

SESSION ABSTRACTS
Gothic and Uncanny Explorations

Wednesday 10 September

3:00-4:30 Parallel panel sessions

Uncanny Technologies and Media (1D 340):

“Knowledge of the Uncanny Cosmos through Media in the Weird Tales of H. P. Lovecraft”

Jakob Olsson, Karlstad University, Sweden

With his concept of “cosmic horror”, H. P. Lovecraft (1890–1937) introduced a type of horror fiction defined by both inescapability and undescribability. When exposed to the truth of the vastness of the universe, the insignificance of mankind therein and the existence of monstrous beings beyond human comprehension, there is no turning back for his characters. Their outlook on life is forever changed; the world they thought they knew is exposed as a façade covering up an uncanny otherworld.

The cosmic is seldom experienced directly in Lovecraft’s weird tales, however. More often knowledge of it is transmitted through various types of media – such as representations, architecture and communication technologies. Throughout the stories we partake in the suspicions, hypotheses and fears of the characters and the very process through which the uncanny cosmos, gradually, is revealed to them through these media utterances.

Thus, the focus of this presentation is not only the occurrence of media in Lovecraft’s stories, but media as an aesthetic strategy for conveying cosmic horror and creating an uncanny effect.

“A ‘soulless mimeograph of humanity’: Cinema, Technology and the Uncanny”

Frances Kamm, University of Kent, UK

This paper explores the relationship between cinema and the uncanny and how, specifically, feelings of the uncanny can be evoked from the representation of human bodies on the cinema screen. As the quotation in this paper’s title demonstrates – taken from a review of 2001’s *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* – cinema has the potential to render bodies uncanny for their viewers: in this case, the reviewer finds the CGI created characters of the film to be photorealist but also eerily lifeless and not quite ‘real’ enough. The digital characters of *Final Fantasy* are uncanny: they embody a slippage between the homely and unhomely, the living and the inanimate. This paper investigates instances, such as these, when the filmic human body is regarded as uncanny and argues that this is directly related to technological developments in film: in this case, the use of digital technology to create photographically

realistic looking human characters. This presentation explores cinema's ability to bring such 'soulless mimeographs' to life, the reaction audiences have to such characters in films like *Final Fantasy*, and points to the suitability of contextualising the experience of watching such representations within the theory and concept of the uncanny.

“The Uncanny World of Motion Portraits”

Torbjörn Svensson, University of Skövde, Sweden

Why are people disturbed and upset by motion portraits technology? Animated portraits made with Motion Portrait software (<http://www.motionportrait.com>) give the impression of moving portraits, similar to those found at *Hogwarts* School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in the Harry Potter books. A lot of reactions on the Internet and when shown to friends is ”- oh, that is so creepy”.

In this presentation I will try to understand the creepiness from the perspective of *the Uncanny*, as presented by Sigmund Freud (1919) and connected to the phenomena called *the uncanny valley*, coined by Masahiro Mori (1970) in a scientific paper concerning design of humanoid robots.

Grotesque Subjects and Unstable Identities (1D 341):

“‘Impersonating the Self’: Grotesque Subjects in Joyce Carol Oates Academic Novel”

Liz Kella, Södertörn University, Sweden

The fiction of Joyce Carol Oates frequently features grotesque and abject subjects, uncanny doubles, taboos and secrets, often connected to an individual's private past, but also to larger social concerns. This is, indeed, one defining feature of the American Gothic. As Teresa A. Goddu argues, “Despite its supernatural effects and its persecuted psyches, Gothic's terrors are neither imaginary nor individual” (65); instead, Gothic terrors register the anxieties of a nation, and in the American context these anxieties have historically centered on interracial encounters.

In this paper, I examine Oates's use of the Gothic mode in *Mudwoman* (2013). Like Oates's earlier novel, *Black Girl, White Girl* (2006). *Mudwoman* might be considered an “academic novel” of the type Jeffrey J. Williams's sociology of genres has demonstrated to be on the rise, and often exhibiting political conservatism. But both novels clearly engage—even extravagantly engage—with the Gothic, recasting university campuses as Gothic locales haunted by secret histories and hidden crimes, and charting the transformation of characters into the grotesques that Bakhtin associated with carnival. In Oates's rendering, however, the

grotesque characters are far from comic; they instead uncannily register “the confusion, the incongruence, the whirling heterogeneity of modern life” (Hurly 141), particularly the modern life of American racial, gender, and class politics.

“*Der kleine Vampir* and the Collapse of Identity”

Peter Kostenniemi, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Children’s gothic fiction is frequently considered ‘kinder’ than gothic fiction for adults. Angela Sommer-Bodenburg’s (b. 1948) series of novels *Der kleine Vampir* (1979–2008) is, for example, often described as a story about a human boy who grows up and matures; a very positive tale, with some elements of horror ‘hovering in the background’.

