

‘Give it Welcome’: Gothic Inheritance and the Troubles in Contemporary Irish Fiction

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On April 10, 1998, the British and Irish governments signed the Good Friday Agreement, marking the official end of the Troubles in Northern Ireland—though not the cessation of violence. A year earlier, Jeffrey Glenn, a 46 year old librarian in Ballynahinch, County Down, submitted an essay for a retrospective collection, *Children of The Troubles: Our Lives in the Crossfire of Northern Ireland*. In it, he recalls the pangs of terror he regularly experienced while growing up in a Belfast suburb in the 1950s:

As a young child, I used to look carefully under my bed every night before saying my prayers. The Irish Republican Army campaign of the fifties was in full swing and I was checking for bombs. Even if I couldn’t see one, I still lay quaking with fear for what seemed like hours every night.(1)

Glenn’s variation on this common childhood anxiety of ‘monsters under the bed’ highlights the particular paranoia caused by Irish paramilitary violence that threatened to erupt into domestic spaces. Glenn was a prisoner in his own “suburban stronghold.”(2) Outside, he recalls, “Buses, trucks, cars, and construction equipment formed blazing barricades and groups of angry-faced men were busy hi-jacking more.”(3) Later, Belfast was to be divided by more permanent ‘peace lines’ constructed of iron, brick, and steel, and topped with metal netting that reached a height of twenty-five feet. These barriers separated Catholic from Protestant neighborhoods, and turned Belfast streets into labyrinthine passages flanked by crumbling, bombed-out buildings—Glenn uses Gothic tropes to describe the Belfast cityscape and the “endlessly repetitive pattern of attrition [throwing] their shadow[s] over everyday life....”(4)

Irish writers have long been obsessed with, and haunted by, Ireland’s troubled history, and have regularly turned to Gothic evocations of ghosts and vampires as a means of negotiating Ireland’s uncanny historical repetitions.(5) In 1996, historian Kevin Whelan observed, “In Ireland, an appeal to the past inevitably worried old wounds on which the scar tissue had never fully congealed.”(6) And in her 1999 study, *The Gothic Family Romance*, Margot Backus identified Ireland’s fascination with historical unrest as particularly Gothic: “In Ireland, the Gothic, with its necromantic interest in the transmission of things—property, capital, curses, guilt—across generations, has had precisely the effect of ‘worrying old wounds.’”(7) Contemporary Irish novelists, including John Banville, Emma Donoghue, and Neil Jordan, have turned to the Gothic as a vehicle for picking at Ireland’s colonial scabs. Two novelists, Seamus Deane in *Reading in the Dark* (1996) and Anna Burns in *No Bones* (2001), have employed elements of the Gothic to represent the psychological burden caused by the return of Ireland’s Troubles.(8)

In Reading in the Dark and *No Bones*, Deane and Burns each use child narrators who, through Gothic tropes, relate their personal accounts of the Northern Troubles. This common narrative choice highlights recurrent psychological damage caused by transgenerational acts of retributive violence in the North. The contemporary Gothic in Ireland generally serves to shadow the progress of Irish modernity with narratives that expose the underside of postcolonial nationhood—the ongoing struggle for a thirty-two county Republic, and recurring debates about whether Protestantism or Catholicism constitutes the ‘true’ Irish national character. By re-imagining ancestral voices that endorse absolution rather than retribution, Deane and Burns break from popular political and social discourse that draws upon Ireland’s ghosts as a way of justifying recurrent political violence. Both authors employ the familiar trope of the-past-haunting-the-present, but reverse typical outcomes. By focusing on the domestic consequences of

the Troubles, specifically trauma experienced by children, both authors imagine a new generation of haunted individuals struggling to re-gain self-possession.

A Spectral Genre

The Gothic in Ireland is a spectral genre. Like the Troubles, a seemingly revenant historical event, the Gothic is ghostly: it is a genre obsessed with the eruption of the past into the present, and therefore it most accurately represents the historical ghosts that “remain always to come and to come-back.”(9) According to Kelly Hurley, “The Gothic is rightly, if partially, understood as a cyclical genre that reemerges in times of cultural stress in order to negotiate anxieties for its readership by working through them in displaced (sometimes supernaturalized) form.”(10) With its litany of recurrent characters, themes, and narrative devices, the Gothic began and continues as a narrative mode of responding to continual social crisis.

The earliest Gothic novels—Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* (1777)—established characters, settings, and props that quickly became the recurring and guiding tropes of the genre: gloomy mansions, evil doubles, wild landscapes, religious anxiety, psychosis, and rampaging mobs are used to comment on the sociopolitical anxiety over aristocratic privilege and the fear that the lower classes might overthrow the decadent and amoral aristocracy. Following the beginning of the French Revolution (1789-1799), additional conservative voices, like Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), continue the tradition of replacing "evil" aristocrats with their more gentle and mannered (i.e., English) counterparts. But while Radcliffe’s paragons of female virtue—Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Ellena in *The Italian* (1797)—are members of aristocratic families, the values, ideals, and morals they display are clearly those of the rising English middle class. Recurrent themes of transgression and excess, threatened damnation, pursuit, persecution, and tyranny abound.(11) E.J. Cleary observes that the overtly didactic program of early Gothic literature is in line with the eighteenth century pragmatic theory of the novel: gothic novels aim to scare individuals into moral, virtuous behavior. Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796), however, takes Walpole’s influence in another direction, crafting grotesque scenes meant not only to terrify, but also to disturb and titillate his readers. Jean Paul Riquelme notes that at the end of the 18th century, these established elements of the genre began to appear in national writing beyond the pale: after the French Revolution, “the characteristics and issues apparent in Gothic writing of the eighteenth century carry forward into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but they are significantly transformed, intensified, and disseminated by interactions with national literatures and political events outside England.”(12) In Ireland, for instance, a number of 19th century novelists turn to the gothic as a useful narrative mode for commenting upon colonial oppression.

At the outset of the 19th century, Gothic modes crept into Irish fiction in works like Maria Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806); both texts employed recurrent narrative devices such as multiple and unreliable narrators, opaque narratives, and use of the fantastic to evoke horror in order to deal with the anxieties of a usurped aristocracy. It is, however, Irish born Charles Robert Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), that many critics claim “as the last—and possibly the greatest—of the Gothic novels in the line from Walpole through Radcliffe and Lewis.”(13) Maturin’s novel, according to David Punter, “casts a bitter eye over the whole process of history and historical narration as he *and* Ireland have seen it.”(14) Maturin offers sociopolitical commentary on the inescapable suspension between theological and social narratives, as between Catholicism and Protestantism; on surveillance, suggesting Ireland’s colonial condition under English domination; and on historical uncertainty, highlighted by Ireland’s long, convoluted historiographical debate between nationalist and loyalist historians and fiction writers.

