# Haunted Shores: Coastlands, Coastal Waters and the Littoral Gothic Symposium

## Abstracts

## 22nd March-26th March 2021

This virtual symposium will be hosted over Microsoft Teams and all presentations will be available asynchronously. Please watch the presentations in your own time and use the channels to ask questions and interact with presenters and fellow attendees. The presentations will be available from the 22nd March. The 26th March will be a live session of panels and activities. If you would like to register for the conference please email hauntedshoresinfo@gmail.com. Abstracts are available on our website hauntedshores2020.wordpress.com.

## 1. Beaches and Shores

**Ursula Kluwick**
**Mediterranean Beaches as Haunted Landscapes in Narratives of Violent Displacement**

This paper deals with glimpses of the gothic in literature about refugees, exiles, and prisoners of war. The contemporary novels I discuss do not necessarily belong to the literatures of terror in a strict sense, but they nevertheless give expression to an existential terror. The shore often figures as a prominent site in such texts, a place that is associated with death: as the point of departure for clandestine crossings, the point where the corpses of the shipwrecked wash up, and, in general, as a place that conjures up visions of human and individual fragility. I argue that the representation of littoral space in these texts is indebted to a gothic tradition of privileging the shore as a site of dissolution. The gothic shores of the literature of violent displacement are haunted by a sense of disintegration – of body, environment, and self. In Pat Barker's

*The Silence of the Girls* (2018), for instance, Briseis is enveloped in a sea fog that makes her "invisible even to" herself and that entices her into the waters of the sea where she almost drowns (31); in Mahi Binebine's *Welcome to Paradise* (2003; *Cannibales*, 1999), a young woman's hand appearing from beneath an upturned boat on the beach terrifies her fellow refugees because it comes "out of the ground like a zombie's" (51); and in Margaret Mazzantini's *Morning Sea* (2015; *Mare al mattino*, 2011), a young man living by the sea can no longer eat fish nor can he even enter a Mediterranean Sea that has become an abject grave. My paper explores the legacy of gothic littoral space in such representations of Mediterranean beaches as haunted and haunting landscapes of death.

**Rachel M. Friars**
**"White snakes of sea-foam": Coastal Boundaries and Lesbian Spectrality in Emily M. Danforth's *Plain Bad Heroines***

This presentation will engage with the symposium theme of "Coastlands, Coastal Waters, and the Littoral Gothic" with an analysis of the neo-Gothic coast in Emily M. Danforth's *Plain Bad Heroines* (2020) and its relationship to the lesbian figure. The queer body's affinity with the Gothic is well known in literary study; however, the neo-Gothic coast and its liminal boundaries provide new ways of thinking through this queer/Gothic relationship.

Set primarily on the boundary between land and sea, *Plain Bad Heroines* casts the coast as a neo-Gothic space of sinister possibility. For the lesbian characters, the sea represents an unfulfilled avenue of escape into the distant 'real' world, where their identities can be fully realized outside of their cursed coastal environment. While the land is the territory of patriarchal power and control, the sea signifies a potential arena of feminine uncontrol. By existing on the physical shores of this boundary, Danforth's characters occupy a tense liminal space; the lesbian body is eternally caught between life and death, past and future, sea and land on the neo-Gothic coast.

This haunting and haunted space where all boundaries are permeable is imbued in Danforth's novel with historical and supernatural significance. The coast is a fraught place of both power, distress, and death, while it also operates as a site of infinite potential and self-discovery. By narrativizing characters and events across

modern and historic timelines that are connected by the neo-Gothic coast and its cursed geography, the lesbian body takes on the spectral form that Terry Castle (1993) identifies as typical of the lesbian figure. As the modern lesbian characters are taken in/taken over by their ghostly historical counterparts, the queer body remains tragically confined in this liminal space. Danforth characterizes the neo-Gothic coast as a contaminated space that collapses characters, timelines, and once-solid boundaries, destabilizing lesbian identity within this geographical limbo.

**Matthew Wynn Sivils**
**The Spectral Shoreline of Henry Beston's *The Outermost House***


The air was full of sleet, hissing with a strange, terrible, insistent sound on the dead grass, and sand was being whirled up into the air. … The dune bank there was washing away and caving in under the onslaught of the seas, and presently there crumbled out the blackened skeleton of an ancient wreck which the dunes
had buried long ago. (87–88)
—Henry Beston, from *The Outermost House*

Published in 1928, Henry Beston's nature writing classic, *The Outermost House*, chronicles the  author's year living alone in a small cottage on the shore of present-day Coast Guard Beach in  Cape Cod. Marked by a lyrical, hypnotic style, Beston's account portrays a metaphysical, even
cosmic, view of the elemental drama of life along the seashore. And—as revealed in his description of a storm wrenching a derelict ship from a dune—an Ecogothic sensibility  permeates this nature writing masterwork:

> As the tide rose this ghost floated and lifted itself free, and then washed south  close along the dunes. There was something inconceivably spectral in the sight of  this dead hulk thus stirring from its grave and yielding its bones again to the fury  of the gale. (88)

From this maritime relic rising from the sand like a corpse from a grave, to the cruel circumstance of a Coast Guard Surfman finding his father's drowned body on the beach (68),  Beston's dark vignettes reveal a littoral gothic embedded in the human presence upon the  seashore. In this paper I investigate how Beston makes clear that the gothic resides not so much  in nature itself, but in mankind's imprint upon the

beach, reminding us of the ever-present death and decay waiting just beneath the sand. Beston's *The Outermost House* represents an insightful critique of our species' exploitation of the maritime natural world, one unique in the canon of American Gothic literature, giving prescient voice to the environmental anxieties that, in the first half of the twentieth century, were just beginning to emerge.

**Clare Slack**
**Foulness Island: Scarelore and the Eerie in an Isolated Coastal Landscape**

Foulness Island in Essex is an island designated a site of special scientific interest which contains around 6000 acres of rugged coastal marsh land situated between the river Crouch, the river Roach and the Thames Estuary. It is reachable from the mainland by just a single road and a deadly tidal path known to those locally as the Doomway. Not only is the Doomway surrounded by military debris thanks to a century of military testing on the island, but the land itself has claimed many victims through the ever encroaching tides, echoing the Gothic landscape of Nine Lives Causeway seen in Susan Hill's horror novel, *The Woman in Black*.

It is an island saturated by the eerie and tales of ghosts, smugglers and conspiracies are rife on the island's shores. The island emits a feeling of being haunted by the outside, of otherness and of the unknown to those looking on at the treacherous coast. Did the troubled history of Foulness' past create its eerie reputation and haunted landscape? Or was the eerie reputation created as scarelore by those who didn't want people to visit in the first place? Maybe the very name of Foulness, foulness being a state of obscenity, vulgarity, inhumanity or even filth, created its own eerie history despite a far more ordinary toponymy.

In this presentation I will explore this haunted coastal landscape and examine the scarelore, as well as the very real dangers, that have shaped the Gothic personality of this island throughout history, from 18th century smugglers to scientists mysteriously engulfed in flames at the nuclear testing site that calls the island home.

**Catherine Howe-Evans**
**The Anorexic Logic of the British Seaside**

With their gaudy bright lights, amusements and sugared doughnuts, British seaside resorts appear to be the antithesis of Gothic locations. Since the 1870s, seaside resorts have offered the promise of clean sea air, colourful entertainment and escapism. In many Victorian home and etiquette books (such as *The Domestic World*), seaside vacations were strongly recommended to middle-class Victorians as essential for maintaining a healthy body and mind.

However, I will argue that there is a darker side to British seaside resorts, in terms of anorexic logic and the female form. Calling upon the work of Anna Silver regarding anorexic logic and Victorian Literature, I argue that during the late Victorian period, seaside resorts and their environmental setting offer a Gothic legacy, which can be seen to this day. With the anorexic logic of Victorian expectations of female bodies, seaside entertainment and seaside food, all is not fun at the fair.

Further to this, I argue that this Victorian experience has created a legacy of the Gothic seaside, which can be seen in the popular postcards of female bodies in various forms of anorexic logic to the grotesque throughout modern history and the societal ideal of the beach body - perhaps the most terror fuelled ideal of all.