Contrary to the above, I intend to demonstrate that *Der kleine Vampir* is the story of how the boy Anton’s human identity is challenged and eventually collapses. The text and illustrations recount Anton’s friendship with a vampire boy, Rüdiger. Together they engage in nightly adventures of a carnivalesque character, but there is a ‘shadow side’ to it for Anton. Gradually the border between his and Rüdiger’s identities is blurred and Anton increasingly becomes the vampire. This is accomplished with the aid of classic gothic devices such as mirrors and dreams.

Anton read a lot of vampire stories, and his perception of them alters as his friendship with Rüdiger deepens. Anton’s changing attitude towards his reading serves as a sign of his challenged identity and, simultaneously, as a metatextual representation of the evolution of the vampire genre from its inception in prose in the early 19th century.

“Sympathy for the Devil: Real and Imagined Monsters in Marie Corelli’s

The Sorrows of Satan”

Rachael Jane Taylor, Newcastle University, UK

In Marie Corelli’s novel, *The Sorrows of Satan*, there are two main characters which could be described as ‘monstrous’: Prince Lucio Rimanez and his protégé Geoffrey Tempest’s bride, Lady Sybil Elton. This paper is a gendered reading of the text and argues that Corelli has chosen to portray the character of Prince Lucio more sympathetically than that of Lady Sybil Elton despite Lucio’s true identity as Satan, the epitome of evil. Using sources from the day such as women’s conduct manuals and psychoanalytical discourses, I wish to argue that Lady Sybil’s perceived ‘monstrosity’ is all the more shocking because of her gender and her physical beauty. I wish to suggest that Lady Sybil’s tragic demise has come as an inevitable consequence of her attempts to empower herself and transcend the treatment and expectations

of women in Victorian society. The most obvious example of these attempts comes in the form of Lady Sybil's acknowledgement of her own sexuality. Consequently, the 'monster' that is Lady Sybil only appears to be more shocking because the real monster was a patriarchal society concerned only with the marriageability of women and their meeting of the needs of the sexuality of men.

4:30-5:30 Parallel panel sessions

Exploring the Uncanny (1D 340):

“A Reader's Bogey? The Uncanny and the Reading Process”

Karin Aspenberg, Karlstad University, Sweden

This paper combines the Gothic novel of the 19th century with modern reception theory. The focus is on E.T.A. Hoffmann, a front figure of Gothic horror, the genre that mixes both horror and romanticism. Thus, it is symptomatic that Freud, in his early theoretical accounts of *the uncanny*, devoted a good deal of attention to Hoffmann. The purpose of this paper, however, is to explore the phenomenon of the uncanny in Hoffmann's literature from a perspective of reception theory, more precisely of Wolfgang Iser's concept of *the void*. The void in literary texts is to be understood as a gap (in phenomenology; a gesture towards nothing) that must be “filled” in the reading process, and therefore triggers the reader's imagination. But what, then, is the significance of the void when it comes to the reader's perception of the uncanny, this diffuse and uncertain experience, sometimes described as “horror vacui”? In other words, can the effects of uncanniness be discerned as a result of filling the void in the reading process, formulated above as a reader's “bogey”? And what can this tell us about the power of human cognition, when confronted with a reality that cannot be instantly categorized and defined?

“Art's Uncanniness”

Kari Løvaas, Karlstad University, Sweden

In his poetological speech “Der Meridian”, given at the reception of the Georg Büchner prize in 1960, Paul Celan identifies several figures of art in the work of Georg Büchner, among them a puppet in *Danton's Death*, a monkey wearing clothes in *Woyzeck*, and an automaton in *Leonce and Lena*. These figures introduce the “uncanny side” of art, where art goes “beyond what is human, stepping into a realm that is *turned toward* the human, but uncanny”.

In this paper I will explore the notion of art's uncanniness in Celan's poetics with relation to the concept of authenticity in Heidegger, who, based on a reading of Sophocles' *Antigone* designates the human essence as being the “uncanniest one”. I will argue

that Büchner's Lucile – with her absurd “Long live the king!” – cannot be figured as heroically transgressive like Heidegger's Antigone. With Celan, I will read her “counter-word” in terms of an irreducible relationality that also aligns with her being characterized as “art-blind”. Lucile's “counter-word” cuts the strings of the puppets, Celan writes, it coincides with the moment where an Other can perhaps be released from the otherness and an *encounter* takes place.

Postcolonial Hauntings (1D 341):

“Revenge of the Trolls: New Nordic (Post) Colonial Gothic”

Johan Höglund, Linnaeus University, Sweden

Recent studies have emphasized the gothic's ability to query the Manichean racial and social categories that have structured national and international relations since the late eighteenth century. A different yet complimentary strand has explored how the gothic has also relied on dominant discourses and cemented these same categories. In both cases, the gothic is understood to be intimately tied to imperial expansion and to the modernity that this movement helped bring about.

While the Nordic region has been perceived as detached from the project of European imperialism, recent historical and sociological research suggests that the Nordic countries were in fact highly complicit in this undertaking and also pursued their own colonial project in the Lapland region. This paper discusses how new Nordic horror films such as *Troll Hunter* (2010), *Thale* (2012), and *Vittra* (2012) appear caught between the traditional, anti-enlightenment gothic and the imperial gothic. These films all centre on the confrontation between Nordic society and a counter-invasive, forest-dwelling native belonging to Nordic folklore. This paper argues that while these films are rooted in Nordic mythology, they are also informed by the concerns of European gothic culture, by US horror film, and by the Nordic region's own troubled colonial past.