Later in the century, as a part of what has been termed the Second Wave Gothic, these same “themes about the unreliability of history and the perverseness of power”(15) run through works by Irish writers, including J.S. Le Fanu’s *Uncle Silas* (1864) and *In a Glass Darkly* (1872; site of the vampiric “Carmilla”), Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890/1891), and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897). Each work “regularly present[s] aspects of the Gothic translated to locations in which agents of empire experience disturbing encounters with nature and with indigenous peoples that challenge their sanity and their ideas about civilization.”(16)

Stoker’s *Dracula*, perhaps the most popularly recognized Gothic novel, has undergone numerous permutations in modern film, has an uninterrupted print history, and maintains far-reaching influence over contemporary science fiction, fantasy, and horror narratives. But despite its popular success, its fantastic supernatural elements (the shape-shifting count), and its sensationalism (a trio of sexually aggressive vampiresses), *Dracula* also articulates serious sociopolitical agendas. As Raphael Ingelbien points out, the Count has been read by Irish Studies scholars such as Terry Eagleton and Seamus Deane as an aristocratic landlord of the failing Protestant Ascendancy, incapable of transitioning into modernity; conversely, Bruce Stewart casts the Count as a Catholic middle-class Land Leaguer intent on taking back Ireland through the use of political violence,(17) which reinforces Stephen Arata’s observation that *Dracula* relies upon traditional Gothic tropes such as wild landscapes, alluring wickedness, and the unbalancing of hierarchies of masculinity and femininity as well as of good and evil to comment upon the “Late-Victorian nightmare of reverse colonization.”(18)

In the opening chapter, Jonathan Harker’s description of the horrors of the Transylvanian forest, complete with wolves, darkness, a ghostly blue flame, and a mysterious coachman illustrate common English fears of Ireland ‘beyond the pale’—a space where numerous rebellions against the Act of Union had originated.(19) This fear of recurrence, of some thing *coming back*, is, according to Siobhán Kilfeather, the most distinctive feature of the Irish Gothic.(20) In Ireland, historical repetition (and the specters that accompany recurrence) is more horrifying than stock gothic machinery such as diabolical laughter, malevolent monks, or inquisition prisons. The Gothic, therefore, has remained particularly attractive to Irish novelists who have continued to use it throughout the 20th century as a vehicle for constructing and contesting distinctions between nationalists and unionists, Catholics and Protestants—cultural divisions that mere modernity cannot resolve.

A number of Irish texts concerned with the Northern Troubles employ the Gothic to express feelings of anxiety and inherited psychological trauma caused by the conflict’s “uncanny” return despite claims that the gothic genre was dying out at the end of the 20th century. I think of Patrick McCabe’s *Breakfast on Pluto* (1998) in which a Catholic priest rapes his housekeeper, who then gives birth to a son that grows up to be a self-proclaimed “high-class escort girl” looking to unravel the mystery of his ancestry. And Colm Toibín’s *The Heather Blazing* (1992), which evokes Ireland’s wild coastal and political landscapes—equally treacherous—as setting for a series of haunting memories that conflate long-dead relatives with the living, and bygone wars with contemporary terrorism. Despite these and other examples of contemporary Irish Gothic texts, Fred Botting declares at the conclusion of his genre study, *Gothic* (1996), that Francis Ford Coppola’s filmed adaptation of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1992) unequivocally staked the heart of the genre: “With Coppola’s *Dracula*,” Botting argues, “Gothic dies, divested of its excesses, of its transgressions, horrors and diabolical laughter, of its brilliant gloom and rich darkness of its artificial and suggestive forms.”(21) He admits, however, that “dying, of course, might just be the prelude to other spectral returns,”(22) a clever echo of Jonathan Harker’s observation early on in Stoker’s novel that “the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere ‘modernity’ cannot kill.”(23) The past—whether undead vampire, historical event, or literary form—is not static.

Seamus Deane and Anna Burns employ the standard machinery of the Gothic in their Troubles fiction, but set it in a recurring, transgenerational framework. Extreme mental disturbance emerges in both *Reading in the Dark* and *No Bones* in the figure of the Gothic specter, a manifestation of psychological trauma caused by the inherited curse of transgenerational violence in Ireland. They therefore invoke critiques of inheritance offered by the Gothic in order to suggest alternate ways of imagining the narratives that come to us from the past. They use the necromantic capabilities of the Gothic to show how confrontation with the past (and the specters that are part and parcel of it) can possibly lead to a stoppage of unproductive, malevolent haunting.

As John Paul Riquelme notes, the Gothic “is frequently a vehicle for staging and challenging ideological thinking rather than a means of furthering it.”(24) In *Reading in the Dark* and *No Bones*, the Gothic mode is used not merely to illuminate Ireland’s haunted predicament, but to stage encounters with Irish history that both haunt and exorcise contemporary Ireland at the same time. Both novels illustrate just how comprehensive and habitual the social machinery of vengeance has become in Northern Ireland, and offer requested haunting as a way of breaking the pattern of psychological trauma passed down from a troubled past that is anything but dead and gone.

A Question of Repetition

Officially, the Troubles in Northern Ireland can be said to have begun in 1966.(25) Yet, in “Sins of Our Fathers,” the aptly titled introduction to *We Wrecked the Place’: Contemplating an End to the Northern Irish Troubles*, Jonathan Stevenson observes that

As with everything Irish, centuries of history animate the present and recent past. The island’s heritage is speckled with violent events, which serve as justifications for more violence. Depending on the context, republicans and loyalists will assert that relevant history starts at the Norman conquest (1171), the Irish rebellion in Ulster against Protestants (1641), Oliver Cromwell’s evangelistic terror against Catholics (1649), King William’s victory at the Battle of the Boyne (1690), Wolfe Tone’s United Irishmen rebellion (1798), the Easter Rising (1916), partition (1921), the founding of the new UVF (1966), the Catholic civil rights movement (1968), the August riots in Belfast (1969), or the IRA split (1970).(26)

The popular assumption that unless we know the past, we are condemned to repeat it often appears reversed in Ireland. According to Irish historical novelist Tom Flanagan, “In Ireland, in fact, it could be argued that it is knowledge of history, history speaking in ancestral voices, rather than ignorance, which enforces its repetition.”(27) Stevenson’s list of retributive events certainly justifies Flanagan’s claim. The case of the past-haunting-the-present is often made to justify the escalating violence at the end of the 1960s.

For the purpose of this essay, which recognizes contemporary Irish novelists’ obsession with historical unrest and their call for the past to haunt the present, 1966—which marked the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising, and saw the founding of the new UVF amidst rumors of the IRA revival—serves as a clear demarcation of both the return of overt anti-Catholic sentiment and of Ireland’s revolutionary spirit. And like previous conflicts in Ireland, the two warring factions bifurcated predominantly along Catholic nationalist and Protestant unionist lines.(28)

Despite ideological division, however, both nationalist and unionist writers regularly couch their observations in terms of Gothic repetition and recurrence—the Northern Troubles are repeatedly

represented as a conflict from the past that will not stay past, the past that had in fact never disappeared. Such a pattern of recurrence becomes even more striking when viewed through Derrida's theories of spectral presence: "They are always *there*, specters, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet."(29) What this means for post-peace process Northern Ireland is that both the spirit of revolution (the desire for freedom) and the specter of revolution (the use of violence to obtain it) continue to contaminate the seemingly peaceful present.

