inherent precision. However, there is another element, which, despite Benjamin’s claim, remains obfuscated in the mists of the days preceding the photographic – the alchemical. Lindberg describes at length how people such as Francis Bacon, both medieval scientist of optics and alchemist, provided the theoretical foundation that was necessary to understand the nature of light and vision (236).

The scope of Bacon’s work was wide and varied. Particularly important is the example of his treatise on the rainbow (Lindberg 277). Arguably, it illustrates the ontological considerations of seeing and the photographic. Put simply, Bacon argued that if a hundred persons are put in a line in front of a rainbow, due to the nature of optics and light, all one hundred of the persons would see a different rainbow. Such early speculations clearly mark the foundation for an understanding of the photographic as an ontological dimension to thought and experience – a way of seeing, rather than simply as a material mode of production of images.³ Speculations such as Bacon’s, perhaps, can be seen as the beginnings of a lineage of thought that is still evident today, which recognises that photography is a way of seeing; and as such it is a construction (or a relative positioning) of the thing that is being seen.

This perspective brings in an ontological dimension. Of most interest is Baudrillard's essay, called "Photography, or The Writing of Light", which attempts to problematize the subject/object dichotomy of photographer and photographed. This is an issue that is central to a perspective of photography as a way of seeing – who *sees* and who is *being seen*. Nevertheless, Baudrillard shies away from naming photography as an ontological dimension and stays firmly in the ground of mediation – namely, that photography is an ambivalent relation (1). Furthermore, however, such a view indicates that photography, as a *way of seeing*, is something more than the material; or, something more than the visible.

Thus, I assert that photography consists of an inception, an ideational event for lack of a better term, and an invention, a material event and subsequent practice. Moreover, inception preceded the invention some centuries.⁴ The history of art is full of stories about painters whose work is mirror like and realistic to the extent that one would feel a desire to reach for it (Pendergrast 30). Such examples fit well into the tradition of magical mirrors as well (Pendergrast 30). Similarly, the imagination of the 18th Century imagined similar prospects for art. Most striking of these examples is the story of the island of Giphantie by Charles- Francois Tiphaigne de la Roche written in 1760 (79 years before Daguerre's official invention of photography) in which the protagonist meets the spirits of the mythic island who:

have studied to fix these transient images [that appear on the retina of the eye]: they have composed a most subtle [sic] matter, very viscous, and proper to harden and dry, by the help of which a picture is made in the twinkle of an eye... [the] impression of the images is made the first instant they are received on the canvas, which is immediately carried away into some dark place; an hour after, the subtle [sic] matter dries, and you have a picture so much the more valuable, as it cannot be imitated by art nor damaged by time. (de la Roche in Nickel 49)

Tiphaigne de la Roche's story demonstrates in fantastic detail the various steps inherent to the photographic process. Considering that this description predates almost 80 years the invention of photography by Daguerre, it demonstrates clearly that the photographic as an idea existed before its material realisation. This exactly is what leads us to the distinction between inception and invention – while invention implies a singular point of invention, inception belongs to a brand of speculative thinking that is willing to accept all kinds of collateral, congruent, and even contrasting influences and discourses. In other words, photography can be invented, but the photographic as a way of seeing, as an ontological dimension has been deeply pervasive to European culture for centuries (see the example of magic mirrors in Pendergrast 29; also, on photographic ontology see Nickel 49). In other words, much like the images will be shown to have visible and invisible dimensions, so does the history of photography itself – the visible invention and the invisible inception.

The photographic, despite the fact that it is made to be the 'handmaiden' to all kinds of concerns, is mostly a concern of ontology. In other words, photography is an ontological dimension, a way of being and a way of seeing. In order to explore this in more detail, I will continue this line of speculation in relation to documentary

photography. This way, I will challenge any preconceived understanding of the visibility of the photograph. I will speculate on particular forms that the photograph has taken, and by drawing on the particular historical examples of Atget and Marville, I will demonstrate how it is related to other supplementary aspects such as technology, practice, and social impact. Ultimately, I will demonstrate that photography, while taking on the shape of documentary practice, produces images i.e. documents that could be understood dialectically. Furthermore, it will be my argument that the dialectical image makes clear the ontological dimension of the photographic. In other words, the dialectical image reveals an inherent ambiguity that makes evident the fantastical, the unseen, and the real.