“The Effects of Spectral Spaces in Post-Colonial Literature”

Chia-Sui Lee, Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society, The Netherlands

Inspired by the current “spectral turn” and “spatial turn” in literary and cultural studies, I attempt to investigate how “spectral space,” which I refer to places that are haunted or characterized by the nature of specters, functions as a diverse and useful metaphor in reconstructing prevailing ideas about time, race, nation, and identity in postcolonial literature. Considering specters or ghosts as cultural specific and differentiated, I argue that spectral

space is varied in different contexts. In this essay I will examine three kinds of spectral spaces, including a space of heterogeneous time, a space of fluidity, and a space of uncanniness. I will demonstrate how they serve as productive narrative devices to challenge the established demarcations between the present and the past, dominant and subordinate, self and other, and to reconstruct the time-bound, place-bound and socially constructed identity of the haunted subjects in a few well-known postcolonial novels: Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*, and Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*.

Thursday 11 September

9:00-10:30 Parallel panel sessions

Writing Unstable Selves (1D 340):

“Writing the Psyche of the Psychic: Depth Psychology and Parapsychology as Models for Gothic Fiction”

Lauren Butterworth, Flinders University, Australia

‘By Any Other Name’, my creative thesis novel in progress, uses Gothic literary strategies with the Jungian personal unconscious and a Western Esoteric interpretation of reincarnation to develop fictional characters. Combining characters’ repressed memories with a series of images linked to their reincarnation allows their histories to extend beyond the limits of a single existence, adding to the complexity of their individuation. Set in sixteenth century Florence, seventeenth century France and nineteenth century London, I intend to link historical and thematic resonances with characters’ motivations through a rippling narrative of cause and effect.

This paper discusses the potential the Gothic offers to explore shifting notions of esoteric spirituality and femininity. The uncanny provides space for recurring motifs of internal and external hauntings to blur the boundaries between the unconscious, spirituality and madness. Through Gothic tropes of setting and tone, I can create physically and emotionally *unheimlich* spaces where characters experience uncanny revelations and strange synchronicities that hint at the sources of their unconscious complexes. The Gothic allows space for these ideas outside of their already interrogated scientific and academic parameters, and by inviting a suspension of disbelief, I am able to explore their potential while maintaining a believable fictional world.

“*Being Geniuses Together* – Ghostwriting and the Uncanny of Collaborative Autobiography”

Anna Linzie, Karlstad University, Sweden

Autobiography rarely presents us with the True Story of the autobiographer. This is especially obvious when someone’s life story has been told more than once and by more than one person.

My paper is about the uncanny of collaborative autobiography and the “ghostwriting” that makes Kay Boyle’s supplementary edition of Robert McAlmon’s *Being Geniuses Together* a strangely self-deconstructive survey of the expatriate community of English and American writers and artists in Paris in the 1920s.

Being Geniuses Together (1938) was an outspoken account of McAlmon’s years in Paris. The 1968 edition was revised by Boyle with supplementary chapters about *her* Paris experience and an afterword which adds yet another dimension of supplementarity.

The 1968 *Being Geniuses Together* departs from the dominant myth of the “same” time and place and crowd, and in this sense Boyle and McAlmon sometimes seem to be speaking in chorus - their impatience with the prolific lesbians of the Left Bank is one area of striking consensus. But it also points up the uncanny, double-voiced nature of collaborative autobiography and flaunts a kind of spectral *post mortem* dialogue in such a way as to deconstruct, relativize and undermine the (idea of the) “original” text.

The Gothic, the Uncanny, and Politics (1D 341):

“Uncanny Modernism and the Maternal”

Johanna Wagner, University College Maastricht, The Netherlands

In Olive Moore’s under-read and under-researched novel *Spleen* (1930), the protagonist recounts the terrifying experience of pregnancy, and her subsequent self-imposed exile. Ruth handles her pregnancy with a melancholic/hysterical intellectualism that evokes uncanny and disturbing perceptions of the pre- and post-natal experience.

The mother-who-turns-out-to-be-a-monster is at this point in gothic genres not particularly uncommon, nor is it uncommon to explore the hysterical woman, a literary trope that has its own tradition in literature. But Moore’s mother differs from the typical idea of the monstrous mother in that she herself is not monstrous in the least. Regardless of her feelings about the pregnancy, she delivers the mentally impaired, physically deformed child, and supports him for the rest of her life. Rather, it is society’s idea of pregnancy and motherhood as “natural” or “normal” states for women’s bodies and minds that conjure Ruth’s feelings of terror and the uncanny.

Through a modernist search for the “new,” Ruth’s melancholic dissatisfaction scrutinizes “old” societal norms that emphasize strict gender practices and roles. In the end, she and her child are the uncanny and terrifying encapsulations of both the promise and the disillusionment of this search.