For instance, at the end of Belfast-born playwright Anne Devlin's *The Long March* (1984), protagonist Helen Walsh reflects on the People's Democracy march from Belfast to Derry in 1969, and contemplates the spectral nature of Irish history:

I still remember that time when we thought we were beginning a new journey: the long march. What we didn't see was that it had begun a long time before with someone else's journey; we were simply getting through the steps in our own time.(30)

Walsh implies that her "long march" is a revenant event: a past act populated by present individuals. Devlin's play brings the specter of Irish oppression at the hands of British soldiers during the Irish Revolution (1916-1921) into the historical space of Catholic civil-rights protests in Northern Ireland in 1969 as a way of critiquing the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) attacks on peaceful demonstrators. Walsh's contemplation of historical return illustrates a consistent Gothic trope in contemporary Irish fiction, namely the use of historical ghosts—or being haunted by history—as a way of placing turn-of-the-century Ireland in conversation with the traumatic events of its historical past. Aestheticized responses to the Troubles, such as Devlin's play, present sectarian conflict as a revenant event that draws upon Ireland's traumatic colonial history. Seamus Deane and Anna Burns continue to employ the Gothic (its formal innovations, tropes, and critical register) as the most precise narrative mode through which to both depict and critique the conflict's "uncanny" reappearance.(31)

Reading in the Dark: Conjuring Spectres

Reading in the Dark is set near the border of Derry/Londonderry (Northern Ireland) and Donegal (Republic of Ireland) in post-World War II Northern Ireland, where the restless ghosts of the 1920s Troubles haunt geographical and generational borders. Against the backdrop of the impending Troubles, Deane's unnamed narrator spends his childhood trying to uncover his family's buried past by piecing together the incomplete and obfuscated facts of his Uncle's mysterious disappearance in April, 1922—facts that the boy's parents and grandparents have tried, and failed, to forget:

Hauntings are, in their own way, very specific. Everything has to be exact, even the vaguenesses. My family's history was like that too. It came to me in bits, from people who rarely recognized all they had told. Some of the things I remember, I don't really remember. I've just been told about them so now I feel I remember them, and want to the more because it is so important for others to forget them.(32)

The boy explains that his curiosity about familial ghosts was born of others' desire to forget them, or in Gothic terms, the boy's parents and grandparents have attempted to make the familiar history of their family unfamiliar.

Deane populates his novel with Gothicized figures from Celtic folklore (heroic ghosts, malevolent fairies, and secret passages) and juxtaposes them with more realistic, psychological hauntings (faded memory, violent trauma, and torturous uncertainty) as a way of compounding myth and reality, past and present,

and domestic and social conflicts. In Deane's novel, the Gothic acts as a spectral genre in which temporalities, events, or peoples are enjambed as a way of placing 21st century Ireland in conversation with the traumatic events of its historical past to show how confrontation with the past might attenuate malevolent haunting in the present.

Reading in the Dark, originally published on October 3, 1996 in the midst of a stalled peace process, questions failed and failing attempts to resolve the conflict in Northern Ireland.⁽³³⁾ Deane uses domestic anxieties—such as the feared, anticipated, and much hated return of familial specters which threaten to completely unravel the narrator's already dysfunctional family—to illustrate the more far-reaching social anxieties in Northern Ireland: the feared, anticipated, and much hated return of sectarian violence. Written at a time in Northern Ireland when peace still seemed elusive, *Reading in the Dark* illustrates the maddening escalation of transgenerational religious and political intolerance.

The novel's pointed and metatextual use of the Gothic shows that putting an end to the Troubles does not necessitate abandoning the past. In fact, in *Reading in the Dark*, Deane adopts standard Gothic machinery—ghosts, dysfunctional families, psychological violence, revolutionary anxieties, and dangerous curiosity—to argue the opposite. He calls forth specters from Ireland's past troubles to put more recent violent political conflict on full display. Doing so seems to exorcise or resist patterns of ideologically influenced retribution that have historically led to psychological and physical violence within the nation. In Ireland, looking backwards often uncovers a clear pattern of retributive violence stemming from colonial trauma. The first step towards ending this tradition, Deane's novel suggests, is to invite ancestral voices to speak in the present, to preserve the voices so that they are not forgotten, and to translate them so that they can speak with a revised significance to end, rather than continue, Ireland's unproductive Troubles.

Over the course of the novel, the narrator works to learn his family's secrets in order to reconstruct the truth about his paternal uncle Eddie's disappearance. The narrator's maternal grandfather, mother, and father have all produced theories concerning Eddie's whereabouts. The father assumes his brother died a hero of the IRA; the narrator's grandfather claims he absconded to America. The family secret—known only to the narrator's grandfather, mother, and a man named Crazy Joe, is that the grandfather (a lieutenant in the IRA during the earlier Troubles) ordered Eddie's execution because the narrator's mother had (inaccurately) fingered him as a police informant. "And then she had married [Eddie's brother], closing herself in forever, haunted forever."⁽³⁴⁾ She has incarcerated herself in that most gothic of prisons, her mind.

In the novel's opening scene, "Stairs: February 1945," Deane introduces stock Gothic conventions in order to attune his readers to the way in which he will use spectral tropes throughout the novel. Traditionally, the Gothic has been employed to arouse a strong affective response of anxiety, fear, and recoil from its readers; Deane, however, uses it to intrigue, thereby metacritically calling attention to its use in the novel as a generic convention.

Reading in the Dark begins with the narrator's description of the staircase upon which he first learns that his house is haunted: "It was a short staircase, fourteen steps in all, covered in lino from which the original pattern had been polished away to the point where it had the look of a faint memory."⁽³⁵⁾ The boy's description of the faded linoleum upon the stairs as resembling a faint memory both calls attention to the frustration he encounters while trying to conjure the ghost and betrays his mother's anxiety over the fact that the ghost is actually her faint memory of Eddie, which she cannot escape.

The novel illustrates that nervous abhorrence of the past versus intense curiosity as to how that past continues to influence the present is the difference between perpetual animosity and the possibility of healing old wounds. This distinction is important because it suggests that a careful examination and revision of history is necessary to successfully recalibrate the present. Steven Bruhm maintains, “The Gothic’s basic investment in ravaging history and fragmenting the past meshes with our own investments now as we attempt to reinvent history as a way of healing the perpetual loss in modern existence.”(36) Such examinations of the past are particularly poignant in Northern Ireland where, for so long, established patterns of loyalty and animosity have caused more violence to erupt.