Documentary Photography

It is widely claimed that photography is the technological development that uncovered a new epoch of seeing in the centuries following its invention in 1839 (Benjamin's *Reflections* 151). However, after the newfound revolutionary *how* of operationalizing the *camera obscura*, other considerations quickly followed – those of where the camera is located in the web of social relations, who is behind it, and who in front of it. While photography has been considered from its very beginning a practice of producing documents, it is the case that not all photography is documentary (Boggre xv). Some photography is documentary, some is activist, and some are both, while other kinds of photography are neither (Boggre xv). For the purposes of this text, I shall define documentary photography as a reflective practice of producing photographs of a particular situation, events, location, or persons that have a clear social implication (Boggre 2). The main distinction between documentary photography and general photography, for lack of a better term, is the difference in positioning the photograph in practice (Boggre 2); in the case of documentary photography, there is the necessity of transmitting a truth, as well as an implication of operationalizing the photograph (*ibid.*). In other words, the photograph is not envisioned solely by the practitioners themselves; it is usually directed towards an unveiling or an emphasis of the particular social implication and importance of that which is documented. As such, documentary photography is a particular convergence of the photographic method and the social element of photographic practice and act (Boggre 4).

Documentary practice, in turn, is closely related to the notion of the document, particularly the authentic document that aims to do something beyond itself and impact change in social relations in general, a notion that is prominent in documentary photographers according to Boggre (6). However, the photographic is essentially documentary, for the purposes of this argument and brevity's sake I would like to limit the current line of thought to documentary photography exclusively – a practice that deals especially with the convergence of the documentary, the authentic, and their production (see the report on 'the integrity of the image' in the World Press Association, Campbell 3).

I have already indicated that the advent of photography reshaped considerably the idea of representation, and it might be argued that it even transformed it completely (*Reflections* 151). An interesting parallel that might give further insight into not only the photographic, but also the very construction of the

documentary is painting. Put simply, painting is a representational model; it selects and builds a totality that is meant to be seen as such in its traditional form of representation. In photography, on the other hand, the camera is an intermediary between the subject and the object and thus acts as a tool that allows for a particular *way of seeing*. Thus, the debate whether photography is art in the same way that painting is, could be seen to belie the actual differences and similarities between the two practices.

As Benjamin notes, in the period in which photography first came about painting was focused on realism (*Reflections* 149); a chief example of that was the Diorama, or Panorama, co-invented by Daguerre (149).⁵ The fact that Daguerre, before establishing his partnership with the pioneer Niepce, was working on the Diorama is completely not accidental.⁶ The Diorama, as Benjamin suggests, is not only painting's projection forwards into realism as an attempt to vividly and truly represent the world, but also painting's projection outside of itself. It is the moment in which the Dioramas are at their most exquisite and complex, complicated vistas of prehistoric life summoning up visions of myth, demonstrating the new technology's ability to summon up a new future out of the vividness of the past (*Reflections* 148). As Benjamin aptly points out, the idea of progress is rooted both in the new technology of an era, but also in the era's prehistoric dreams of the time before it had begun as a defined time period. Thus, photography represents painting's dream of realism, by drawing on one of its most rudimentary of tools for sketching and reference work, the camera obscura.

The parallel between painting and photography demonstrates the merit of the particular kind of dialectical thinking that I aim to apply to the documentary image itself (Marcuse xii). Due to painting being the dominant mode of visual representation, photography, as a new invention in the same domain, was immediately perceived as a challenge (Marien 3). The opposition between the two was further reinforced by the evidence that photography is far superior to painting as a means of expressing information (*Reflections* 151). Precisely because of photography's overtaking of painting, that photography becomes largely synonymous with the authentic, as argued by Benjamin, the documentary as shown by Boggre, and science according to Marien (*One-way Street* 172; Boggre xv; Marien 32).