**Katy Shaw**
**The Presence of Absence: Missing Children in Littoral Literatures of Contemporary Britain**

Reframing coastal communities as marginal sites of deviance and disruption, in contrast to the picture postcard promenade of popular culture, contemporary fiction utilises the dark side of the seaside to tell us new tales about the lost futures we face today. Focussing on the motif of the missing child in recent writings from Jon McGregor and Sarah Moss, the paper will consider the spectrality of the absence, and the power of presence, in the representation of missing children across contemporary literary coastal sites. Asking what the motif of the missing child tells us about identity and temporality in the contemporary moment, the paper will examine the visibility and agency of the missing child in offering new understandings of nationhood, loss and time.

The missing child raises questions about the historical traumas of a community and a nation. Creating a profound focus on the power of displacement in the present moment, as well as a reminder of the temporality of trauma that arises from the prospect of a lost future, the missing child has become a powerful platform for mediating grief and loss. The paper will mobilise the contemporary theory and thinking of Mark Fisher and Franco Beradi to interrogate the agency and popularity of this powerfully haunting symbol in contemporary literature. Through a consideration of what and why the spectral dynamic of this presence/absence illuminates - from historical archetypes of female sacrifice, to the realities of time and change, and the ability of the past to erupt at will in the present - it will explore the missing child as a haunting vehicle for the revoicing of histories, for moving power from the margins to the centre, and reorientating conversations about the future of the dis-united kingdom away from cities and towards the seaside in the twenty-first century.

## 2. The Caribbean

**Ellen Howley**
**"the ghostly sound / of waves": Encountering the Past in Derek Walcott's Omeros and "The Schooner Flight"**

St Lucian poet Derek Walcott is a poet of the sea and from the coast of his Caribbean shore, he encounters a past that is marked by the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade. The book-length *Omeros* (1990) and the long narrative poem "The Schooner *Flight*" (1979) are two works which turn to the sea to attempt to understand the lost histories of the Middle Passage, the triangulated journey from Europe to Africa to the Americas.

This paper brings these two Walcott poems into dialogue, with a particular focus on Book III of *Omeros* and section five of "The Schooner *Flight*", where the poems' characters are brought face-to-face with the ghostly presence of their African ancestors. For Achille in *Omeros,* the journey begins on a Caribbean beach and ends on the shores of an African river. The protagonist of "The Schooner *Flight*", Shabine, passes the phantom ships of Admiral Nelson and Admiral Rodney while at sea.

These meetings at sea and at shore are compared in this paper. In particular, this work reveals the sea's ability to challenge linear time through the historical and personal memories it holds. In the postcolonial setting of St Lucia, these pasts haunt the island's shores, which, for Walcott, are inextricably linked with the African coastline from whence millions were sold into slavery.

**Alannah Ari Hernandez**
**A Sea Foam Monster in the Caribbean Sea: Misremembering Rape and Murder in "The Wake" by Lasana Sekou**

Due to its location, the Caribbean is thousands of miles of littoral geography; and due to its colonial and postcolonial histories, it is a locus that is still haunted by its violent, brutalizing, and exploitative plantation past. In his short story, "The Wake," Lasana Sekou –the contemporary author from St. Martin– explores the painful ways in which the centuries-old, colonial violence legacy continues to taint the thought processes and behaviors of some members of Caribbean communities.

"The Wake" shows the sad reality of how internalizing legacy violence makes the abused become the abuser. In the story, the island is haunted by the specter of forgotten historical abuse. It is also branded by trauma, which appears, like footsteps on wet sand, only to disappear when a wave of sea foam washes over them. The wake in the story takes place in Edonia's (protagonist) home which is a locus haunted by the sadness of recent death, the memory of a sea monster and actual ghosts. It is also scarred by a trauma that prevents her from seeing and discerning the real cause of the tragedy her family suffers.

This paper intends to analyze two aspects of the story. The first is Edonia's trauma and her creation of "screen memories," like the sea foam monster, as a defense mechanism that keeps her from visualizing a crime she witnessed as a very young child, when she saw her sister raped and murdered at the beach. She did not understand the crime then and does she remember it now. The second aspect for analysis is the supernatural: the sea foam monster and the ghost, as symbols that veil two painful pasts: the misremembered murder and the island's forgotten plantation history. The protagonist's final interaction with the ghost liberates her from trauma, historical amnesia, and the gothic locus.

**Giulia Champion**
**Caribbean Coasts and Colonial Ghosts**

In a recent article, Kerstin Oloff and Sharae Deckard theorised Rita Indiana's *La Mucama de Omicunlé* (2015) – translated into English, in 2018, as *Tentacles* – as a piece of New Oceanic Weird Literature: "Indiana's turn to the Oceanic Weird is mediated predominantly via the fiction of H.P. Lovecraft, which teems with fears of deep geological time, natural immanence, and the alterity of both nonhuman life and non-European civilization" (2, 2020). By engaging with Lovecraft's racist and ecophobic legacy, Indiana's speculative work connects the colonial past of the Caribbean with one of ecopocalypse. In her novel, the crystalline waters and white sandy beaches of the region have been transformed into decaying landscapes, challenging the Edenic and picturesque images used to sell these sites to tourists – images which never show the environmental impact of this industry.

Similarly, in this paper I propose a comparative study Rita Indiana's novel with the Victor Halperin's horror movie *White Zombie* (1932). By considering the intertextuality of Euro-American folklore and cultural productions in both works, I first identify how the figure of the zombie and that of environmental catastrophe become ghostly figures of colonialism haunting Caribbean shores, both metaphorically and literally. I then illuminate the use and misuse of Afro-Caribbean deities and myths in Indiana's novel and in Halperin's film, respectively. This is done by identifying the embodiment of American racial and gender anxieties in Halperin's depiction of the zombie figure contrasted to Indiana's representation of the water deity, Yemayá. Finally, I explore how the author's engagement with the Yemayá's character can be understood as depicting a new shore ontology. This approach envisions coastal and littoral environments as more than spaces of mere leisure and vacationing, emphasising the critical role they play in anthropogenic climate change regulation.

**Sara Crouch**
**'The Woman of Colour, A [Gothic] Tale: Liberty, Trauma, and Migration in the Eighteenth-Century Gothic'**
*The Woman of Colour, A Tale* (1808) is a relatively short text that was published anonymously and has subsequently received little critical attention. Ostensibly an

heiress novel, it tells the story of the beautiful, single Olivia Fairfield, the mixed-race daughter of a recently deceased Plantocrat, who leaves his entire fortune to his daughter on the condition she return to England and marry her white cousin Augustus. It is these details, namely destructive paternal interference, incestuous marriage plot, and, to borrow George Haggerty's words, the 'nightmare of miscegenation,' (Haggerty, 1998, p.12) that complicate the interpretation of this text as an heiress novel and shift it into gothic territory. The titular use of 'tale' (which at the time was strongly associated with the gothic tradition via precedents such Eliza Parson's 1796 novel *The Mysterious Warning, a German Tale*) further hints at the gothic tension that animates this text. This paper contends that Olivia's forced migration to England, via the Bristol channel, and subsequent sublimation into the world of white sociability and domesticity, expose the limitations of the popular eighteenth-century English values of liberty and freedom. By harnessing the tropes eighteenth-century gothic fiction, this anonymous author carves out space in which a mixed-race woman might be realised as a complete and feeling subject, while exposing the horror, trauma, and haunting of the coastlines that have been indelibly shaped by systems of empire namely, colonial expansion and slavery.