Deane casts Northern Ireland as a place echoing with the cries of the past, where the individual and political are delicately interwoven, and personal and national histories rely upon both folklore and the supernatural as a means of explaining trauma. He exploits the Gothic’s recurrent structural devices that include interrupted and incomplete narratives, not to reinforce these inherited gaps or secrets, but to illustrate their latent dangers. In a recent article, Daniel Ross contrasts *Reading in the Dark* with traditional Irish bildungsromans such as James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: “Deane’s story inverts the pattern that we have come to expect from the Irish bildungsroman, where the son rebels against the mother.”(37) In Joyce’s text Stephen Dedalus flees from his biological mother and mother Ireland. Rather than flee, the boy in *Reading in the Dark* attempts to heroically exorcize the family ghosts by calling on them to make their secrets known, thereby neutralizing their ability to terrorize. Ross, therefore, identifies Joyce and Deane as unsuccessful exorcists:

Joyce’s highly autobiographical fiction testifies to his unsuccessful attempt to bury his Dublin past—replete with all its quarrels with family and friends—forever. It is little wonder that Deane, on whom the Joycean influences are clear, uses a similar technique.(38)

While Ross correctly notes Joyce’s influence on Deane, their similarity, I argue, is not that they both attempt to bury Irish history, but that they call forth Ireland’s specters to put them on full display. Both *A Portrait* and *Reading in the Dark* illustrate that what allows historical specters to terrorize the present is not necessarily forgetting the past, but ignoring it. Ultimately, Deane’s focus upon one family’s obscured past implies that Ireland’s political history is similarly opaque. *Reading in the Dark* therefore suggests that actively conjuring the spectral past in order to come to terms with it—to divest the past of its ability to terrorize and to re-imagine the way individuals interact with domestic and political history by suggesting, via the boy’s curiosity, that haunting can be productive. Individuals can call upon the past not to reinforce or justify acts of retributive violence, but to condemn them. This aesthetic maneuver resists the ways in which politicians and militants have used history to justify their campaigns.

Deane’s most poignant warning against abandoning the past takes shape in the character of the boy’s mother at the novel’s conclusion. Deane returns us to the stairs—the site of the first haunting:

She took to the lobby window again. But she disliked anyone standing with her there to talk, most especially me. There she was with her ghosts. Now the haunting meant something new to me—now I had become the shadow.(39)

At this point, her son is the only person left that knows her secret, and his presence becomes the haunting reminder of what she has done. She goes mad with anticipation that the boy will tell her secret, that she is responsible for the execution of an innocent man (Eddie) and for the escape of an informant (McIlhenny). Her son, guardian of this secret, is asked to leave. She hopes that his absence will mean the absence of

this ghost in the lobby window. The novel, however, does not endorse this view. Rather, it suggests that confronting one's ghosts is the key to exorcizing them.

In 1959, when all the other holders of her secret have died or been locked in the asylum at Gransha, the boy asked his mother what she would like for her birthday: "'Just for that day,' she answered, 'just for that one day, the seventeenth of May, to forget everything. Or at least not to be reminded of it. Can you give me that?'"(40) He cannot, for as Derrida's theory of spectrality reminds us, "they are always *there*, specters, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet."(41) The Gothic signals the specter's imminent return: "This, the thing ('this thing') will end up coming. The *revenant* is going to come."(42) How one responds to the specter, with curiosity or recoil, dictates whether the return is productive—as represented by the boy's curiosity and use of the past as a healing agent—or destructive—as represented by the mother's fear of the past and ultimate insanity.

Worrying Those Old Wounds

Seamus Deane again juxtaposes these two opposing responses to specters—curiosity and madness—in his most consciously Gothic episode of the novel: "Grianan, September 1950." The boy spends his summer holidays racing around and staging mock battles at the Grianan Aileach, a stone fortress in County Donegal that dates back to the rule of early Irish chieftains (c. 800 B.C.E.).(43) "Once," he reports, "my friends—Moran, Harkin, Toland—locked me in [its] secret passage." (44) The boy's description of the place, combined with his incarceration in a secret, haunted passage, depicts the Irish architectural past in Gothic terms:

Grianan was a great stone ring with flights of worn steps on the inside leading to a parapet that overlooked the countryside in one direction and the coastal sands of the lough in the other. At the base of one inside wall, there was a secret passage, tight and black as you crawled in and then briefly higher at the end where there was a wishing-chair of slabbed stone. You sat there and closed your eyes and wished for what you wanted most, while you listened for the breathing of the sleeping warriors of the legendary Fianna who lay below.(45)

According to the Fenian (or Ossianic) myth Cycle, Finn MacCool, King Cormac's bravest soldier, rose to mythological status along with his band of warriors—the Fianna. They are said to have possessed extraordinary skill in battle, including the supernatural ability to communicate with the Celtic otherworld. In modern Ireland, the most popular mythology surrounding the Fianna is that they lie below Ireland, ready to reawaken and defend the land in the hour of its greatest need—usually perceived as the final battle between Ireland and England. This myth remains particularly attractive to those who see the Northern Troubles as the result of continued British occupation and governance.

The Fianna myth reverses the Gothic theme of the dreaded return as well as the Gothic image of corruption beneath a desirable façade. Whereas the undead are typically thought of as malevolent creatures to be feared, Deane draws upon a myth that establishes spectral warriors as the heroic defenders of Ireland. However, in a double-reversal, Deane's narrator, who has already been identified as one who invites ghosts to haunt him, admits that he fears those heroic ghosts who are believed to fight on behalf of Ireland and its people:

They were waiting there for the person who would make that one wish that would rouse them from their thousand-year sleep to make final war on the English and drive them from our shores forever.... I was terrified that I might, by accident, make that special wish and feel the ground buckle under me and see the dead faces rise, indistinct behind their definite axes and spears.(46)

The boy's anxiety that he might accidentally summon the Fianna seems uncharacteristic; yet, this scene is juxtaposed with his earlier motivation for actively calling forth ancestral voices to haunt from beyond the grave. He conjures the dead, such as his uncle Eddie, to gain insight into his family's and Ireland's troubled histories. Here, though, he is terrified of accidentally conjuring the Fianna because he does not want to "worry those old [colonial] wounds." (47) Deane's narrator, incarcerated in this Gothic passageway, offers an alternate reading of the Fianna myth that imagines a dreaded return rather than a desired final battle between Ireland and England. (48) For him, the Fianna represent a retributive force that would perpetuate the cycle of violence in the North, not bring it to an end. On the other hand, he believes that the conjuration of Eddie's ghost would at least ease the tensions between him and his parents, if not between his mother and father. The boy's knowledge of his uncle's fate, however, estranges him from both parents. He observes, "Every time [my mother] saw me she felt exposed, even though I made it clear I would never say anything...staying loyal to my mother made me disloyal to my father." (49) The absence of Eddie's ghost terrorizes the entire family: the mother because she fears the truth that its return might deliver, the father because he does not know the truth about his brother's whereabouts, and the boy because he knows the truth but cannot speak it. The narrator's fear of being responsible for perpetrating the continuation of Troubles-related violence (by accidentally wishing for the Fianna to return) testifies to his motivation for seeking out ghosts earlier in the novel, which was to deny them the power to terrorize. In short, exorcising the specter of the Irish past in one context can stop cycles of violence; in another it can perpetuate them.

Aware of the psychological dangers of repressing history and its attendant specters, the boy performs a sort of exorcism inside the secret passage. He refuses the Fianna legend's efficacy by calling it to haunt him and subsequently exorcizing it by deconstructing the mythology of the legend. His action serves as a direct critique of those who try to ignore their specters, and who therefore suffer psychological trauma.