Documentary Images

The first of the two photographers I am interested in is Charles Marville, a French photographer who documented Paris of the 19th century in great detail (Sramek 8). In fact, he was the photographer hired by Baron Haussmann, who, in turn, was hired by Napoleon the 3rd to implement the structural changes of Paris that are now frequently referred to as its "haussmannisation" (*Reflections* 159; Berman 147). Haussmann's changes involved chiefly the demolition of old neighbourhoods in central Paris in order to prevent the working class from constructing barricades (*Reflections* 159). It consisted of demolishing certain working class neighbourhoods in order to prevent local opposition to the government, as had happened during the French Revolution. It is a marked historical occurrence that demonstrates the willingness of the state to completely restructure a space into something else that serves better the ideological agenda of power (see Berman 147). It is through this

process that the inception of the large and wide Parisian boulevards came about in place of the demolished neighbourhoods. Marville was the photographer hired by Haussmann to document both the old and the new – the “ruins even before they have crumbled” (*Reflections* 162).



Figure 1. Atget, Eugène. A l'Homme Arme, Paris, France. c. 1900. Photograph. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

It is through Benjamin that this analysis moves on to Atget, a photographer with an immense legacy that continues in the same tradition of Marville. Originally an actor, he reportedly never considered his photographic work artistic until the very end of his career (Atget 11). Nevertheless, he was a photographer who provided reference photos to artists such as Braque and Picasso, and Man Ray was his neighbour and friend (Atget 11). Atget's work of interest to this presentation is his documentation of Old Paris. Atget was responsible for thousands of glass plate negatives of old buildings in Paris that were in disrepair, in a state of ruins, or completely neglected by their owners. It is through his work that the archives and collections of several institutions in Paris managed to keep track of buildings that were in danger of collapse. He was both a photographer working on

commission, photographing what was asked of him, as well as photographing buildings on his own initiative that only then would become part of the lists of the various institutions and archives. In Atget's work the themes central to Marville are continued. There are still the empty streets, the abandoned buildings, every inch of Old Paris evident as a crime scene (*One-way Street* 191). To many of the surrealists, including Man Ray and Andre Breton, Atget's work was strange and represented a peculiar dimension of the city – to paraphrase Benjamin – one deprived of its aura (*One-way Street* 236). It is Benjamin who famously compared Atget's photographs to those of a crime scene, where something is apparently amiss. People are conspicuously missing and the photograph's frame reveals a surreal emptiness – the total opposite of what Berman, inspired by Baudelaire, shows it would have been like to be on the street of the great metropolis of Paris (Berman 131).

I plan to draw on Benjamin's method and rather than going into in-depth semiotic analysis of the images, I aim to simply provide a frame for them. In Atget's *A l'Homme Arme* one can see the watchful cabaret waiter as an abstract figure standing in for all possible observers (see fig.1, above). All is standing still. The technology used for the making of these images is dated and cumbersome in relation to contemporary photography, and based on chemically coated glass plates that require long periods of exposure. The people in such images tend to be ghostly, the buildings still, and light evenly distributed as befits a haunted daylight scene at a standstill. It is exactly this that Atget's photographs demonstrate - the stillness *in place* and *of place*, as well as the necessary stillness of an observer if one is to be noticed or if one is to be seen. It is the case that if there were people in Atget's photographs, due to the slowness of the technology, they would either disappear completely or show up as ghostly silhouettes. Very rarely one can see an Atget photograph that has managed to capture a person. But perhaps, it is more important to indicate at this time that in order for this to happen, the person in front of the camera must have remained still for a prolonged period. It is the first indication that we are approaching an exploration of the dialectic of seen and unseen in a photographic document.

This is also evident in Marville's Boulevard Haussmann (see fig.2, below) where the grand boulevard, itself a symbol of movement, has been stilled into a place, not a line of flight, not a transitional space, but a place of absence, where people are rendered into ghostly hauntings, whose presence seems long past, strange, and indistinguishable, but in a way much different from photos of bustling crowds and long exposures of places such as Grand Central Station in New York that grace the covers of magazines such as Time and National Geographic.