## 3. Cornwall

**Virginia Richter**
**A Grave for Fish: the Haunted Shore in Wyl Menmuir's *The Many***

The fish that are caught, rarely enough, in an empty and silent ocean in Wyl Menmuir's short novel *The Many* (2016), are either diseased – 'burned … with white lesions down the side of each body … black skin dull and flaked away in patches' – or ghostly – colourless, translucent, 'the outlines of organs visible, shadows in the pale flesh'. The run-down state of the isolated fishing village where the novel is set appears to be caused by an environmental disaster, 'a profusion of biological agents and contaminants' in the sea. However, the ecological dystopia is only the reflection of a deeper malaise, a pervasive sense of entrapment, surveillance, and doom. Disturbing things happen to the novel's protagonist, but it isn't quite clear whether they result from human malice, his own mind, or a supernatural agency. In my paper, I want to explore Menmuir's narrative techniques, especially his use of

focalisation and space, with which he constructs a deeply oppressive and uncanny storyworld. The littoral setting plays a decisive role in the process of disorientation which affects the characters as well as the readers. In a constantly shifting and treacherous environment, sensory perception and memory appear more and more unreliable, until finally the boundaries of personal identity are as much eroded as the very ground beneath the villagers' feet. While never quite abandoning a realist mode, *The Many* questions the soundness of reality.

**Beth Howell**
**"Beyond it lay the ghostly, the intangible:" Tracking the skeleton of the Isles of Scilly's gothic literary legacy in the archipelagic work of Bram Stoker, Thomas Hardy, and Daphne du Maurier**

The sea that stretches between Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly is home to an ocean of ghosts. On calm days, disembodied church bells are said to ring out from the legendary lost land of Lyonesse, an ill-fated terrain believed to have once connected the islands with the mainland. The story of Lyonesse's submersion, supposedly occurring due to its inhabitants' disreputable actions, still featured in travel guides and folklore compilations as late as the 1890s. More tangibly, the Seven Stones, the rocky outcrop marking the spot of the drowned city, bore witness to numerous shipwrecks throughout and beyond the Age of Sail, giving rise to ideas about the island inhabitants as "natural" criminals and deliberate wreckers in an age of fears about global expansion and domestic "degeneration." Accordingly, this paper will focus in on this mysterious stretch of sea between Cornwall and St Marys, the largest of the islands, and examine the ways this archipelago came to haunt the late nineteenth-century Gothic imagination. The "Gothic" tends to be conceived of as something that emerges from the margins, a liminal space where subversive and challenging ideas evolve, yet the skeleton of an island gothic remains hidden and unexplored. In 1975 Scilly was declared an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and tales of shipwreck and sin rarely correlate with Scilly's idyllic tourist-motivated image. Yet prominent fin-de-siècle writers, including Thomas Hardy, Bram Stoker, and Daphne du Maurier, pointedly revisited the islands' Gothic past. With specific emphasis on Stoker's "Buried Treasures" (1875), Hardy's "A Mere Interlude" (1885),

and du Maurier's "East Wind," (c.1923), this paper will therefore focus in on these comparatively *forgotten* narratives in order to recalibrate the even less examined story of the Isles of Scilly's gothic literary legacy, and to consider why the ghosts of Lyonesse were eventually laid to rest.

**Simran Dinghra**
**Cornish Coast as a repository of horror, smuggling and patriarchal clutches:  Reading Daphne du Maurier's *Jamaica Inn***

The imagery of Inn and coasts makes us reminisce vacations and leisurely time spent around the people we like. Contrastingly in gothic writings, coast may represent the dark, sinister and concealed elements in the community. As a plot setting and a building structure, Jamaica Inn is far from the reliable accommodation one would associate an inn with, it invokes a deep sense of alienation and loss of freedom suffered by the protagonist Mary Yellan. The inn serves as a site of oppression, hosts pirates and facilitates smuggling, all of which were reportedly rampant in the nineteenth century Cornwall. Set in the 1820's the novel utilises all the proven elements of a gothic fiction. The protagonist Mary assumes the role of a gothic heroine entrapped by the patriarch, her uncle Joss Merlyn and strange occurrences happen around the town. The only solace is provided by the landscape, the sea, moors which may appear comforting but are just a metaphorical extension of her confinement because she can't escape to her old life in Helford. This research paper attempts to study how the nautical gothic components which were at the core of the era of industrialisation and imperialism have been incorporated in this text. Since its inception the work has been viewed as a romantic novel, a notion the author has always vehemently rejected, this paper aims to shed light on the ideas that are enclosed in the space, nature images, horror, ghostly dreams, which attempt to reveal the woman writer's anxieties in relating to feminist aspirations and consciousness for countering the male domination.

**Indu Ohri**
**"Their Friend, The Third Part of their Lives":Reconstructing Lost-at-Sea Narratives in Mary Butts's Ghost Stories**

Recently, Andrew Radford, David Matless, and Amy Clukey have written about enchantment and its connection to spaces—the countryside of Wessex, the cities of London and Paris, and the seaside settings of Cornwall—in Mary Butts's works. While scholars have looked at her representation of Cornwall as a place infused with magic and ghosts, I want to expand on their studies to consider Butts's portrayal of the ocean. I will specifically examine her short stories "Look Homeward, Angel" (1938) and "The Guest" (1935) and consider the interaction between oceanic imagery, male friendship, and the supernatural. In both stories, Butts portrays a couple named Julian and Cynthia and their differing friendships with the ghostly Fergus and living Archie, respectively. The two sharply contrasting portraits of friendship are explicitly linked to the couple's residence near the Cornish ocean through intertextuality.

In both stories, Butts imbeds numerous intertexts in order to reconstruct and engage with the masculine literary tradition of elegies mourning spectral male friends lost at or traveling by sea. I will examine the couple's friendships with Fergus, Archie, and Campion in terms of this imagery in John Milton's "Lycidas" (1637) and Alfred Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850). Butts feminizes this literary tradition by including the figure missing from these poems of male homosocial camaraderie, namely Cynthia. The couple's friendship with Fergus positions Cynthia as an equal and elevates her beyond her subordinate role in marriage; in contrast, Archie's loyalty to his friendship with Julian subjects her to the male gaze and near rape. Butts's foregrounding of Cynthia's presence in both stories serves as a critique of homosocial friendship in male elegies and aligns her works with female-authored maritime tales. I will end with a comparison of Cynthia to Esther Maitland in Louisa Baldwin's naval ghost story "Many Waters Cannot Quench Love" (1895).

## 4. The Long Nineteenth Century

**Talitha Slabbert**
**Joseph Conrad's Haunted Seashore**

In 1896, Joseph Conrad published a strange little story, written during his honeymoon, which  dealt with murder and madness on the Breton coast. The story,

named 'The Idiots.' was published in short-lived magazine *The Savoy*, and its editor was the well-known decadent Arthur Symons. Within the issue, the story was followed by a poem by Symons, and then by Aubrey Beardsley's 'The Death of Pierrot.' Symons would later write of Conrad that 'he creates thrilling effects by mere force of suggestion, elusive as some vague mist, full of illusion, of rare magic, which can become poisonous and sorcerous.' And indeed, the Gothic is a pervasive, if subtle feature of Conrad's littoral landscapes. In 'The Idiots,' the climactic tableau is introduced by

> The sea-winds coming ashore on Stonecutter's point, fresh from the fierce turmoil of the waves, howled violently at the unmoved heaps of black boulders holding up steadily short-armed, high crosses against the tremendous rush of the invisible.

The rugged landscape holds up 'high crosses' against the threatening onrush of the sea and its winds, like church steeples or like worshippers warding of evil. This suggestive imagery, in which the sea becomes symbolic of that which threatens a religious and social order, is further heightened when Susan, having confessed to her mother that she has murdered her husband, and receiving only condemnation, rushes out to the sea. In this presentation, I will explore the Maritime Gothic in Conrad, paying special attention to the coastline as the meeting place between a haunting sea and a supposedly settled landed order. I contend that the sea constitutes what Virginia Woolf might call 'the skeleton beneath' urban modernity, supporting and constituting the economic system that creates the prosperity and stability of the land: land which remains, nonetheless, haunted by its maritime underpinnings.