“Gothic Romance as Resistance in Karen Blixen’s/Isak Dinesen’s War-Novel

Angelic Avengers”

Claudia Lindén, Södertörn University, Sweden

Angelic Avengers is Isak Dinesen’s only one novel, published 1943 during the Nazi occupation of Denmark. Dinesen refused to acknowledge the novel until after the war. Since Dinesen continued to refer to the novel as her “illegitimate child” it has been considered of low value in the research.

With *Angelic Avengers* Dinesen returned to the gothic tradition from *Seven Gothic Tales*. In this novel she used all the classic elements in the “female gothic” tradition from Radcliffe: two orphaned, and disinherited heroines end up in a strange gloomy house on the French countryside where their initially nice host turns out to be involved in “white slavery”, in trafficking. The girls are rescued by an old nanny, who plays the part of the lost and rediscovered mother. In the end, the girls are happily married and noble family connections restored.

I suggest that, even though *Angelic Avengers* look like a traditional gothic romance, it could be read as an allegory of the German occupation. In fact, I will argue, it was the gothic frame that allowed Dinesen to write a very political story of resistance against racial and sexual oppression based on loyalty between women, thereby defying the Nazi censorship.

“The Gothic between Popular Culture and Politics”

Gerd Karin Omdal, NTNU-Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway

The mid-1790s was the absolute heyday of eighteenth century gothic fiction in Great Britain, and Matthew “Monk” Lewis’ *The Castle Spectre* (Drury Lane, 1797) was the most successful gothic play of this period. Here Lewis stages the misanthropic Hassan being one of four African slaves constituting the guard force of the gothic villain. In the dialogues Hassan utters explicit criticism of both Europeans and Christianity. Having been forcefully removed from his native country he is now supporting his master’s evil deeds to get his revenge on humankind. The action of play takes place in Great Britain –a quite unusual location for the

time, as gothic fiction normally was set in catholic central Europe or the Far East. The setting brings attention to Britain's role in the slave trade, which was a highly controversial theme at the time.

This paper will explore what happens when ethical and political questions concerning slavery, race and colonialism are transmitted in the popular form of the gothic, and how these serious issues are elaborated and mixed with a romance plot typical of eighteenth century gothic fiction.

1:00-2:30 Parallel panel sessions

Trauma (1D 340):

“Screening Gothicised Turkey: Exploring National Identity and Child Abuse in Can Evrenol's *Kurban Bayramı/Festival of Sacrifice* (2008)”

Tugce Bikakci, Lancaster University, UK

Festival of Sacrifice is a religious holiday celebrated once a year in Muslim countries and cultures. During the festival, Muslims sacrifice an appropriate animal for God as a re-enactment of Abraham's story. Since Turkey is a Muslim country, the festival is a part of Turkish national identity. However, it has never been the subject of any film until Can Evrenol's *Kurban Bayramı / Festival of Sacrifice* (2008). This paper will discuss *Kurban Bayramı* within the context of Gothic criticism to explore the link between the social dimensions of sacrifice and the representation of its traumatic results on the Gothic screen. Having served as an introduction to Turkish national identity, the opening scene is followed by the sacrifice scene which makes references to Freud's term, “the uncanny” in a Turkish context. Moreover, while Rene Girard's theory of “the scapegoat” creates a motivational background of the use of sacrifice motif in the film, Dani Cavallaro's interpretation of the Gothic child enables further analysis within Gothic criticism. Drawing upon the representation of national trauma in Horror cinema, *Kurban Bayramı* not only reflects the Turkish identity and its traumatic past but also relates this discussion to the most common conventions of the Gothic genre.

“The Postcolonial Uncanny in European Art Cinema”

Andreas Jacobsson, Karlstad University, Sweden

This paper discusses the concept of uncanny in connection to a renowned French art film *Caché* (*Hidden*, Michael Haneke 2005). The aim of the study is to analyse how the film narrates an uncanny feeling of uncertainty about reality. The uncanny sensation in the film

emanates from a storyline that tells about an upper-middle-class family living in Paris who receives amateur surveillance footage of their everyday life doings in the mailbox. The experience of being filmed without noticing soon becomes frightening, and the husband in the family starts questioning what is real and not in his own life history. The quest for an answer to whom is filming and why focuses the story on an unresolved childhood trauma. The trauma also forms the basis for a discussion of postcolonial otherness in the midst of the former French colonial power. And it is in the unequal relationships steeped in the colonial/postcolonial history that we will find the key to the characters' uncanny experiences.

“Trauma and the Uncanny in Poe’s ‘Ligeia’ and ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’”

Marita Nadal, University of Zaragoza, Spain

As a disorder of memory and time, trauma implies a crisis of representation, of history and truth. The phenomenon of trauma remains in the mind like an intruder or a ghost, foregrounding the disjunction between the present and a primary experience of the past that can never be captured. Like trauma, the uncanny implies haunting, uncertainty, repetition, a tension between the known and the unknown, and the intrusive return of the past.