While locked in the underground passage, he does not try to block out the haunting sounds of the Fianna as might be expected. Rather, he sits in the wishing-chair concentrating on the emaciated ghost sounds within the passage:

I imagined I could hear the breathing of the sleeping Fianna waiting for the trumpet call that would bring them to life again to fight the last battle... If you concentrated even further, you would scent the herbal perfumes of the Druid spells and you would hear the women sighing in sexual pleasure—yes-esss-yes-esss.... I could hear the wind, or maybe it was the far-off sea. That was the breathing Fianna. I could smell the heather and the gorse tinting the air; that was the Druid spells. I could hear the underground waters whispering; that was the women sighing. (50)

The boy conflates past myth and present reality by recognizing that the haunting sound of the breathing Fianna is also the wind, or perhaps the waves echoing in the underground passage; the perfumes are both the lingering presence of a supernatural spell, and the heather and gorse growing in the ground just above him; the sighing women are simultaneously the whispering waters of underground creeks. Like a palimpsest, two paintings on one canvas, the Gothic (this spectral genre) brings together two modalities and two temporalities in one moment—the myth is made real; the past is made present. The narrator instructs readers how to recognize, and perhaps more importantly how to accept, radical heterogeneity. (51)

Reading in the Dark suggests, therefore, that competing narratives always occupy the same space. Another example of this can be found in the "Reading in the Dark" chapter, which opens with an allusion

to James Murphy's *The Shan Van Vocht: A Story of the United Irishmen* (1889). Its green cover signals Irish heritage; the boy's mother's maiden name penned on the flyleaf signals domestic tradition. The two coalesce in the physical object of the book about Old Mother Ireland who calls for the men of the nation to fight for independence during the 1798 rebellion. Here Deane not only brings together social and domestic spheres (national troubles and familial troubles), but he also disrupts temporal boundaries by equating past failed rebellions with the current Troubles (1798, 1916, and 1966-1998).

Deane's novel does more than simply dramatize Northern Ireland's traumatic experience. By bringing the history of Celtic mythology into the historical space of the Northern Irish Troubles, the Grianan episode invites multiple competing and seemingly discordant narratives to co-exist.⁽⁵²⁾ This seems to be Deane's explicit argument that multiple political narratives must tolerate one another, for he refuses to enter the recurring debate about what constitutes the 'true' Irish national character because he rejects the notion that such a character exists. The novel's use of the Gothic return can be read as a critique of repetitive acts of violence aimed at defining Irishness. The return—of Eddie, of the Fianna, of the Troubles—is feared because these specters bring with them threats of intense psychological and physical violence. Deane puts the consequences of haunting on full display to argue for a new way of encountering the past. In the Grianan episode, Deane explores the possibility of pardoning those who do us wrong. He depicts the boy's incarceration, symbolic of constraining transgenerational violence, as a prank that does not require revenge: "Eventually, someone came and rolled the stone back and I scrambled out into the sunshine, dazed by the light, unsteady when I walked, as though all my blood had collected around my ankles."⁽⁵³⁾ He does not seek retribution; he simply rejoins the races and mock battles. The boy's willingness to call Ireland's ghosts into full view empowers him to deny their ability to haunt, thereby symbolically challenging the pattern of transgenerational violence into which he was born.

Deane then illustrates that by ignoring the past one inherits its specters. On their way home from Grianan, the boys encounter "water rats," which one of the friends, Brendan Moran, explains is the "nickname given to customs officers." The narrator then relates a story told to him by his father about a customs official who was also imprisoned in Grianan's haunted passageway. This incarceration, however, was not a joke among friends, but a violent political act—and as a result of the trauma, the official goes mad:

My father told me the smugglers caught [a customs officer] one night near Grianan and they took his customs jacket off, tied him up and closed him inside the passage. It was nearly two days before they found him, and he was stark, staring mad when they got him out. He's still in the asylum at Gransha and they say he's always cold; never warmed up since. Never will.⁽⁵⁴⁾

The customs official represents an older generation who, the novel suggests, typically ignores the repercussions of these repeated acts of violence, and is therefore driven mad by his incarceration. The boy reports, "He's always cold; never warmed up. Never will."⁽⁵⁵⁾ By first introducing us to the gothic passage through the eyes of the curious young boy, however, our experience is shaped by the boy's composure throughout a potentially maddening situation. And by inviting the ghosts within the passage to haunt, thereby denying them the ability to terrorize, the boy avoids common psychological trauma associated with Troubles violence.

The customs official's misery mirrors that of the boy's mother. Haunted by the knowledge that her husband's brother was mistakenly executed as an informant on the orders of her own father, this woman's guilt is illustrative of political conflict contaminating domestic space. The incident at Grianan serves as another example of political treachery that has been passed down unchecked through generations. The mistrust of public officials has been a recurring theme in Irish history, reaching back to the nationalist

hatred for fellow Irishmen who enlisted in the British Army during World War I, and who worked in the British run police force (Royal Irish Constabulary, RIC) after the war. The families of those who took jobs in the RIC have not been trusted since, never will.

The repetition of the word ‘never’ is at odds with the Fianna myth’s claim to an imminent “last battle” and “final war”: it insinuates Ireland’s continual subordination to England. Throughout the novel, only the narrator gives welcome to both familial and political pasts to haunt him; he actively seeks them out in order to make sense of them in relation to one another, and therefore is the only character in the novel that is able to reconcile the personal with the political.(56) The others—his family members, police officers, and clergy—refuse to let go of centuries old political and religious divisions that have become integral to their sense of Irishness. In actuality, Deane clearly warns against abandoning personal identity for political cooperation. His novel illustrates that the anxiety about adopting new identities is actually what perpetuates the conflict. Neither side wants to recalibrate their ideals of Irishness. *Reading in the Dark* suggests that this is in fact not the way to end the Troubles; in a *Fortnight* interview Deane insists, “[If we] forget the past, [we will] forget Ireland.”(57) Deane, therefore, draws upon spectral qualities of the Gothic that are indicative of productive (or didactic) haunting: haunting that suggests a non-violent, if still conflicted, response to acts of terror. His reversal of a repetitive aesthetic strategy—the Gothic return—counteracts common justification for continued violence in Northern Ireland.

No Bones: Ma’s Fighting Rules

Anna Burns’s debut novel, *No Bones*, combines the psychological terror and neuroses that Seamus Deane exploits in *Reading in the Dark* with the more sensational machinery on display in earlier Gothic novels such as *Dracula*: terrifying wilderness, extreme psychosis resulting in unstable narrative time and space, and graphic sexual aggression.(58) Like Deane’s eerie rural Derry, where the ghosts of executed IRA informants and the legendary Fianna continue to haunt the living, Burns transforms her native Belfast into a Gothic nightmare narrated (in part) by Amelia Lovett.(59) Chronologically, Burns’s novel begins where *Reading in the Dark* leaves off (at the “beginning” of the Troubles in Northern Ireland), and follows a similar coming-of-age structure that charts the maturation of Amelia from the age of seven in 1969 to the age of thirty-two in 1994. Over the course of twenty-five years, Amelia’s best friend is blown up by a car bomb, her sister commits suicide, and she is nearly the victim of an incestuous rape. By internalizing the violence experienced in Belfast’s Catholic neighborhood of Ardoyne, Amelia suffers severe anorexia and alcoholism, and finally a complete mental breakdown resulting in confinement at a London insane asylum. The novel, divided into twenty-three interrupted and incomplete episodes told through the eyes of multiple confused narrators, mirrors Amelia’s psychosis.