Figure 2. Marville, Charles. *Boulevard Haussmann (du Faubourg St Honoré)*. c. 1853–70. State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

And it is this *documentary* image that, through its haunting, empty look, becomes clearer and clearer as something else – a dialectical image. It is dialectical, because even though it seems to be showing one clear image of a particular place i.e. a boulevard in Paris, it becomes evident that at the same time it also hides and unveils. It hides the people to the point that the space becomes uninhabited, eerily abandoned, abandoned like a crime scene (*One-way Street* 192). It either reminds one of ghostly hauntings or brings up associations of abandoned crime scenes. This becomes even more peculiar when one revisits the initial understanding of the image, the fact that it is a historical and documentary image. It seems that although it is only one single moment that has been captured, the image speaks of far more than one moment. It hints at the moment's emptiness, the inability to retrieve what was lost in the moment or the one previous, or the uncertainty of what happens next. It makes one wonder if people had just left the scene, are about to rush back into it, or if there are people at all. As Benjamin writes:

Each epoch not only dreams the next, but also, in dreaming, strives toward the moment of waking. It bears its end in itself and unfolds it – as Hegel already saw – with ruse. In the convulsions of the commodity economy we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled. (*Reflections* 162)

And it doesn't take long to see that these palaces and boulevards are become ruins, long before they are abandoned. It is, in fact, strangely peculiar and fitting, that Marville's and Atget's cameras captured both New and Old Paris, the Paris that is being built by the Bourgeoisie and the Paris that is being destroyed by it. Furthermore, it is not only the reverse of reality that these photographs reveal. Rather, they unveil reality as

empty, as detached from the *auratic* experience one would have in those urban spaces (for example, for an application of Benjamin's aura in another context, see Mason 146). This is what I argue to be the fantastic of documentary photography. As Benjamin argues:

But it is precisely modernity that is always quoting primeval history. This happens here through the ambiguity attending the social relationships and products of this epoch. Ambiguity is the pictorial image of dialectics, the law of dialectics seen at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectic image therefore a dream image. (*Reflections* 157)

Thus, one becomes able to see more than the surface of the image. It is not simply "this happened" or "that which is", rather the image becomes imbued with nuance and further significance (Marcuse x). It stops being an image of only a single moment, but becomes an image of a delicate standstill, dialectically formed by the interplay of forces that both precede and succeed the particular moment. It is through this ambiguity that it becomes possible to see the image as something more than a documentary, but a dialectical image. It is both "that which is", but it is also made manifest as "other than itself" at the same time (Marcuse x).

When looking at the first image as a documentary image, while also considering its material basis (i.e. the technology that necessitates a long exposure time), and also place it in the historical context of Old Paris both having undergone the restructuring of Haussmann and currently undergoing its own collapse with old buildings being left to fall in disrepair, one makes it possible to set the foundation for a dialectical understanding. Dialectically, one would be able to see far more, in fact, to render the unseen visible. It is this method that I suggest as the tool of choice for beginning to investigate Benjamin's "crime scene" (*Reflections* 192).

Considering the historical context in which Atget took a photograph of a waiter in a cabaret bar, one would be able to analyse this further. First of all, to reiterate, the waiter is only visible in the photo because he did not move during the period it took to take the photograph. Furthermore, it is visible that his likeness is taken in great detail; this only reinforces the previous statement – in order for the high level of detail to be seen the waiter must have been almost perfectly still. However, if one looks to the left of the waiter (fig.1), it is possible to see a ghostly silhouette of someone else. Already, there is the distinction of stillness and movement, visibility and invisibility. This can be further explained from a critical perspective; namely, the figure seen only as a silhouette is likely to be a customer. This demonstrates a very peculiar class aspect, in addition to evoking connotations of alienation. In other words, the waiter has no choice but to be still, for he is not an agent in the space depicted, but rather an "ornament" of the environment (Kracauer 75; also, see Richter 118). The waiter is reduced to his functionality as a working class individual, and in a particular way objectified as a subject without agency. This is just a simple example of what the dialectical image can demonstrate as a product of underlying forces that remain invisible on the surface.

Other images taken by Marville include empty pissoires (public urinals), abandoned flower markets, places, about which one is never sure whether they were captured too early or too late in the day, they appear

timeless. Thus, it seems that all of Marville's photos point to the thought that all of them have been caught either too early or too late. Or it is, perhaps, early enough, and late enough – both for those whose homes are to be demolished in the restructuring of Paris, and for those who are building their new palaces. Such documentary images when explored through the prism of dialectic speculation and subsequently understood as dialectical images reveal the underlying forces responsible for shaping spaces. On one hand, it reveals the empty stalls of the market as the bare bones of a dead body left lifeless and inactive. On the other hand, it makes clear that the newly built palaces are, in fact, fortified under ever-present guards, much like the waiter, fixed in time like statues.