Taking trauma theory and the notion of the uncanny as the point of departure, this paper analyses Poe’s gothic tales “Ligeia” and “The Fall of the House of Usher”, and explores the close relationship between trauma and the uncanny in both of them. Thus, the protagonists of these tales experience the desire to know and the fear of doing so—the basic dilemma at the heart of traumatic experience—and are haunted by memories of a dark and repressed past not recoverable by conscious means but which determines their life in the present. The paper discusses trauma and the uncanny in the light of US history, pointing out the connection between these notions and the sociopolitical unrest associated with race and slavery.

Art, Avant-garde and Subculture (1D 341):

“‘The Trumpet in the Bottom’: The Uncanny in Öyvind Fahlström’s Work”

Per Bäckström, Karlstad University, Sweden

Öyvind Fahlström (1928–76) commenced as a surrealist author in the late 40s, writing several large and unpublished manuscripts as e.g. “The Trumpet in the Bottom”, but soon turned to avant-garde art becoming a driving force in the Swedish neo-avant-garde. In 1953 he wrote the world’s first manifesto for concrete poetry, inspired by Pierre Schaeffer’s *musique concrète*. In the late 50s he became a visual artist and later wrote radio plays, directed movies

and arranged performances. During his lifetime one of the main sources for inspiration was the debris of everyday life, and consequently he thematizes the uncanny in his political art of the 60s and 70s. Fahlström uses the uncanny to display the return of the repressed in everyday life: scatology, pornography, the monstrous, the body, the materiality of the artwork, media and popular culture etc, according to Schelling's comment: "Unheimlich sei alles, was ein Geheimnis, im Verborgenen bleiben sollte und hervorgetreten ist". His later work therefore previsions Nicholas Bourriaud's notion of relational aesthetics as a (political) uncovering of everyday life. In my paper I will discuss Fahlström's *œuvre* from the early texts, via his radio plays and films, to the visual art of the 70s.

"The Subject and the Sublime: The Gothic Nature Motif in Black Metal Lyrics"

Lars Martinsson, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Emerging in Norway during the early 1990s, black metal is a music-oriented youth subculture with a dramatic contemporary history which has occasionally been subject to intense media attention. Insofar as the academic world has shown interest in this subculture, it has very rarely paid attention to its literary content, despite the fact that the song lyrics take a central position for musicians and listeners alike. This is a major blind spot in the understanding of a cultural expression which is internationally recognized for its significant regional value.

The aim of my presentation is to illustrate the conception of the relationship between nature, the individual and the sublime that characterizes the literary expression of black metal. Moreover, I will illuminate the connection between black metal and the gothic literary tradition, which is primarily evident in the recurrent depictions of dramatically altered mental states and the merging of inner and outer reality, but also in the darkly atmospheric circle of motifs that characterizes both genres. Sticking to the Norwegian corpus of black metal lyrics, I intend to include and analyze examples in order to support my thesis, with translations into English where necessary.

"When the World Is According to Me"

Mariela Cvetic, University of Belgrade, Serbia

The presentation is about the exhibition/project *The World According to Me*. The central part of the installation is a scale model of a *dollhouse* in real size, made of cardboard and modeling paste by hand, precisely, meticulously. Thus, the scale model becomes a copy of smaller objects, which are themselves copies of (large) objects from our everyday surrounding. The final aim of this *trompe-l'oeil* play of passing between these two worlds in

1:12 scale is to return the small to the big, but due to an error inscribed in the original transformation, the size of the elements reveals the third system of measures, very close to the “natural” one.

The presentation analyzes doubling of objects and spaces through Freud’s psychoanalytic concept *Das Unheimliche* and investigates “the change” of architectural form in regard to subject. Analogue to the question “What does the Other want from me” is the question: “Where do I stand (literally) in regard to the Other” as well as: “Which space do I occupy”. In fact, the subject *wanders* between different spaces and is “never on the spot where he is”, both when he “doesn’t believe that he is where he is” and when “the place where he is” is accepted as absolute *fatum*.

http://gallery-shots.blogspot.com/2013/05/mariela-cvetic-svet-po-meni-world_18.html

4:15-5:45 Parallel panel sessions

Contemporary and Regional Issues (1D 340):

“Horror Economy: Horror Movies of the 2000s and the Crisis of Neoliberalism”

Alexander Markin, University of Zurich, Switzerland

As a literary genre that in its very beginning renders the epistemological shift that occurs in the XVIII century, early gothic fiction also reflects the final stages of the transition from the feudal to capitalist economic system. Although rarely discussed explicitly, questions of private property, economic liberty, production and exchange are an essential part of the early gothic discourse and play an important role in works of first gothic writers.

In my paper I will argue that economic discussion is an inherent part of the gothic genre memory. Moreover, since the 1990s and especially in the 2000s, gothic fiction becomes an important tool in the discussion of neoliberal economic issues, such as Reaganomics (Wes Craven’s *The People under the Stairs*, 1991), or, more recently, controversial policies, contradictions and the crisis of the second-wave neoliberalism (Eli Roth’s *Hostel*, 2005, 2007; John Stockwell’s *Turistas*, 2006; John Erick Dowdle’s *Devil*). In these horror movies neoliberal values are not only criticised, but also represented as a source of horror and anxiety, which is not very surprising, since the cultural imaginary links neoliberal economic to Pinochet’s state terror on the one hand, and to the aftermath of 11 September 2001 on the other.