Burns’s use of the Gothic return highlights an ever-present historical narrative that is continuously written over by increasingly violent acts, thereby creating a culture of revenge in which the past manifests in the present. Burns’ protagonists metatextually recognize elements of the gothic in their surrounding, and are therefore able to undermine and reverse typical ‘revenge’ plots by exposing the machinery that produces unending acts of retribution. *No Bones* illustrates just how all-encompassing and internalized vengeance has become in Northern Ireland. Judith Grossman observes, “The driving force of *No Bones* is a passionate indictment of the decades-long rule of sociopathic killers in Belfast’s neighborhoods, and of the deluded families willing to pitch child after child into that deadly arena.”(60) This culture of revenge in Northern Ireland, which *No Bones* works to overturn, becomes particularly clear in an early chapter titled “Somethin’ Political” in which Amelia outlines her mother’s fighting rules: “Rule Number One: (a) Don’t start fights. (b) If someone else starts them, get stuck in, for you’ve got to save face no matter what. ... Rule Number Two: Never run away.”(61) Thus, as Margot Backus observes of Glenn Patterson’s

Burning Your Own (1988), *No Bones* is a novel that “explores the position of children within a transgenerational familial and national system that appropriates them into a priori patterns of loyalty and animosity.”(62) Children in the novel are made to suffer the consequences of their ancestors’ actions, a particularly Gothic plot device. Amelia and her siblings are ordered to “get stuck in” the cycle of sectarian violence. Both of Amelia’s older siblings—her brother, Mick, a PIRA operative, and her older sister, Lizzie, who solves every conflict with her fists—“very much resembled her parents, at least as they used to be, before they’d become useless and afraid.”(63) Amelia, on the other hand, refuses her role in the recurring drama.

In a narrative shift similar to that executed by Seamus Deane in *Reading in the Dark*, Burns’s use of the Gothic rejects firmly established patterns of Ireland’s historical unrest. She suggests an alternative way of dealing with the persistent call for retribution by placing Amelia at odds with familial ideology. Amelia questions Rule Number Two’s promotion of recurrent acts of retributive violence at any cost: “I just couldn’t come to grips with that Rule Number Two at all. It seemed to me there was something terribly wrong with it.”(64) Her mother admits, “It may not be much but when you’ve been murdered, and you will be, you’ll at least have done your best and you won’t have run away.”(65) But Amelia insists, “Grown-ups never understood. They were stupid, distracted, mindless sorts of beings. They never had a clue. They always got it wrong.”(66) Amelia attempts to break this transgenerational system of loyalty and animosity by simply ignoring the conflict around her.

Amelia’s refusal to participate in the conflict, however, initially results in psychotic fragmentation: Amelia experiences a mental breakdown that bifurcates her into what she refers to as “dual realities”—she simultaneously exists in Belfast and in London, in the past and in the present.(67) She refuses to be sacrificed to a transgenerational pattern of violence that would, at the very least, effectively kill her capacity to think and act independently. While Amelia successfully retreats from the physical dangers of numerous schoolyard and workplace riots, and later escapes from Ardoyne to Camden Town, she eventually goes mad. Her attempt to ignore the external political madness of troubled Belfast causes the physical violence from the streets to manifest as psychological violence.

Burns’s most direct commentary on the extreme states of mental disturbance caused by the inescapable recurring violence in Northern Ireland, and her clearest articulation of what she thinks will end Troubles-related psychosis, comes in two later chapters (“Triggers, 1991” and “No Bones, 1991-1992”) in which she draws heavily upon the Gothic to narrate the spectral return of two ghosts from Amelia’s past: her childhood friend Roberta, who was killed by a car bomb in 1975, and her sister, Lizzie, who committed suicide in 1989.

A Sad Tune. Repetitive

No Bones reinforces the popular assumption that Ireland is a place of recurrent traumas, a “strange country”(68) where “the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere ‘modernity’ cannot kill.”(69) The Troubles, after all, continuously (re)appear as a series of violent events, which serve as justifications for more violence. We can thus think of Burns’s use of the Gothic as a means of critiquing the unwillingness to challenge seemingly irrepressible forces from the past that continue to tyrannize the present; however, Amelia Lovett does offer a challenge of sorts—she escapes to London. Like the mother in Deane’s *Reading in the Dark*, Amelia hopes to ignore her past, and as a result suffers a mental breakdown. The specters from her Belfast past cross the Irish Sea as easily as they transgress temporal and metaphysical borders:

She was having dual realities again, right here in front of her. As well as being in Camden Town in London, she was also on Belfast's Crumlin Road. ... Something else was starting to bother her. It turned out to be Roberta McKeown who, at that moment, was walking by. Roberta shouldn't have been walking by and Amelia had no business to be seeing her, for Roberta'd been blown up by a car bomb in 1975. 'That can't be Roberta,' said Amelia, knowing it for a fact because she remembered that she'd forgotten, deliberately, to go to Roberta's funeral. After all, just how many funerals was one expected to attend?(70)

Here, Burns illustrates the danger of "looking the other way," by exposing her protagonist to the Gothic's "unwanted return." The return of Roberta's specter, in other words, is caused by Amelia's refusal to attend the funeral, or to even acknowledge the violent death of her friend at all. Therefore, Amelia, though not physically present in Belfast, is still mentally imprisoned there: haunted. She cannot escape from its terrifying atmosphere.

There seems to be multiple meanings for Roberta's return: personal, national, and transnational. Burns reminds her readers, via Amelia's haunting, that sectarian violence in Belfast was not restricted to Northern Ireland. In this passage, Burns equates 1975 Belfast with London in 1991, where the IRA detonated explosives on five different occasions.(71) At the time *No Bones* was published the violence had largely ended, yet the novel asks us to recognize that the legacy of the Troubles cannot simply be left behind. Amelia announces that she deliberately forgets to attend Roberta's funeral, insinuating that any life taken in the conflict was not martyred but squandered. *No Bones* implies that the victims of the Troubles want their deaths to be productive, not fruitless. To be productive, individuals such as Amelia will have to look at their ghosts and reflect on what has happened. As we will see, the ghosts in *No Bones* are not there to terrorize; they come back to warn against the dangers of continual acts of retribution.

Burns keys in on the Gothic mechanics of inheritance in which families sacrifice their children to the transgenerational conflict. Amelia recalls with horror the expectation (at both the familial and the national levels) that she become responsible for the "sins of her father."(72) The climax of her breakdown in a public shopping center in Camden Town is triggered by the presence of children:

Amelia panicked when she heard them. The sound of children was like the sound of terrorists. She hadn't known there were children and she knew that this was the time, if ever there was one, to run. Her brain and her nervous system, her heart, couldn't cope with children. They were the ones who became the adults and she slipped into powerless frightened childhood every time.(73)

Amelia is frozen with horror. It is at this moment in the novel that she realizes—despite being insane—that "she could never get away."(74) All of her defense mechanisms (alcohol, anorexia, sex, humor, and emigration) have failed to help her escape the Troubles' consuming system of compulsory violence, provoking the questions, "How could she fall to her knees? How could she surrender?"(75) The answer comes in the following chapter while Amelia is heavily drugged in a London asylum, and all of her ghosts come back to her.