**Amy Ainsworth**
**Alfred Döblin's Nature as Secret in Theodor Storm's Der Schimmelreiter**

By the 1880s, the region of marshy coastline stretching between the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark known as the Wadden Sea should no longer have been a haunted shore, yet it remained a space of myth, superstition and uncertain rationality. Theodor Storm's 1888 novella *Der Schimmelreiter* (*The Rider on the White Horse*) famously dramatises the conflict between progressive, rational

enlightenment and the long-held, murky superstitions tied to this wetland region. As liminal spaces, somewhere between land and water, the wetland is a fitting environment for the conflict between rational progress and irrational myth to take place. My paper will argue that the fantastical elements which trouble the main character Hauke, and which prove so disruptive to the progress he hopes to bring about, are reflective of a broader sense in literature and culture of this time of there being something unknowable yet powerful in Nature, despite it being an era of apparent disenchantment.

The watery landscape in *Der Schimmelreiter* appears to embody a kind of unknowable agency which rejects human mastery. In a 1924 essay, Alfred Döblin discusses his crisis with Nature, and his attempts to grapple with what he perceives as its unknowable power. He explores his inability to get to grips with the terrible, secretive power of Nature. My paper will explore the marshy coastline in *Der Schimmelreiter*, considering the various connotations of literary wetlands, with reference to Döblin's ideas on terrible, powerful Nature, to argue that Storm's novella and its portrayal of the gothic coastline are part of a broader grappling with powerful Nature in all its irrationality. *Der Schimmelreiter's* coastline is haunted by myths, superstitions and demons, yet is haunted, too, by a sense of there being *something* present in Nature which eludes us.

**Janice Niemann**

**Wood's Shores and Genres: Subversive Settings in Ellen Wood's The Red Court Farm**

*The Red Court Farm* (1868) is not Ellen Wood's best novel. Its disparate plotlines, including a  train crash, a lace smuggling operation, and a haunted beachside cliff, are haphazardly  connected, an neither the novel's Gothic elements nor its sensational elements play out as  expected. Significantly, though, Half-moon beach (the novel's haunted shoreline plateau next to  the Thornycrofts' Red Court Farm) facilitates both of Wood's genre breaks—Half-moon's ghost  turns out to be an intentionally started rumour, and the lace smugglers decide to end their involvement in smuggling before they are caught. Subverting generic expectations set up by  Wood's Gothic ghost and her sensational smugglers, Half-moon is notable as the setting for both  anticlimactic conclusions.

Responding to Freed-Thall and Zhang's 2018 comment that literary setting "remain[s] largely unexplored" (*Modernism/modernity*) and MacNeill Miller's note in *Victorian Studies* (vol. 62, no. 2, 2020) that setting is "notoriously understudied" (249), I argue that *The Red Court Farm* relies on landscape settings to subvert generic conventions. Because of Half-moon's liminal status between private and public property (for all intents and purposes in the novel, it is a part of Red Court Farm), it does not carry with it a distinct set of social rules, making it a particularly well-suited setting for transgression. While Wood uses landscape settings as similar sites of generic subversion in *St. Martin's Eve* (1866) and *Anne Hereford* (1868), *The Red Court Farm* demonstrates a new level of subversive landscape by having the novel's Gothic and sensational plots, plots that we would expect to have exciting conclusions, amount to nothing. The novel's tidy denouement, where the Thornycrofts all find their happy endings, is significant for its mundanity—Half-moon, the setting that planted the seeds of Gothicism and sensationalism, ultimately undermined *The Red Court Farm*'s performance of both genres. I argue Wood's consistent use of liminal landscape settings to subvert generic conventions speaks to a larger understudied trope of landscape settings as transgressive spaces in Victorian novels.

**Jordan Welsh**
**Nautical Tragedies: Coleridge's "Mariner" and Hopkins' "Wreck"**

In 1918, a strange and unusual poem was published in the collected works of a relatively unknown poet who had died over forty years earlier. The poem entitled "The Wreck of Deutschland" had previously been rejected for publication in a Jesuit magazine by a relative of the Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (whose own nautical poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" had caused confusion and criticism).

While Michael Raiger and Patricia M. Ball have talked about the connections between Coleridge and Hopkins, less attention has been given to establishing extensive connections between both their lives and poetry. This paper explores and compares the representation of disasters at sea in Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" [1798] and Hopkins' "The Wreck of Deutschland" [1876]. It will consider how both poems take their influence from real life accounts but also include

the poet's own exploration on the themes of redemption, hope, religion and faith. The poems represent an awareness of the dangers of the sea and the risk posed to vessels, highlighting the ongoing fascination with travel and nature. I argue that we see a reimagining of what poetry can mean, in which there is no separation between the power of nature and the mystical effects of a benevolent force or deity. Through the use of the nautical settings, I will demonstrate that both Coleridge and Hopkins are exploring the concepts of the gothic, supernatural and the non-human in order to comment on empire, national identity and alienation.

# 5. The Non-Human

**Charles Paxton**
**Sea serpents and giant gooseberries: the changing reality of sea monsters in the 19th century**

Throughout the 19th century there was abundant eyewitness testimony of sea serpents. In addition, more large marine animals were described by scientists in the period 1830 - 1870 than at any time before or since. Despite this, there was an increasing scepticism as to the existence of the great sea serpent. My talk will explore chronological patterns in the rate of animal discovery, the amount of eyewitness testimony and media coverage of sea serpents in the 19th century and seek to find reasons for the observed changes.

**Lucy Arnold**
**'Beaches of Bones: Non-Human Hauntings and Littoral Legacies of Animal Cruelty in Michelle Paver's Dark Matter'**

In his book *The Last Imaginary Place: A Human History of the Arctic World,* Robert McGhee describes what he terms 'the rape of Spitzbergen', a four-century long process in which the native species of the Svalbard archipelago were slaughtered for profit and sport by non-indigenous hunters, trappers and traders.[1] This exploitation of the non-human life which populated the arctic coast was not only

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[1] Robert McGhee, *The Last Imaginary Place: A Human History of the Arctic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 173-189

significant economically but was characterised by a sadism and excess which still haunts these landscapes. McGhee recalls visiting the sites of walrus kills in Spitzbergen, and speaks of 'carpets' and 'drifts' of walrus bones, seemingly impervious to decay.[2]

It is Spitzbergen, 'so far north that "dead things" last for years',[3] which Michelle Paver selects as the setting for her neo-thirties novel *Dark Matter*, a work which ostensibly gothicises the 'Boys Own Adventure' genre in its narrative of Arctic exploration thwarted by supernatural intervention. In this paper I understand the haunting presence at the heart of the novel to exceed any straightforwardly human post-mortem status, instead marking the insistent remains of the historical slaughter McGhee details. Shifting the critical focus away from the human protagonists, in this reading I recognise the significance of the animal in Paver's work, and its status within this littoral landscape defined by non-human suffering and death. Through an analysis of Paver's repeated return to the space of the shoreline as the arena for gratuitous acts of animal cruelty, I read *Dark Matter* as an eco-gothic work which prompts an acknowledgement of the continued resonance of the historical acts of sustained, extreme and sadistic colonial violence practiced against the non-human inhabitants of the Spitsbergen coastline. In doing so, I demonstrate how Paver's use of the gothic mode positions the suffering and deaths of animals both as constitutive of these shoreline spaces and as meriting sustained ethical attention.

**Juliana Amir**

**Conscious and Unconscious Fears: the ecogothic, the nonhuman, and the shore**

Peering into Slavic folklore, stories of Rusalki showcase curious binaries of human to non-human and of the natural world to the supernatural. These binaries sculpt much of our most haunting folklore, but spirits from the water are often confined to that realm. The shore is the line between worlds. The place of safety. What happens when all of the terror and wonder shimmering off coast suddenly is ashore? In his famous poem "Rusalka" Alexander Pushkin describes this entity of the water as "white as first snow of the highlands, / Light-footed as nocturnal shade / There comes ashore and sits in silence…"(20-23). Entwined in natural surroundings, something

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[2] McGhee, p. 189.

[3] Michelle Paver, *Dark Matter* (London: Orion, 2010), p. 39.

supernatural is evolving before the eye of the audience. Rusalki, sometimes envisioned as beautiful beings and other times as hideous creatures, vary as much as depictions of death itself.