“Nature and the Uncanny in Contemporary Fiction”

Sofia Wijkmark, Karlstad University, Sweden

What dimensions of our existence evoke the uncanny today? This paper will argue that one of the central aspects of contemporary life in regard to this issue would be the increasingly problematic relationship between humanity and nature. Living in an era of climate change might be described as uncanny, since our familiar environment has turned strange. Freud considered death to be perhaps the strongest topic of the uncanny, and pointed out that our thinking and feeling on the subject might still be considered primitive. We all rationally know that death excludes no one, but we still cannot cope with the fact of our own death. The same has been said about the environmental crisis; for example Žižek describes our attitude towards it in terms of a “split between the (real) knowledge and (symbolic) belief”. How can fiction, understood as a defense against the unbearable, deal with this split? What formal and narrative strategies are used? What themes and motifs of the uncanny are prevalent? Recent theoretical considerations on the concept of the uncanny will be discussed in relation to fiction by Swedish authors such as Lars Jakobson, Mare Kandre, Kerstin Ekman and John Ajvide Lindqvist.

“Exploring the Seasonal Gothic in Literature and Television”

Derek Johnston, Queen’s University, Belfast, UK

This paper considers the relationship between the Gothic and the seasons within specific cultural contexts. Various cultures have different associations of horror tales with specific times of the year. For the English, it is the Christmas ghost story, while for the United States horror belongs at Halloween, and in Korea summer is the time for chilling films and television series. The cultural specificity of this seasonal connection is demonstrated by the way that a supernatural element in a *Downton Abbey* Christmas special was described by American reviewers as being more suited to Halloween. There is also an element of cultural influence at play, as the increasing importance of US imports to Britain helped develop the significance of Halloween, while the English dominance of UK broadcasting has spread the Christmas ghost story to Wales, Scotland and Ireland, where there was no pre-existing tradition. This paper presents the broad findings of this research, with appropriate specific examples, to suggest why these uses of the Gothic at particular seasons of the year differ, and what this tells us about the cultures. It thus aims to encourage consideration of the hitherto under-studied area of the seasonal in relation to modern cultural production.

Friday 12 September

9:30-11:00 Parallel panel sessions

Gothic and Uncanny Geographies (1D 340):

“‘One thing about living in Santa Carla I could never stomach, all the damn vampires’ (*The Lost Boys*, 1987): The Uncanny, The Valley, and Intemperance with a Vampire along California’s Gothic Coastline”

Lauren Randall, Lancaster University, UK

Although the beach is traditionally perceived as a space of healing and recuperation, as an antithetic paradigm of Gothic trauma, incarnations of the coastline in contemporary American narratives appear much darker. Indeed, rejecting the sun in several ways, certain California-set narratives situate the beach, coastline and their surrounding areas as a haven for varying incarnations of the vampire. It is the aim of this paper to examine how and why the two converge so (un)naturally in both literature, such as Bret Easton Ellis’ short story ‘The Secrets of Summer’ (*The Informers*, 1994) and the young adult series *Vampire Beach* by Alex Duval (2006-2008), and film, most notably Joel Schumacher’s *The Lost Boys* (1987). Specifically, this presentation will consider how the complex relationship between vampires and youth engages with the culture of consumption associated with California, ‘interrogat[ing] the fetishization of youth as a desired/desiring substance at play’ (Latham, 2002) that occurs upon its beaches and down its coastline. By exploring the transformative nature of these spaces, as well as the ever-changing vampire, this paper will consider how the Californian coastline becomes a new space of contemporary anxiety, a new site of disturbance, and a new version of the uncanny valley.

“Familiarizing the Uncanny: Matt Reeves’s Vampire Movie *Let Me In*”

Maria Holmgren Troy, Karlstad University, Sweden

The vampire is a peculiarly transnational phenomenon as it moves, sometimes with supernatural speed, between different countries, parts of the world, and media. One intriguing recent example is the film adaptations of John Ajvide Lindqvist’s Swedish bestselling novel *Låt den rätte komma in* [*Let the Right One In*] (2004). A Swedish film based on the novel – directed by Thomas Alfredson with the screenplay written by Lindqvist – was first screened in 2008. In 2010, Matt Reeves’s American remake of the film, *Let Me In*, was released. This film is set in Los Alamos in a 1980s US instead of in Swedish Blackeberg, a Stockholm suburb, in the same period. In this paper, I will relate both the cultural representation of the

setting and the changes in the figure of the vampire to the uncanny, to the familiar and the unfamiliar. I am interested in to what extent the American film adaptation retains, changes, or omits uncanny elements that can be found in the Swedish adaptation and/or the novel. There are some significant changes and omissions that, I suggest, may indicate a lower tolerance of uncanny elements in the American film than in its Swedish counterpart.