It is exactly the modern (in this case the captured moment) that conjures up the prehistoric (the unknown moment preceding), and the documentary image finds itself becoming a dialectical image. The fantastic reality of exploitation is made into a reality; the fantastic notion of rebuilding a city by uprooting its citizens in order to protect power from ever being in their grasp. In another sense, it becomes unreal that such an event is even fantastic. Much like the waiter, whose very reality is exploitation, the fantastic condition of life becomes real – it has been documented, and thus made visible. The new document portrays the new boulevards, the existing class relation as the already established and thus as eternal.

The photographic document begins what Benjamin calls a realistic mode of representation that offers what Campbell argues is a claim to truth, founded on the notion, suggested by Nickel, that the visible is the real (Reflections 151; Campbell 3; Nickel 42). This paper has demonstrated how taking such a “document” and exploring it through the notions of the invisible, the fantastic, and the generally ambiguous (be it spirits, crime scenes, or modernist grandeur), it is revealed as “other than it is”. I have provided an unconventional account of historical materialism that tries to unveil what is occluded and hidden, to show that the real was once fantastic. And that it is not the potential for change that is fantastic, but rather the fact that the real exists as real. For the reality of exploitation inherent to mass government projects that destroy neighbourhoods and build boulevards in their place are, in fact, fantastic, yet real. Thus, I argue that the dialectics of documents is the interplay between the visible and the invisible, the fantastic and the real.

It is through this speculative dialectical approach that one can reverse the photographic process and uncover the crime behind the crime scene Benjamin describes (*One-way Street* 192). As the infamous surrealist Seligmann notes, quite similarly to alchemy, the transformation of reality into an image can be reversed – from image to reality (see Seligmann 120); from a modernist project to a lived experience on the street and from a lived experience into a photographic document.⁷ It is this interplay that is revealed in photography, to paraphrase Benjamin, where the observer is not only allowed a glimpse into the past, but also into the future (*Reflections* 148). These buildings, cabarets, and boulevard are real, *were* real in fact, but understood dialectically one can begin to see how they hide their inexistence as well. The boulevards, buildings and cabarets are already ruins – the process that has created the conditions for their existence is based on the destruction of what has come before. Thus, through their very existence, and the documentary proof seen here, they become that which *has*

come before and the inevitable ruin becomes apparent. It is through this standstill that the images uncover the fantastic of the real.

Notes

- 1 By “fully working” I mean a method that allowed for an acceptable period of exposure of 2-3 minutes, rather than the excessively long 20 mins that Daguerre dealt with in his experiments before the final Daguerreotype that he announced to the world (see Gernsheim and Gernsheim).
- 2 An interesting example of such fiction can be found in Ancient Greece, where it is said that a painter could produce photorealistic images, or that a notorious sculptor gave perfect human likeness the shape of stone. Undoubtedly, such anecdotes are of great interest to an inquiry into the nature of the photographic; especially to an inquiry that aims to problematize the visible and the invisible.
- 3 At this point, it will only be noted that way of seeing is used in a different sense from John Berger’s work.
- 4 The reader is invited to, once again, read the quotation at the beginning of this section from Walter Benjamin’s “A Brief History of Photography”, where both Benjamin’s use of “invention” and his indication that “more than one person had sensed [photography’s] approach” acquire a new layer of meaning in this context (*One-way Street* 172).
- 5 Usually an arrangement of various wooden boards that through realistic painting styles and configuration aimed to represent a particular environment; often, it was the case that a landscape from uncivilised nature would be displayed in a large city (*Reflections* 149).
- 6 A historically significant partnership that resulted in the first working daguerreotype camera; Nicephore Niepce is acknowledged as the first person to fix an image on paper, some decades before the actual daguerreotype and the pivotal partnership (Gernsheim and Gernsheim 20).
- 7 Kurt Seligmann, quite interestingly, was a practicing occultist and surrealist, as well as historian of magic.

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