Even though in literature Rusalki are translated to mermaids, mermaids have diminished in terror. Rusalki remain both tragic and treacherous with legs to cross onto shore, to dance, to haunt and to bewitch. How are the conscious and unconscious fears, hopes, and beliefs of a culture infused into these haunted shorelines? What is the root of fear that the Rusalka stirs within us? How do these stories, in turn, go on to suffuse anxieties and meaning into our modern contexts? This presentation seeks to explore these questions and even poses that Edmund Burke's concept of the sublime may lurk within this gothic waterscape.

Brief Bio: As a professor of The University of Akron, Juliana Amir teaches courses such as: Fairy Tales, Folklore, and Myth, Enchanted Tales: the stories that make us, Iconic and Psychotic: or just written that way, and Story Tonic: the healing and science behind narrative. Her fiction is published in places such as Grimoire, Fantasia Divinity, and Enchanted Conversations. Her peer-reviewed work is forthcoming in anthologies published by Vanguard and Lexington Books.

**Jennifer Schell**
**The Trouble with Ecogothic Wilderness: The Extinction Stories of the Great Auk and Steller's Sea Cow**

Taking a cue from William Cronon's famous essay "The Trouble with Wilderness" (1995), my paper explores the problems inherent in the representations of littoral wilderness appearing in two 1960s-era environmentalist texts, Allan Eckert's *The Great Auk* (1963) and Corey Ford's *Where the Sea Breaks Its Back* (1966). Though stylistically and generically different, both books employ ecogothic tropes in order to describe extinction events that took place on remote volcanic islands in far flung northern latitudes. Thus, they characterize subarctic coastal zones as sublime wildernesses, where forbidding cliffs are cloaked in eerie mists, swept by banshee winds, pummeled by relentless storms, and shaped by mysterious tectonic forces. They also transform the extinction of the great auk and Steller's sea cow into

terrifying tales of gothic horror, involving the destruction of entire species of nonhuman animals.

Insofar as their troublesome aspects are concerned, I argue that these books are thoroughly enmeshed in certain ideological constructions of wilderness that circulated throughout American culture in the 1960s and served to define wilderness as an environment untouched by humans.[4] As a result, they ignore the pronounced impact of anthropogenic activities on the ecosystems of the North Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Eckert downplays the degree to which human hunters contributed to the extinction of the great auk; instead, he lays much of the blame on orcas, storms, and auk mating practices. Meanwhile, Ford attempts to portray the Aleutians as a place that has remained unaltered over time, despite the loss of an entire species. As I stress, the ecogothic aspects of these ideologies—and their manifestation in the books—only exacerbate these representational problems, because they serve to characterize some wilderness areas as particularly hostile to humans and impervious to their influence.

# 6. Scotland and the North

**Kristy Strange**
**Coastal Hauntings: Examining the disposal of feminine bodies and the fight to reclaim narrative and corporeal authorship within coastal spaces in Evie Wyld's The Bass Rock**

This study examines the permeability of the Scottish coast in Evie Wyld's *The Bass Rock* and explores the ways in which this relates to feminine corporeality in contemporary Female Gothic. Through the lens of ecofeminism, the fears and anxieties of feminine corporeality within the environment are compared to Simon C. Estok's theory of ecophobia – an idea rooted in the anthropocentric and androcentric fear of a threatening and vengeful Nature. In choosing to set *The Bass Rock* on the iconic Scottish coast of North Berwick, Wyld draws on the Scottish Female Gothic to reflect the blurring of boundaries between women and ecology. The novel explores the permeable borders of both human and nonhuman through the incorporation of

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[4] See the Wilderness Act of 1964, which proclaims, "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

the haunting feminine; this shows the merging of past and present in the context of continued oppression and violence towards feminine bodies by men driven by a masculine logic for domination. In this paper, I argue that the overwhelming presence of an anthropocentric and androcentric desire for domination results in the production of fear for feminine bodies within ecological spaces rather than as a direct consequence of the environment. The patriarchal authority behind the dualistic narratives in this novel is revealed as a societal construct established to justify and maintain masculine dominance through the categorisation of feminine bodies as Other. Consequently, these feminine bodies only exist as exploitable resources and are subjected to continued subjugation and oppression before being disposed of when no longer profitable. This study emphasises the critical necessity of addressing the gendered corporeality of women and the environment to establish a well-rounded theory of ecophobia that extends beyond the Anthropocene and to include discussions on the impact of androcentric constructs.

**Camilio Peralta**
**Horror in the Hebrides: The Scottish Coast in the Gothic-Conservative Imagination of Johnson, Waugh, and Kirk**

In the summer of 1773, Samuel Johnson embarked upon a tour of Scotland with his loyal friend and future biographer, James Boswell. Johnson was saddened by the rapid pace of change in the highlands, as traditional ways of living slowly gave way to English and European influences. Only in the Hebrides, a chain of islands off the western coast of Scotland, did he find some of the "savage virtues and barbarous grandeur" he had been hoping to discover (Johnson 624).

Johnson may have been disappointed by his trip there, but centuries later, the Hebrides continued to haunt the imagination of his intellectual descendents, conservative moralists such as Evelyn Waugh and Russell Kirk. The former sets part of his *Sword of Honor* trilogy in the isle of Mugg: "a single misty lump" surrounded by dark, foreboding waters and plagued by a "biting wind" (Waugh 53, 63). Kirk's first novel, *Old House of Fear*, likewise takes place on (fictional) Carnglass Island, an isolated and depopulated rock on which the traditional highland ways still linger. This paper / presentation will explore the Gothic-Conservative Imagination, as

represented and expressed by these three authors.

Despite writing in very different genres, each adopts a quintessentially Gothic view of the Hebrides, turning them into a mysterious, even dangerous land, in which dreams become reality, and one never knows what sinister forces might be lurking around the corner. At the same time, and in the vein of traditional Gothic works, the islands serve as a haven for those seeking refuge from the outside world. Indeed, for Johnson, Waugh, and Kirk, the volatile waters that surround the Hebrides are more than just an indelible feature of the landscape: they are a genuine barrier protecting the inhabitants from the truly destructive forces of modernity. Thus, it is no coincidence that references to the sea abound in each of their works set in this location.

**Rachel Hill**
**"But Which Self?" Antarctica's Fluctuating Shorelines and the Ice-Sea Gothic**

Icy peaks loom over beckoning waves. Wild cracks of ground and sound lash the frozen valley with wild resonances as peaks become troughs; crashing into the ocean, only to rise again. Jagged and mercurial labyrinths form a chattering jaw, into which many sailors have entered, fewer have returned. Images of their Barks, frozen and slowly rendered asunder by the snapping enclosures of the siren ice-sea, populate collective imaginaries of polar extremity. It is here, at the ends of the world, where the final betrayal of the sea meets the miscalculations of ambition, greed and necessity.

Coleridge, Shelley, Poe, Lovecraft and Le Guin: all feature stories of liminal polar expanses where ice and sea become unparsable. These frozen netherworlds are a crucial spatiality for the Gothic and its explorations of ontological slipperiness. During Apsley Cherry-Garrard's infamous Antarctic tribulations, he mused upon the ice-sea, riddling "be yourself...But which self?" This elision of strange ice shelves and increasingly disorientated selves is central to the Antarctic's coastline alterities and key to what I will call the "Ice-Sea Gothic."

Haunting auralities of an ever-shifting shoreline define Antarctica's Ice-Sea Gothic aesthetics. From early forays into the region to contemporary anthropocenic accelerations: the asynchronous cracks, booms, songs and mumbles of calving icebergs become situated within Gothic sensibilities and lexicons. The frozen stuttering shorelines of Antarctica are thus not only a limit point which the Gothic utilises in its exploration of ontological precarity; conversely, the Gothic also becomes a means of translating Antarctic's watery terrains and their eerie affects into a perceptible literary form.

This transdisciplinary paper will yoke material from art history, contemporary art, Antarctic exploration and environmental sciences together with the blue humanities and Gothic scholarship. In doing so, I will unpack the Ice-Sea Gothic and its potentials for translating environmental alterity into simultaneously cognisable but always slippery form.