“Antarctic Gothic: The Legacy of Poe and Lovecraft”

Johan Wijkmark, Karlstad University, Sweden

This paper argues that when it comes to describing the tradition of speculative writing of the Antarctic, two authors loom large over subsequent productions: Edgar Allan Poe and H. P. Lovecraft. Poe was first to infuse mystery into the Antarctic. *Pym* and “MS Found in a Bottle,” fashion the Antarctic as a mysterious locale beyond the known. This is picked up a century later in Lovecraft’s *At the Mountains of Madness*, writing in the same imaginative domain as Poe, extending his influence on Antarctic writing into present days. However, Lovecraft takes Poe’s impulse further, envisioning remnants of an alien civilization beneath the ice. Based on these impulses a tradition of Antarctic fiction has developed, where the premise is that beneath the icy surface lies something threatening that will surface. Despite the rapid expansion of scientific knowledge of the Antarctic, this tradition exists as a dark shadow of the scientific paradigm, in a manner reminiscent of Gothicism in the Enlightenment. It now spans over both literature and film, primarily in popular culture, and continues the use the motif of buried Antarctic secrets in Poe and Lovecraft’s vein, proving that the region is every bit as mythopoeic as ever.

New Readings of the Classics (1D 341):

“Jane Eyre’s Offspring: The Backwards Birth of *Wide Sargasso Sea*”

Louise Benson James, Cardiff University, UK

This paper looks at Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and its literary progeny *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys through the lens of postcolonial theory and scholarship on the female gothic. Rhys’ work is constructed as a deliberate ‘Other’, a ghostly and inverted double of Jane Eyre. I argue that the story, a retrospective prequel, presents a ‘backwards birth’, dispensing with the traditional Bildungsroman narrative of a journey towards enlightenment and maturity in favour of a devolution into madness, chaos and confusion. The heroine regresses from the freedom and open landscapes of the West Indies into the symbolic womb of the Gothic locked room. I examine death, life, dream spaces, and birth. The house and domesticity are

connected to the colonial civilising mission, possession, slavery and servitude, and themes of mimicry and mockery (Cf. Bhabha) are played out in the doubling that Rhys' story performs. Dream spaces highlight truth and reality vs lies and dreams, questioning memory and history. There is an acute anxiety about birth and motherhood in *Jane Eyre*, which *Wide Sargasso Sea* explores in the notion of monstrous motherhood and inheritance. I conclude by outlining the Victorian novel and Gothic genre's relationship to their distorted 20th century offspring.

“Temporal Distortions in the Gothic: The ‘Eternal Now’ as a Mechanism of Synthesis
and Redefinition in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*”

Christos Angelis, University of Tampere, Finland

If one wished to find a common foundation of Gothic works – from Victorian monsters to modern-day vampires – the concept of time would be a very strong candidate. Gothic works, particularly from the temporally charged Victorian era and onwards, are pervaded by forms of temporal distortions and dichotomies. Oppositions such as the day versus the night, (Christian) linear time versus (Pagan) cyclical time, as much as existential agonies referring to both the past and the future possess a central role in the mode. However, the temporal scheme that arguably becomes the tangent where all these conceptual circles meet is the idea of the *Eternal Now*, a timeless, suspended present. In my presentation I analyze how the concept of the Eternal Now functions as a mechanism of redefinition, by offering a negotiation of the temporal dialectics between an ‘undead’ past and a not-yet-materialized future. Applying Hegelian concepts related to synthesis and hybridization to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, I will demonstrate that the future envisioned by the text is not exclusive but, rather, through its inherent contradictions and conflicts, it becomes all-inclusive.

“Gustav Meyrink's *The Golem* and the Question of Genre”

Sten Wistrand, Örebro University, Sweden

In his fascinating novel *The Golem* Gustav Meyrink transforms the old Prague legends of rabbi Judah Loew's creature of clay into a book of esoteric wisdom referring to kabbalistic thinking, tarot cards and metempsychosis. The novel has been referred to as a story of horror or gothic fiction, not least due to its creepy and uncanny moods. In his dissertation *De mörka labyrintherna* (“The Dark Labyrinths”) Mattias Fyhr, however, claims that *The Golem* should not be described as a gothic but as a fantastic novel. This gives rise to the general question of how to deal with genre and, in this case, with genres like horror, gothic and the fantastic. For example the genre definitions of Fyhr and Tzvetan Todorov, in his study *The Fantastic*, are of

different kinds, one mainly concerned with motifs and the other with “operative principles”. But we also have to confront yet another and perhaps more intriguing question, namely what we have gained, if anything at all, by defining *The Golem* as this or that. I will discuss the novel in the ambiguous light of genre but I will also try to describe what Meyrink has created regardless of genre.