Until this moment in the novel, Amelia is a character who orders ghosts away, or at least tries to do so. Here, Amelia begins the process of calling those ghosts back to her:

It was crowded. They were all in here with her, including her parents and her brother and all the others she had forgotten. Lizzie said, 'Ye've got to get it into your head Amelia. We can't do it all y'know. *We didn't come back to get you. You came back to get us.*'(76)

The realization that she requested her haunting cures Amelia of her psychosis. She awakes from the nightmares permanently, and in the novel's concluding chapters, "Safe House," and "A Peace Process," goes on to lead a relatively normal life. In both chapters, title and content are decidedly more optimistic, implying progress toward individual and national recovery. Amelia's regained sanity suggests that recovery from those 'old wounds' is dependent upon welcoming spirits of the dispossessed who have returned to argue, in words that echo historian Jonathan Stevenson, that "Northern Ireland needs to make room for the inevitable unforgiving,"(77) for "even without contrition, ceasefires are welcome."(78)

Burns uses the Gothic specter, specifically designed to rouse curiosity even as it terrifies, as a tool for grappling with larger questions of what it means to be a child of the Troubles: Is there a more treacherous and ambivalent virtue than that of inherited loyalty? This idea of loyalty underscores the larger issue of unending retributive acts of violence. Amelia breaks this cycle by re-imagining the way individuals interact with domestic and political tradition. She suggests, via her conjuration of Roberta and Lizzie, that haunting can be productive. Individuals can call upon the past not to reinforce or justify acts of retributive violence, but to condemn them. It is only after she confronts her specters and returns to Belfast that Amelia successfully removes herself from the conflict, and therefore regains her sanity. As I observed with reference to the narrator in *Reading in the Dark*, individuals are only ever terrorized by their own willingness to grant authority to that which haunts. Amelia realizes this, and refuses to grant her specters the authority to frighten her. Rather, she invites them to communicate with her. Central to Burns's challenge of the Gothic motif of involuntary recurrence, then, is the idea of invitation.

Conclusion

Literary historian Jim Hansen recently observed, "Literary genres participate in confronting and negating certain sociohistorical problems and, to some degree, in preserving those very problems in and for subsequent contexts."(79) This seems to be particularly evident in the genres artists manipulate in addressing the problems of Northern Ireland, including Deane and Burns, who turn to the Gothic to narrate the Troubles. Both *Reading in the Dark* and *No Bones* take up and reverse a repetitive aesthetic strategy—the Gothic return—used, within political and social discourse by nationalists and loyalists alike, to justify violence in Ireland. Both novels argue for a new rhetoric of the past-haunted-present, one to be embraced, even called forth, rather than feared.

Recognizing Gothic tropes in contemporary Irish historical fiction can, at the minimum, sharpen one's reading of these works. The gothic provides us with both the theoretical framework and precise language for discussing Ireland's historical ghosts, and for placing 21st century Ireland in conversation with the traumatic events of its historical past. Moreover, the Gothic points us to sites of imaginative reinvention of Ireland's historical narrative and cultural myths, giving iconic historical events new social meaning in the present. Such reinvention offers us insight into the psychology of contemporary Ireland more than it answers longstanding questions about complex historical events.

Gothic, as a theoretical lens, can also heighten our awareness of re-emergent cultural factors (colonial trauma, gender and sexual discrimination, political insularity) that originally led to the Irish artist's dual aesthetic and political identity during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and give us a glimpse into how contemporary Irish writers use fiction to respond to the longstanding identification of the Irish artist as politically vested. Both *Reading in the Dark* and *No Bones* highlight the reciprocity between historical events and literary discourse to influence the complex ways in which Ireland is remembered, and therefore suggest a need for greater political tolerance in the future.

The casualties of the Troubles continue to haunt, and both novels explore productive ways of interacting with those specters. For as Carla Freccero maintains, “The goal of spectral thinking is [...] not to immure, but to allow to return, to be visited by a demand, a demand to mourn and a demand to organize.”(80) *Reading in the Dark* and *No Bones* offer a model of spectral thinking, a model for productively coming to terms with the consequences of the Troubles, as well as providing a lens through which to examine recurrent sociohistorical problems in Northern Ireland without prompting yet another cycle of violence. Ultimately, both novels illustrate how Ireland’s competing histories might be used in collaboration to re-inscribe the intricacies and contradictions and tragedies of the Irish national narrative that have been falsified and oversimplified by ideologically motivated historical writing, and challenge the reliability of any narrative (historical or fictional), which assumes authority.

1. Jefferey Glenn, "Surviving the Troubles: A View from the Suburbs" in *Children of 'The Troubles': Our Lives in the Crossfire of Northern Ireland*. Ed. Laurel Holliday (New York: Pocket Books, 1997), p. 79.
2. Ibid., p. 78.
3. Ibid., p. 80.
4. Ibid., p. 84.
5. Siobhán Kilfeather, "Terrific Register: The Gothicization of Atrocity in Irish Romanticism." *boundary 2* 31.1 (2004). p. 53.
6. Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism, and the Construction of Irish Identity, 1760-1830* (South Bend: U of Notre Dame P, 1996), p. 37.
7. Margot Gayle Backus, *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice, and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1999), p. 243-44.
8. Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* is traditionally read as a neo-Gothic novel. In this article, I will offer further evidence in support of such readings, and introduce Anna Burns's *No Bones* as yet another example of the Irish Gothic revived.
9. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. 1993. Trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge Classics, 2006), p. 123.
10. Kelly Hurley, "British Gothic Fiction, 1885-1930" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), p.194.
11. See, Richard Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* 2 (2007) for an exhaustive list of Gothic conventions, themes, and narrative devices which he has collected from studies ranging from the rise in Gothic criticism during the 1970s through the present.
12. Jean Paul Riquelme "Toward a history of Gothic and Modernism: Dark Modernity from Bram Stoker to Samuel Beckett." *Modern Fiction Studies* 46.2 (2000), p. 586.
13. Chris Baldick, "Introduction" in *Melmoth the Wanderer* by Charles Robert Maturin. Ed. Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), p. ix.
14. David Punter, "Scottish and Irish Gothic" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), p. 123.
15. Ibid., p. 123.
16. Riquelme, "History of Gothic and Modernism," p. 588.
17. Bruce Stewart, "Bram Stoker's Dracula: Possessed by the Spirit of the Nation?" *Irish University Review* 29.2 (1999). p. 255.
18. Stephen D. Arata, "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization" in *Dracula*. Ed. by Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), p. 465.
19. The Pale was originally the fenced-in territory established around Dublin by the invading English in the medieval period, a border between English civilization and Celtic foreignness. In later usage, the phrase, "beyond the pale" came to have a purely metaphoric meaning—to stand outside the conventional boundaries of law, behavior, or social class.
20. Kilfeather, "Terrific Register," p. 71.
21. Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 180.
22. Ibid., p. 180.
23. Bram Stoker, *Dracula*. Ed. Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), p. 41.
24. Riquelme, "History of Gothic and Modernism," p. 588.
25. The official beginning to the Troubles in Northern Ireland varies from historian to historian, but is traditionally accepted to be between 1966 and 1969.
26. Jonathan Stevenson, 'We Wrecked the Place': *Contemplating an End to the Northern Irish Troubles* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), p. 7.