**Barbara Franchi**
**Gothic Hauntings and Uncanny Resurfacings in Sarah Moss's *Bodies of Light* and *Night Waking***

In Sarah Moss's historical novel *Bodies of Light* (2014), young nurse May Moberley dies mysteriously in a storm in 1878 while trying to return to mainland Scotland from the (fictional) island of Colsay, where she had tried to work towards reducing child mortality. In *Night Waking* (2011), the novel's contemporary sequel, historian Anna Bennet uncovers the story behind May's disappearance by finding her letters and a child's skeleton in her summer house. The Victorian woman's traces disrupt Anna's complicated domesticity, made of juggling childcare with nightly academic work; at the same time, they become a haunting presence enabling her to redefine her relationship to the island, her body, and her work as a historian.

How do rural islands allow hidden histories to resurface in the present? What is the relationship between the traumas of Victorian (lost) motherhood and millennial feminist attempts to successfully combine motherhood with an intellectual career? And how do Gothic shores become textual palimpsests, where historical traces engender the conjuring and creation of new stories?

In this paper, I argue that Moss's Colsay embodies layers of 'unofficial history' (Timothy Baker, *Contemporary Scottish Gothic*: 90) and establishes uncanny connections across centuries, shaping female body politics, cultural perceptions of maternity, and women's ability to write their own  histories. While a tragedy affecting a Victorian rural community haunts twenty-first-century  Anna's family struggles, it nonetheless enables her to take agency over her life and career. The body of the dead child, a Gothic *memento mori* of dire living conditions in the past, represents therefore the birth of Anna's new intellectual life as a feminist historian, allowing her to inscribe  the history of her life within the haunting traces left by her foremothers.

## 7. The Romantics and Romanticism

**Sophia Moellers**
**Where Past and Present Collide: Haunted Seascapes and Gothic Exile in Godwin's *Deloraine***

William Godwin is celebrated as the forefather of political anarchism and mostly remembered  for his role in the Revolution Controversy of the 1790s. However, casting aside his magnum  opus *Political Justice* and focusing on his novels, which often function as fictional testing  grounds for his socio-political visions, it becomes clear that he frequently employs gothic motifs  which serve to create Godwin's most haunting metaphors: the solitary gothic wanderer, the  melancholic misanthrope, or the abandoned mansion as safeguarding fortress against  nightmarish visions.

As all of Godwin's main protagonists are haunted by their pasts and driven towards remote  spaces such as barren coasts, rocky islands and deserted beaches, this paper seeks to investigate  the function of the nautical gothic in Godwinian psychograms, with specific focus on his final  novel *Deloraine*. Given that Godwin seeks to create intersections between the private and the  public to offer understandings of character formation, it will be illustrated how the relocation  of individuals in self-inflicted exile near sublime coasts and seashores foregrounds their  emotional turmoil as past and present clash to haunt them. The gothic can be described as  revealing "the hidden architecture of the mind" (Miall 346), thus the barrenness of Godwin's seashores indicates a lack of psychological stability and personhood, causing the

eponymous protagonist of *Deloraine* to describe himself as "a walking ghost [, …] a person dug up from a grave" (Vol. I, 108f.). Lastly, the implementations of gothic shores can also be read as echoing Godwin's own attempts of coming to terms with the sublime sea as "productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (Burke 33f.), serving for the writer as representation of significant loss, reminiscent of his son-in-law Percy Shelley's fatal boating accident and his first wife Mary Wollstonecraft's two attempts at suicide by drowning.

## Madeline Potter
## 'A Fiery Ocean': An Oceanic Geography of Damnation in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*

The figure of Melmoth in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* is often intertwined with images of the shore and the ocean. When John Melmoth encounters his ancestor laughing at the shipwreck, Maturin establishes a parallelism between the Faustian hero's fate and the ambivalent nature of the seashore. My paper focuses on the physicality of the sea and explores the image of the shore in Maturin's novel as an actual theological space, laying out an alternative geography in which Melmoth's destiny plays out. Traditionally a liminal space, the shore acts as a physical counterpart to Melmoth's unnatural existence following his demonic pact: he now exists within a timeline of uncertainty, wandering the Earth in a quest for someone to pass on his burden to. Upon his impending damnation, Melmoth borrows oceanic vocabulary: he faces the 'receding shore of life' and 'the mists of memory'. But the image of the shore is not merely a metaphor for Melmoth's own troubled predicament. Rather, Maturin maps a metaphysical space, overlapping the natural, in the framework of which the Wanderer's condemnation takes place. In his final dream, Melmoth finds himself at the edge of a hellish, fiery sea; my paper offers a reading of this image not as a psychologising symbol of his anguished state, but instead as a revelation of the corollary realm concealed beneath the natural sea. The physical reality of Melmoth's voyage to hell through the sea is witnessed by both John and Monçada, while the fishermen attest to the frightful noise they heard, reinforcing the real, physical nature of his damnation. My paper then frames the question: how does Maturin use palpable landscape – the clay, the mist, the sea – to formulate a Dantesque topos of hell?

**Liz Wan**

**Seashore Suicide and Spectrality in Mary Shelley's *Matilda***

In Mary Shelley's *Matilda* (1820), Matilda sees in a dream vision her father leaping off a cliff into the raging sea; she wakes up in desperate search for him, only to find him as a beach body. This paper purports to explore the depiction of the coast as a site of death, haunting, and trauma in the novel, arguing that the representation of coastal waters embodies Gothic atmospherics and is reflective of the characters' psyches. After a brief delineation of the plot, I will first discuss the significance of the coast as a Gothic setting for suicide via close reading of the synaesthetic tropes in the nautical imagery and their parallels with the mentation of Matilda and her father. As Lisa Kröger observes, "[t]he environment […] acts as a kind of conduit of emotions, a way to experience feelings and sometimes to purge them" (19), and in this case, the sea, particularly the coast, performs both functions. I will then elucidate how shores are portrayed in the novel as places of the uncanny mutual haunting by/of the father and daughter. Through comparing the shores of a calm lake, a spot of (re)union where Matilda meets her father for the first time after she rows across the water, and that of the precipice, a point of perpetual departure where her father plunges to his death, it will be argued that littoral spaces are sites of spectrality and trauma. This aligns with the argument that "the Gothic [is] a space of crisis which conceptually creates a point of contact with the ecological" (Smith and Hughes 3). Ultimately, I will contend that Shelley's novella showcases both the fear of and affinity for the sublimity of the sea and its shores of pleasure and perils.

**Roslyn Irving**

**Ann Radcliffe's Coastal Spirit, Trapped in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791)**

Ann Radcliffe wrote *The Romance of the Forest (1791)* during the political storm of the French Revolution (Dent 2016: 159). The action is based in France and Switzerland, largely in mountainous regions and woodlands. It seems strange then, that while her heroine, Adeline is trapped in the opulent mansion of the Marquis de

Montalt, Radcliffe introduced *The Song of a Spirit*. Presented as a performance piece, the poem is the imagined call of a mythical being on the clifftops, challenging the wind and waves, and ultimately dreading the moment her own voice will 'die along the gales of eve.' (Radcliffe 2009: 162). The final four stanzas are both gothic and haunting, drawing in the tropes of ruins, tricks of the light, and reflections on mortality in a vast and forceful world. The poem is at once a fitting example of Radcliffe's sublime in verse (Burke 2000, and Radcliffe 2000), as well as jarring and unexpected as the Spirit is out of place, beached in a prose set on the land.

*Song of a Spirit* is the only poem preserved in archival collections, published in a daily newspaper prior to the release of the novel (The Gazetteer 1791: 3). The poem is significant in Radcliffe's oeuvre and has been likened to the enchanting lyrics of Shakespeare's Ariel (Norton 2009: 45). Furthermore, the sudden invasion of the coast into the novel's plot and the idea of looking outwards at a storm, is a manifestation of conflicts across the channel Radcliffe would have read about. This presentation will explore the song; editorial changes which impacted the verses; and how this alienated 'voice' on the shore, reflected contemporary political events.