11:30-1:00 Parallel panel sessions

Ambiguous Bodies (1D 340):

“Fluid Bodies: Gothic Transmutations in Carlos Fuentes’ Fiction”

Antonio Alcalá González, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico

In America, the Gothic allowed writers to explore the origins of a failed national dream in the existence of past mistakes that are frequently ignored. In a similar manner, Carlos Fuentes makes use of Gothic writing to express his anxieties about the identity of Mexico as a country that has neglected to establish a dialogue with its past. This paper studies three narratives by Fuentes which have in common the arrival of monsters that transgress limits of time and body, bringing uncanny revelations when faced by the protagonists. The paper concludes by asserting that the superiority of these adversaries arises from their having a stronger understanding of the flux of time than the protagonists do.

“Human Pigs and Piggish Humans: Blurring the Boundaries in

Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* Trilogy”

Marinette Grimbeek, Karlstad University, Sweden

The relationship between humans and pigs is fraught with ambiguity. While the pig is the only domesticated species bred solely to be eaten, pigs traditionally live in close proximity to humans and are reared on household waste. This ambivalence is mirrored in their cultural significance: sometimes pigs symbolise luck or happiness, but they are also often regarded as the embodiment of everything unclean.

For the purposes of this paper I am primarily concerned with Pigoons, the genetically modified pigs which figure prominently in Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy. Originally engineered to be vehicles for human organs, these human–animal hybrids exhibit a sense of self that corresponds neither to traditional ideas of the human, nor to human conceptions of animality. In the post-apocalyptic world of the novels, notions of human exceptionalism are questioned and satirised through this blurring of the boundaries between human and nonhuman animals.

This paper investigates the way in which the uncanny physical resemblance between humans and pigs is used in the representation of hybridity in Atwood's trilogy, and also makes reference to some of the Pigoons' literary antecedents, as well as to figurations of pigs in contemporary visual art.

Forming the Gothic and Uncanny (1D 341):

“‘No Certain Guide’: Moments of Horror in Sarah Kemble Knight's Travel Journal”

Mischelle Anthony, Wilkes University, USA

In his 1785 *Essay On Punctuation*, Joseph Robertson comments on what he deems “carelessly and irregularly pointed” literature. Though critics and grammarians of that time agree that this “irregular” punctuator, the dash, can be used in expressive writing as an occasional sign of fragmentation or elision, they dismiss regular use of the mark. My paper examines how the dash replaces language in *all* eighteenth-century prose during moments of emotional or moral upheaval. Before the Gothic developed as a genre in English, in fact, the dash marked risky moments in earlier English language prose. My paper will explore the dash's roots, using Sarah Kemble Knight's New England travel narrative from 1704. When the dash appears in *The Journal of Madam Knight*, it inhabits both a presence and an absence: Here is a taboo subject, and readers can imagine how I might feel. Incorporating ideas from interdisciplinary theorists Theodor Adorno and Mikhail Bakhtin, my paper will demonstrate how Knight uses the dash to designate moments of horror, to invite reader sympathy, and to reveal her own class and race prejudices in her text. Her dashes reveal cultural mores surrounding female virtue.

“The Uncanniness of Form: A Reading of C.J.L. Almqvist's *Amorina*”

Boris Lazic, Karlstad University, Sweden

I hope to present a reading of C.J.L. Almqvist's *Amorina*, originally published in 1839, focusing on its relation to the concept of the uncanny as understood by Freud and his interpreters. While the text has been recognized as relating to a Gothic tradition, much of the scholarship regarding Almqvist has been reluctant to take these aspects of the text seriously, preferring to read it in terms of “romantic irony” or even humour. I would argue, however, that such an interpretation does not preclude a sense of the uncanny and may, in fact, contribute to it. In exploring the uncanny nature of *Amroina* I will briefly touch on its manifestation on a thematic level but will mostly explore it as a formal category, aiming to demonstrate how the uncanny can arise in relation to the formal organization of the text. To

achieve this I will focus primarily on two key aspects of the text: the fictitious foreword of the text and its continual shift between a narrative and a dramatic form. It is my argument that these two features of *Amorina* serve to destabilize the text and to give it a sense of ambiguity and unfamiliarity which definitely approaches the uncanny.

“Showing and Telling *das Unheimliche*? The Representation of Magical Thinking in the
Novels of Two Swedish Writers”

Anna Forssberg Malm, Karlstad University, Sweden

This paper compares the notion of magic and magical thinking in Carina Rydberg’s novel *Djävulsformeln* [The Devil’s formula] (2000) and Selma Lagerlöf’s trilogy *Löwensköldscykeln* [The Löwensköld cycle] (1925-28). This comparison has historical and theoretical implications. In Lagerlöf’s trilogy the magic is attached to the main initiator of events, Thea Sundler, whose magical thinking is represented through a typical Boothian mode of *showing*. In Rydberg’s work the protagonist is *telling* the readers about her magical powers. Both writers relate magical powers to the motif of homelessness, which links it to the concept of *das Unheimliche* and Freudian ‘un-homely-ness’ is indeed foregrounded in these novels. Despite the difference in the representational modes of showing and telling, it is, as I will show, high time to extend Rydberg’s authorship beyond its present position in the tradition of Strindberg’s apologetic works to the Selma Lagerlöf tradition of great, and often, gothic narratives.

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