27. Thomas Flanagan, *There You Are: Writings on Irish and American Literature and History*. Ed. Christopher Cahill (New York: New York Review Books, 2004), p. 444.
28. Nationalist historians tend to color the Troubles as the revived fight for Ireland's moral right to a thirty-two county sovereignty. This argument is laid out by historians and cultural theorists such as Desmond Fennell (*The State of the Nation: Ireland Since the Sixties* [1983]), Eamonn McCann (*McCann: War and Peace in Northern Ireland* [1998]), Tim Pat Coogan (*The Troubles* [2002]), and Peter Beresford Ellis (*Eyewitness to Irish History* [2004]). On the other hand, Revisionist accounts of the re-emergent violence in the North typically argue for Northern Ireland's justified struggle to retain union with the British commonwealth: Roy Foster's *Paddy and Mr. Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (1993), Garret Fitzgerald's *Towards a New Ireland* (1972), Conor Cruise O'Brien's *States of Ireland* (1974), Claire O'Halloran's *Partition and the Limits of Irish Nationalism: An Ideology Under Stress* (1987), and Ruth Dudley Edwards's *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure* (2006).
29. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 221.
30. Anne Devlin, *The Long March. Ourselves Alone, with A Woman Calling and The Long March* (London: Faber, 1986), p. 155. The long march to which Walsh refers is the Belfast-Derry march that began on Wednesday January 1, 1969. According to reports, "Approximately 40 members of People's Democracy (PD) began a four-day march from Belfast across Northern Ireland to Derry. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) and some nationalists in Derry had advised against the march. The march was modeled on Martin Luther King's Selma to Montgomery march. The first day involved a walk from Belfast to Antrim. [Over the next four days the number of people on the march grew to a few hundred. The march was confronted and attacked by Loyalist crowds on a number of occasions the most serious attack occurring on 4 January 1969.]" (Melaugh).
31. Sigmund Freud argues that the 'uncanny' evokes fear from individuals who are confronted by a repressed memory—in this case, memory of revolution. He writes, "the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (124), but has become (through repression) unfamiliarly horrifying. Revolution in Ireland evokes feelings of home and normalcy, while simultaneously illustrating that home has changed utterly, bringing with it a sense of uncertainty.
32. Seamus Deane, *Reading in the Dark* (New York: Vintage, 1996), p. 236-7.
33. The first IRA ceasefire of August 31, 1994 had ended on February 9, 1996 when the PIRA exploded a bomb in the London Docklands killing two and injuring forty people. The second, and permanent, ceasefire would not take place until July 19, 1997. At the time of the novel's publication, then, no one could be sure if the peace process had failed, and even with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement on April 10, 1998 and complete IRA disarmament on October 23, 2001, peace is still precarious. In the epilogue to his study of the Northern Irish peace process, *A Secret History of the IRA*, Irish journalist Ed Moloney observes, "After nineteen years of difficult, secret, and often dangerous diplomacy, Northern Ireland had finally arrived at a sort of peace. A new government, fairer than anything that had preceded it, was striving to make its roots grow, and Northern Ireland's deeply divided population was struggling to come to terms with a new political order, one in which each side had been obliged to abandon some strongly held beliefs in return for a chance at building stability (emphasis added, 492)."
34. Deane, *Reading in the Dark*, p. 242.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
36. Steven Bruhm, "Contemporary Gothic: Why We Need It" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), p. 274.
37. Daniel Ross, "Oedipus in Derry: Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark*." *New Hibernia Review* 11.1 (2007), p. 25.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
39. Deane, *Reading in the Dark*, p. 28.

40. Ibid., p. 235.
41. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 221.
42. Ibid., p. 4.
43. The original fortress was destroyed in 1101 by Muirchertach Ua Briain, then King of Munster, and was reconstructed in 1878 by Dr. Walter Bernard (Linke).
44. Deane, *Reading in the Dark*, p. 57.
45. Ibid., p. 56.
46. Ibid., p. 56.
47. Whelan *The Tree of Liberty*; Backus *Gothic Family Romance*
48. St. Columcille's prophecy foretells that the band of warriors would rise again to wage "the final war on the English" (Deane, *Strange Country* 56), "after which the one remaining English ship would sail out of Lough Foyle and away from Ireland forever" (Deane, *Strange Country* 57).
49. Deane, *Reading in the Dark*, pp. 234-36.
50. Ibid., pp. 57-8.
51. Gothic critic Steven Bruhm maintains, We need [the Gothic] because the twentieth century has so forcefully taken away from us that which we once thought constituted us—a coherent psyche, a social order to which we can pledge allegiance in good faith, a sense of justice in the universe—and that wrenching withdrawal, that traumatic experience, is vividly dramatized in the Gothic. (273)
52. According to Peter Mahon, The reader-narrator of Deane's text stakes out a site where a non-hierarchical framework or system of incomplete narratives can flourish because no story has the ability to cancel out any other, and it is this site that marks the text's main contribution to the debate on the political situation in Northern Ireland. (118)
53. Deane, *Reading in the Dark*, p. 58.
54. Ibid., pp. 58-9.
55. Ibid., p. 59.
56. "Give it welcome" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* I.v. 164).
57. Carol Rumens, "Reading Deane." *Fortnight* July/August (1997), p. 30.
58. Anna Burns was born in Belfast in 1962 and moved to the Notting Hill district of London in 1987. *No Bones* is her first novel, and was shortlisted for the 2002 Orange Prize, which is awarded annually to a female author for the best original English language novel published in the United Kingdom.
59. The name Amelia Lovett calls to mind the fifteen-year-old Ann Lovett, who hid her pregnancy and died giving birth alone in a grotto for the Virgin Mary in 1984. Burns relies on this story, in which personal tragedy became national scandal, to suggest Amelia suffers similar horrors.
60. Judith Grossman. Rev. *No Bones*, by Anna Burns. *The Women's Review of Books* 20.1 (2002), p. 10.
61. Anna Burns, *No Bones* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), pp. 99-100.
62. Backus, *Gothic Family Romance*, p. 2.
63. Burns, *No Bones*, p. 148.
64. Ibid., p. 100.
65. Ibid., p. 100.
66. Ibid., p. 63.
67. Ibid., p. 284.
68. Seamus Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).
69. Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 41.
70. Burns, *No Bones*, pp. 284-5.
71. February 7, at 10 Dowling Street; February 18, at Victorian Station; December 14, at a shopping center; December 15, at the National Gallery; December 16, at a railway line in South London.

72. This phrase is often used to represent the transgenerational nature of the Troubles. See, for instance, Jonathan Stevenson's introduction to *'We Wrecked the Place': Contemplating an End to the Northern Irish Troubles*. See also the 1998 film by Jim Sheridan, *In the Name of the Father*, in which the title refers both to the religious context of the Troubles, and also to the pattern of violence inherited by the main protagonist from his biological father.

73. Burns, *No Bones*, pp. 288-9.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 315, emphasis added.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

79. Jim Hansen, *Terror and Irish Modernism: The Gothic Tradition from Burke to Beckett* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009), p. 7.

80. Carla Freccero, "Queer Spectrality: Haunting the Past" in *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies*. Ed. George Haggerty and Molly McGarry (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 2007), p. 196.