## 8. Seas & Waters

**Steven Burke**
**Entering the 'mighty Orinoco': Coastal Encounters in British post-Napoleonic travel writing**

The mouth of the Orinoco river in South America presented the first-time observer with an extraordinary set of sights, sounds, and new sensory experiences to engage with. It was often a first continental landfall for European travellers to the region and a first encounter with a subtropical environment. Responses by early nineteenth century travel writers had to engage with the unusual geographical layout of the delta, often evoked Romantic visions of landscapes, and described flora and fauna in terms of their strangeness. Accounts were preoccupied, most of all, with the atmosphere of threat, of danger, and intense anxiety about being there. Any description or evaluation was viewed from a water-borne perspective, significant to

how newcomers engaged with the landscape and its contents. The variable impact on perspective and effect on the gaze of the traveller of the Delta Amacuro's hundreds of river mouths and waterways prevented a definitive account of arrival.

This presentation will consider the travel writings of several mercenaries travelling to fight for the Independence cause in Venezuela in the 1810s. Writing within the already established conventions of the genre, these first-time authors were powerfully influenced by contemporary literary conceptions of the Sublime, Exotic, and dangerous nature of the alien environment. Encountering the uniquely evocative Orinoco Delta, they produced remarkably similar descriptions of this disturbing experience, incorporating the labyrinthine nature of the river mouths, threat of hidden enemies in the landscape, immense and impenetrable shoreline and riverbank vegetation, and the enigmatic latent threat of indiscriminate violence posed by the water and the frequently unobserved creatures in it.

**Dorka Tamas**
**The Haunting Presence in the Father in Sylvia Plath's Waters**

For Sylvia Plath, the coasts of Massachusetts defined her childhood: she spent the majority of her free time on the beaches of Nauset, Cape Cod, and Point Shirley. No wonder that the Atlantic Ocean has a haunting presence in her most famous writings which she associated with the innocence of childhood and the death of her father and other relatives. Nostalgia, magic, and deep water.

In my presentation, I introduce the geographical shores that haunt Plath's writing. Then I look at her two most prominent poems, "Full Fathom Five" and "The Decline of Oracles" that portray the dead father figure, who is associated with the sea and was influenced by Prospero's figure from *The Tempest*'s. For Plath, the play and the sea were a "central metaphor for my childhood, my poems and the artist's subconscious, to the father image - relating to my own father, the buried male muse & god-creator" (J 381). In her short story, "Ocean-1212W", Plath depicts her memories as a child living near the beaches of Massachusetts. The presence of the water describes the idyll of the childhood until the father's death which seals off her closeness to the water, as her family moved into a new home.

My presentation demonstrates the link between the sea/ocean/water/shore and the father figure Plath's writings. I argue that this connection brings light to the oceanic presence of Otto Plath in Sylvia Plath's life and shows the literary and mythological influences in her poems. The father figure, like the water, often has a ghostly presence and is the foundation of many of her writings.

**Chantelle Mitchell and Jaxon Waterhouse**
**The Shores of an Inland Sea: the Eromanga and the ur-haunting of the once-coastal**

The hydrologic has long been a key component of the Australian gothic. From the original wounding of Invasion, which occurred through crossing the littoral boundary of the shoreline, to the continued spectres of drought and flood that categorise our current climate context, we see the hydrologic as a volumetric medium, capable of carrying memories that continue to horrify and unsettle. For Haunted Shores, we propose to follow this spirit back to its source, examining the Eromanga Sea as the original manifestation of an Australian coastal gothic.

The Eromanga Sea once filled much of inland Australia. The land is now largely arid; a desert stretching thousands of kilometres, the water which was once atop the land now hidden beneath. Though the Eromanga had disappeared long prior to Invasion, the persistent colonial belief in its existence became an obsession for many, and for some, fatal.

The spectre of this inland sea haunts Australian colonial history; the Australian *ur*-haunting, inviting refigurations of the landscape as empty, or desolate, which have now become key tropes of an established Australian gothic. Following the flow of the Eromanga through the writings of Flinders, catastrophes of Sturt, disappearances of Leichhardt and Gibson and miserable ends of Burke and Wills, we examine the lack of knowledge held and sought by colonial invaders -- the myth of a vast reservoir within the country obscuring the true nature of Australian inland ecology, as populated by soaks, waterholes and creeks.

We extend this into temporal framings of Deep Time and the *once*-coastal, shifting our investigation towards ecological frames, which necessitates recognition of

climate change upon landscapes and landscape imaginaries. When read through the historical frame of the Eromanga, we see our changing climate as a reperformance -- the continued haunting of the inland by the spectre of disappearing water. By refiguring the inland sea through the frames of a coastal Gothic, the gaze turns inward in recognition of contemporary landscapes and sense of place as haunted by the spectres of the past and futures to come.

**Morgan Daniels**
**Ghosts of Electricity**

The ghost of 'lectricity howls in the bones of her face
– Bob Dylan
In 1902, *Scribner's Magazine* published 'Wireless', a short story by Rudyard Kipling. This strange tale details the narrator's visit to a friend on the south coast, a chemist with a keen interest in radio technology. Whilst the chemist attempts to make wireless contact with Poole, about forty miles away, Kipling's narrator whips up a cocktail of drugs for the chemist's assistant, who is a late-stage consumptive. He falls into a stupor, and as the amateur experiments in wireless communication swirl all around him, he starts channelling Keats, scrawling lines from 'The Eve of St Agnes'.

Kipling's yarn was typical of a now widely-acknowledged turn-of-the-century tendency to invoke the world of spirits whilst discussing telegraphy. Following Jeffrey Sconce in *Haunted Media* (2000), this paper insists upon a third dimension common to popular writing on the telegraph, viz. the maritime. The sea persists in late Victorian/early Edwardian fiction and non-fiction alike as both a material fact to be 'conquered' by communication technology, and as a grand metaphor, the metaphoric sublime, even, a ready-made analogue for the unknown and the unconscious.

Bearing in mind Kipling's reputation as the unofficial Poet of Empire, I wish to read this affinity between the telegraph, the occult, and the sea, as embodied in 'Wireless', as something fundamental to the imperialist mind-set. In so doing, I will place Kipling in discussion with a range of contemporary writers, not least Bram Stoker.

**Octavia Cade**

**The Ghosts of Coastlines Past: Eco-Poetry and the Oceanic Ecological Gothic**

In November of 2020, 35% of the little blue penguin chicks of Wellington harbour, New Zealand, died of starvation. Warming waters had limited the amount of available small fish, and the chicks could not survive their absence. The effects of climate change are felt on our coastlines as much as any other ecosystem, and those coastlines – and the oceans that they border – are becoming places of death and absence, of grief and remembrance. Seagrass beds, disappearing five times as fast as the tropical rainforests, algal blooms smothering shallow water ecosystems, coral reefs bleached to ghostly skeletons… Coasts, long acknowledged as examples of the biological littoral, are more than ever becoming liminal as well as littoral spaces, places where ecological horror can be experienced as well as observed.

Eco-poetry – such as Sea Change by Jorie Graham – has the capacity to marry science and a quiet, burning horror, by visualising the haunted environments of present and future. It no longer simply skirts the ecological Gothic, bringing fear and death and sorrow at a failing sublime into the ecologies we are turning into wastelands. Eco-poetry, especially the poetry concerned with climate change, is arguably an increasing part of Gothic literature, and this is especially clear when the subject of that poetry exists as a littoral (and liminal) zone. The effects of climate change are becoming ever more apparent, and are likely to have profound effects on our experiences of coastal regions. Poetry that explores the ecological Gothic is particularly suited to the heightened emotional experience of those changing coasts, and the ghosts we insist on starving into existence there.

