

***Lost Souls of Horror and the Gothic: Fifty-Four Neglected Authors, Actors, Artists and Others*, ed. by Elizabeth McCarthy and Bernice M. Murphy (Jefferson: McFarland, 2016)**

As Christopher Frayling observes in his foreword to Elizabeth McCarthy and Bernice M. Murphy's *Lost Souls of Horror and the Gothic*, this extensive collection uncovers some of the missing links in the great chain of heroes and heroines that forms the gothic canon as we know it, and identifies them as 'Lost Souls'. The collection began as a feature of *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*; McCarthy and Murphy (the journal's original founders and editors) explain that they recognised the need for a larger volume that would represent the many overlooked figures whose work has shaped gothic and horror studies. Their efforts have resulted in these fifty-four biographical essays written by an array of new and established gothic scholars, all of which explore significant contributions made by a vast array of authors, as well as a colourful blend of characters ranging from actors, artists, designers, and directors, to mediums, musicians, and even occultists. While I could make an argument for discussing any one of these entries at length, I've chosen to focus on five essays that I think give an accurate overview of the collection's comprehensive nature as an academic text, as well as its ability to engage the reader with personal and (often humorous) anecdotes about its subjects.

The weird fictions of American author Charles Beaumont and his immeasurable influence on the horror, science-fiction, and fantasy genres are examined by Edward O'Hare. He details the strange events of Beaumont's childhood, as well as his experience of growing up around a mentally ill mother, and highlights Beaumont's love of literature from a young age. O'Hare also identifies the common theme that connects Beaumont's many literary works, one that was undoubtedly inspired by the hardships of his early life: 'the monstrousness that lurks beneath ordinary appearances' (p. 31). His contributions to numerous screenplays, including a 1962 adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Premature Burial' (1844) and episodes of *The Twilight Zone* (1959-64), illustrate, for O'Hare, Beaumont's understanding of human nature, as well as his belief in the importance of individual freedom, all of which helps secure his status as one of the more unusual and versatile writers in the collection.

Another author who crossed media to make a significant contribution to the world of television and film was modern British horror writer, Stephen Volk, described by James Rose as being one of the quieter figures of the genre. He recounts Volk's impact on British literature, theatre, film, and television, focusing on Volk's creation of the first

'mockumentary' (a supernatural fiction that pretends to be a real-life event), which was quickly recognised as a defining moment in British horror. The programme, entitled *Ghostwatch* (1992), offered viewers the experience of witnessing a 'live' broadcast from an alleged haunted house, and caused the BBC to receive over 30,000 complaints. Rose examines Volk's extensive body of film and television work, and identifies a common thread in both — his creation of a complex and fluctuating relationship between the ghost, the believer, and the sceptic. This relationship creates a 'narrative of change' (p. 223) that is equally playful and terrifying to its reader.

One of the most fascinating British women in the collection is explored by Catherine Spooner, who uncovers the hidden musical talents of Danielle Dax, a figure from the 1980s Goth music scene who is better known for her silent cameo as a wolf-girl in Neil Jordan's production of *The Company of Wolves* (1984). Starting with Dax's various contributions to post-punk band Lemon Kittens as a musician, and later as a cover art designer for the group, Spooner details how her naked live performances and solo albums earned her a cult following that worshipped her overt feminist persona and tendency to ridicule hyper-masculinity. Noting too her later success as a designer and spoken-word poet, Spooner emphasises Dax's status as 'an unsung feminist icon' (p. 66), whose work has influenced many of today's most popular female performers, such as Alison Goldfrapp, St Vincent, and Florence Welch.

Sculptor and 'King of the Gorilla Men' (p. 96) Charles Gemora is another example of an overlooked artist who made a huge contribution to numerous sci-fi and horror films. Mark Cofell traces his humble Hollywood beginnings as a street sketch artist, to his role as a sculptor of gargoyles for *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) and a set designer for *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925). However, it was not until he was asked to sculpt a gorilla costume for the film adaptation of the play, *The Gorilla* (1927), that the extent of Gemora's talent was revealed. Gemora not only constructed the suit from scratch but, as he began to play gorillas himself, made regular visits to the gorillas of San Diego Zoo in order to perfect the movements of his primatial alter ego, and in doing so, set a new standard of performance for costume actors.

As well as uncovering influential figures from the glamorous worlds of music, television, and Hollywood film, the collection also documents the lives of fascinating personalities. One such example is Dara Downey's account of Leonora Piper, a medium and psychometrician who made a career out of her ability to contact the spirits of the dead. Associated with both the American Society of Psychical Research (ASPR) and Society for

Psychical Research (SPR) in England, she devoted herself to aiding in the Associations' study of the existence of life after death. As well as providing comprehensive biographical details about Piper's early life and eye-witness accounts of her channelling various spirits or 'controls', Downey also details the scepticism and controversy that plagued Piper during different stages of her career. She pays particular attention to the misrepresentation surrounding Piper's attempt to retire in 1901 and her later decision to return to work for the ASPR, despite ongoing exposés regarding her abilities, as well as detailing Piper's life-long involvement in psychical research.

The abundance of extremely well-researched and well-written chapters in this collection make it impossible to pick a favourite entry, but one that stayed with me long after reading it is Tom Weaver's personal account of his friend and horror actress Susan Cabot. Recalling the many strange details about her life, such as her troubled son, her chaotic mansion, and her mysterious romance with King Hussein of Jordan, Weaver paints Cabot as an eccentric figure whose very existence was defined by gothic-horror elements. Although he takes time to detail her brief stint as a cult-status horror actress, he mostly focuses on the gruesome details and conflicting stories surrounding her death. To summarise, her murder, at the hands of her disturbed son, and his ensuing suspended sentence for 'involuntary manslaughter' (p. 49), mean that her biography reads like the script of any classic or contemporary horror film. Weaver's personal anecdotes make this chapter quite a unique one, making me wish that there had also been more of this personal content in other chapters, although I understand that doing so may have taken from the academic tone and nature of the overall collection.

While, as I have already mentioned, it would be quite difficult to detail every chapter in this book within a single review, it is worth noting that the inclusion of entries by some of the leading scholars in gothic and horror studies (such as Clive Bloom, David Punter, and Xavier Aldana Reyes, to name but a few) ensures its status as a valuable research text that belongs on the shelf of every serious scholar of these genres. The alphabetised layout and short-essay format make it an excellent and easy-to-use reference text for research purposes, as well as an ideal book for the general reader who simply wishes to learn more about these overlooked Lost Souls of the gothic and horror canons.

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