# 9. Visual Cultures

**Tosha R. Taylor**

**Littoral Haunting and Body Horror in Lisa Brühlmann's Blue My Mind**

Lisa Brühlmann's 2017 film *Blue My Mind* presents a somewhat typical coming-of-age horror narrative: after moving to a new city with her parents,

teenaged Mia becomes alienated from her family, joins a rebellious group of friends, and discovers that her body is transforming into that of a mermaid. The transformation is a gradual and disturbing one, devoid of much romanticization of this mythological creature. Coupled with this transformation is a cryptoqueer bond with the leader of her friend group and a sexual assault, the latter appearing to trigger the completion of Mia's bodily change. Yet despite the mermaid's association with the sea, the film's imagery of the littoral space is infrequent, positioning it as a liminal space in Mia's memory and in the spectator's understanding of her transformation. The film opens with a scene of a small child solemnly approaching the shore, an image that is never truly contextualized, and ends with her return to this space as a fully realized mermaid who can no longer live amongst humans. My paper would analyze the littoral space in Brühlmann's film, arguing that despite its minimal role, it looms large as the site of queered gothic reckoning. Without a strongly narrativized bond to the sea, my paper would argue, the film establishes the shore as Mia's origin and ending, a place of haunting and memory that requires the loss of her identity but may, in turn, reconcile her alienation and trauma. Furthermore, my paper would argue, the film's juxtaposition of the littoral space and the inorganic home space posits the queered non-human form as a transcendent rather than horrific one.

**Gavin Davies**
**'My body may be present, but my soul is on the beach': Collective isolation and the videogame Death Stranding (2019)**

In an interview with The Washington Post, game director Hideo Kojima averred the interpretation put to him that his latest title, the postapocalyptic Death Stranding (Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2019), was a response to a connected society growing in collective isolation, wherein people cast themselves away with manifested online personae, effectively beaching their personalities elsewhere. The game evokes this separation through the metaphor of cetacean stranding and the black sand beach as threshold in-between life and death. Scenes of beached whales and myriad marine lifeforms washed upon the shore were prevalent in the game's promotional material from its incipience, and feature as a prominent motif throughout its 40-50 hours' runtime. What this paper aims to explore are the underlying reasons for this

perceived congruence between the state of human connectivity and the whale as its bellwether, touching upon not only the liminality of the beach in culture but more pertinently the eschatology of what has been dubbed the cetacean imaginary. How this symbiosis is reinforced at a diegetic level by Death Stranding, was adumbrated by previous entries in Kojima's oeuvre, and its relation to a prevailing view (galvanised by lockdown) of videogames as nostrums against the ill effects of social media will also be considered.

Gavin Davies (University of Exeter) is an AHRC-funded PhD student whose thesis examines the Georgian and Victorian board gaming market and how such games variously promoted, challenged, and disrupted notions of the British Empire. Currently, his studies are on hold while he works at the University of Manchester on a new Aspect-funded project on the commercialisation of educational games produced within the world of social sciences. He is an avid gamer and essayist, with some publications under his belt, but is now most concerned with the potential of video essays to challenge financial or social barriers to tertiary education by disseminating academic research to groups and communities otherwise dissuaded.

**Brandyn Whittaker**
**'There is Enchantment in the Light:' An EcoGothic Study of Lighthouses in Video Games**

Alan Wake begins with a camera panning over a Pacific North West landscape; the light from a precariously built cliffside lighthouse pierces through the fog. Voiceover narration from Alan Wake, the video game's protagonist, explains that this is a reoccurring nightmare for the character. The player gains control of Alan as he desperately tries to get to a lighthouse for reasons he cannot remember. This first section of the game has the player make their way down from a costal road, fighting proto-forms of the dark apparitions which will haunt the character throughout the game all the while the light from the lighthouse constantly shines in the distance. For a game where the player must use light sources to fight off the darkness, the lighthouse is a poignant, if not a little heavy-handed, opening symbol for the game at large.

Intriguingly Alan Wake is not alone in its usage of the lighthouse setting within video games. Dear Esther, World of Horror, and Nobody Lives Under the

*Lighthouse* all feature lighthouses essential to the narrative and the atmosphere of their respective games. The lighthouse as a setting builds upon contrasts and is ripe for ecoGothic study. Its primary feature is a light against the darkness, while the arduous and often dangerous working conditions of its keepers contrasts the safety it brings to ships. Furthermore, its placement on a precipice between land and sea evokes comparison to a frontier setting, one of danger, isolation, and with an uncaring wilderness on all sides. My essay will examine the lighthouse setting, incorporating its long history as a gothic and maddening structure, while also seeking to observe how the video game format, a creative medium often overlooked in academic study, utilizes gameplay mechanics and immersive features to further expand upon this dangerous and enchanting location.

## Practice Panel (Live - 26th March)

**David Williams**
**The Melancholy Menace of Their Tone: The Ghost Story As Coping Mechanism**

The Legend of the Phantom Bell-Ringers is a well known ghost story from Atlantic Canada. It's so well known, in fact, that it has its own postage stamp, and continues to be shared in story collections and haunted tours to this day. The story tells of a sea captain who woke to the sound of a bell ringing in a port town on a cold October morning in 1853. He followed the sound to the church where he saw three women in white glide through its open doors while another looked down from the belfry. At the seventh and final bell, the doors closed and locked. An investigation by the captain and the church sexton found nothing; the women had vanished. Later that day a steamship left port and sank in a storm. Seven people died, including four women, and it's said that these phantom bell-ringers were forerunners: portents of the impending disaster.

The story is as entertaining as it is chilling, but it also pushes aside the truly horrific details of an historic event. The sinking of *The Fairy Queen* was a real disaster that shook the coastal settlement of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island after it left almost half of its passengers dead and the remainder abandoned,

hypothermic and traumatised due to unforgivable (and largely unpunished) negligence, incompetence and cowardice.

This presentation will recount the famous ghost story and its gothic elements, review the historic event on which it is based, then examine how stories like these can serve as coping mechanisms in small, isolated seaport communities like late 19th century Charlottetown, where risking one's life on the open water was an everyday occurrence, and where a predetermined death may have been far more comforting than a life lived in the grip of an unpredictable landscape and dispassionate chance.

**Claire Connolly, Rita Singer and James L. Smith**
**Interpreting Gothic Strangeness and Tragedy at the Coast in Public Humanities Storytelling**

The Gothic clings to coasts and finds voice through strange stories of drowning, shipwreck, suicide and smuggling. Centuries of accumulated death and tragedy forms a dense web of sorrow with particularly prolific roots in the literature, songs, and stories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These traditions resonate within the longer history of lives and vessels lost in the Irish Sea, becoming part of what Gillian O'Brien has described as the "ring of sorrow" encircling Ireland—and the wider archipelago—"binding together communities who have suffered maritime tragedies like beads on a rosary".

The *Ports, Past and Present* project is an initiative funded by the European European Regional Development Fund through the Ireland Wales Cooperation programme. It seeks, through its storytelling activities, to present a depth of narrative across five coastal communities—Dublin Port, Rosslare, Pembroke Dock, Fishguard and Holyhead—and to bring the past to life for visitors and residents alike. During this task, the project has tuned in to a dark and tragic subset of coastal folklore and literature. In this paper, three project members will discuss some of the coastal Gothic resonances that cross the Irish Sea and explore some of the conundrums of expressing this material through digital and stakeholder-based public history activities.

**Catherine Spooner**

### *Sunder-land*: coastal disturbances and the legacies of slavery

Sunderland Point is a hamlet on the River Lune estuary that is cut off from the mainland by the tide twice a day. In the first half of the eighteenth century, it was the fourth largest slave port in England, and supported a community of around thirty people of African descent. It is distinguished by the lone grave of 'Sambo', a black boy who died shortly after embarkation. The grave continues to attract contemporary visitors who leave gifts and offerings.

*Sunder-land* is a fictional work in progress that asks what happened to that black community and what legacy they left behind them. As the story opens, in the summer of 1796, a strange creature washes up on the foreshore. It is unclear whether it is supernatural in origin or simply a specimen unknown to science. Against the backdrop of an abolitionist schoolmaster arranging a belated memorial for 'Sambo' sixty years after his death, the creature's presence begins to cause tensions and disturbance in the small community.

This paper will combine a short reading from the work with a discussion of how practice-based research enabled the author to address some of the problems of writing about slavery from a white perspective. The work does not attempt to recover the voices of the slaves themselves, but rather addresses issues of memorialisation and haunting, acknowledging Avery Gordon's statement that 'The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us' (1997: 8). The paper explores the coastal space as somewhere where unexpected or forgotten things may 'wash up' and proposes the idea of *disturbance* as a means of evoking traumatic histories that conventional research cannot recover.