

HORRIFYING CHILDREN

HAUNTOLOGY AND THE LEGACY OF
CHILDREN'S TELEVISION

Lauren Stephenson, Robert Edgar & John Marland



BLOOMSBURY

Horrrifying Children

Horrrifying Children

*Hauntology and the Legacy of
Children's Television*

*Lauren Stephenson, Robert Edgar
and John Marland*

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
NEW YORK • LONDON • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Inc
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC and the Diana logo are trademarks of
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in the United States of America 2024

Copyright © Lauren Stephenson, Robert Edgar and John Marland and contributors 2024

For legal purposes the Acknowledgements on p. xvi constitute an extension of this
copyright page.

Cover design: Eleanor Rose

Cover images: Doll photograph © Robert Edgar; Supplementary image © Getty Images

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted
in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying,
recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior
permission in writing from the publishers.

Bloomsbury Publishing Inc does not have any control over, or responsibility for, any
third-party websites referred to or in this book. All internet addresses given in this
book were correct at the time of going to press. The author and publisher regret any
inconvenience caused if addresses have changed or sites have ceased to exist,
but can accept no responsibility for any such changes.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-5013-9056-2

ePDF: 978-1-5013-9054-8

eBook: 978-1-5013-9055-5

Typeset by Newgen KnowledgeWorks Pvt. Ltd., Chennai, India

To find out more about our authors and books visit www.bloomsbury.com
and sign up for our newsletters.

This volume is dedicated to all of the enthusiasts who collect, catalogue and curate television programmes, comics, toys and other treasures from our past.

The editors would like to dedicate this book to:

Lauren: Her grandparents, Ann and Jack, who patiently endured hours of Goosebumps every summer, and bought her most (if not all) of her Point Horror collection.

Robert: His mum and dad (Jenny and Fred) for allowing him to use their attic as his personal archive of 1970s and 1980s ephemera. He would also like to thank his brother, Stewart, for sharing his toys. He would also like to dedicate this to his partner, Julia. And, as always, for M and the memory of her childhood.

John: His children, John Joseph and Marian Rose. Horrified, perhaps, but never horrifying.

CONTENTS

List of Figures x

Notes on Contributors xi

Acknowledgements xvi

Introduction: The Edwardian legacy and children's fiction 1

Lauren Stephenson, Robert Edgar and John Marland

Part One Hauntings and Spectres

- 1 'What is it like to be dead and a ghost? Oh, do tell me Tom, I've been simply longing to know': Hauntology and spectrality in the 1989 BBC television series

Tom's Midnight Garden 9

Stella Miriam Pryce

- 2 Coming of age in *The Owl Service*: England and the uncertain future 21

Fernando Gabriel Pagnoni Berns

- 3 'Oh please, let us come undone!' States of independence: Female temporality in the supernatural children's television and literature of the 1970s and 1980s 37

Fiona Cameron

- 4 'It came from beneath the sink': Children's horror television as an uncanny mirror 53

Merinda Staubli

- 5 An adult nightmare: Garbage Pail Kids and the fear of the queer child 69
Max Hart
- 6 The transgender twist: Mermen and gender nonconformity in *Round the Twist* 85
Jackson Phoenix Nash
- 7 Weird doubling in Wes Craven's *Stranger in Our House* (1978) 93
Miranda Corcoran
- 8 Suburban eerie: *The Demon Headmaster* (BBC 1, 1996–98) and *The Demon Headmaster* (CBBC, 2019) as neoliberal folk horror 109
Adam Whybray
- 9 'My Carnaby cassock': Jimmy Savile, *Jim'll Fix It* and *Top of the Pops* 131
Benjamin Halligan

Part Two Memory, Process and Practice

- 10 The technological uncanny: The role of memory prosthetics in hauntological practice 155
Michael Schofield
- 11 The pandemic and the bomb 171
Flannán Delaney
- 12 Killing a cow on kids' TV: The case of *Die Sendung mit der Maus* 177
Alexander Hartley
- 13 Confronting ghosts: The inherited horrors of the Kent State Shooting 191
Elizabeth Tussey
- 14 Creeping dread in *The Singing Ringing Tree*: East German cinematic fairy tale as children's tea-time entertainment 201
Wayne Johnson

- 15 'May cause drowsiness': A (false) memory of weekday morning television in the mid-1970s through the filter of prepubescent illness and sedation 213
Jez Conolly
- 16 Bleak adventures in Kenneth Johnson's *V* 225
Keith McDonald
- 17 Don't turn tail from horror: Using eco-horror in the secondary-school classroom 237
Hollie Adams
- Index* 253

FIGURES

- 10.1 *Zoetrope.space* by Conflux Coldwell (2019). 156
- 10.2 *Memorex Mori* by Conflux Coldwell (2023). 160
- 10.3 *Memorex Mori* by Conflux Coldwell (2023). 163

CONTRIBUTORS

Hollie Adams is a secondary-school teacher based in the UK. Hollie is an independent researcher with interests in pedagogy, children's fiction and eco-horror.

Fernando Gabriel Pagnoni Berns is Professor of Audiovisual Thought (Cinema and Literature) and teaches undergraduate seminars on international horror cinema at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina. He is the director of the horror film research group 'Grite', and has published chapters in the books *The Films of Delmer Daves* (2022), *Doubles and Hybrids in Latin American Gothic* (2021), *Gender and Environment in Science Fiction* (2018), *Critical Insights: Alfred Hitchcock* (2016), *Dreamscapes in Italian Cinema* (2015) and *To See the Saw Movies: Essays on Torture Porn and Post-9/11 Horror* (2013), among many others. He has written a book about the Spanish television series, *Historias para no Dormir* (2020), and has edited a book to celebrate the bicentenary of Frankenstein (2019).

Fiona Cameron is Lecturer in Creative Writing at Bangor University, North Wales. Her most recent poetry collections are *She May Be Radon* (2021) and *Bendigo* (2015). Her recent work has appeared in *Poetry Wales*, *Strix Magazine* and *Horror Across Borders*. She is currently writing and researching a poetry/memoir project which explores deep time and the 'opening of the field' in a specific six-acre rural location on the Wirral peninsula.

Jez Conolly is co-editor, with Caroline Whelan, of three books in the World Film Locations series – *Liverpool* (2013), *Dublin* (2012) and *Reykjavik* (2012). He wrote regularly for *The Big Picture* magazine and website, and currently contributes articles for *Beneficial Shock!* magazine as well as numerous other cinema books and journals. He is the author of three monographs offering detailed analyses of John Carpenter's *The Thing*, the 1945 Ealing Studios portmanteau horror film *Dead of Night* and the 1966 John Frankenheimer film *Seconds*. His new essay on *The Thing* will appear in *Scarred for Life, Volume 3*. Jez is former Head of Student Engagement

with the University of Bristol Library Services, UK, having recently retired to live in Scotland with his wife and two bears.

Miranda Corcoran is Lecturer in 21st Century Literature at University College Cork, Ireland. She is the author of *Witchcraft and Adolescence in American Popular Culture: Teen Witches* (2022) and the co-editor (with Steve Gronert Ellerhoff) of *Exploring the Horror of Supernatural Fiction: Ray Bradbury's Elliott Family* (2020).

Flannán Delaney lives on the banks of the River Lee with their partner, a flatmate and two cats. They spend much of their free time trying to stave off the end of the world.

Robert Edgar is Professor of Writing and Popular Culture in the York Centre for Writing at York St John University, UK. He has published on *Venue Stories* (2023), the *Routledge Companion to Folk Horror* (2023), *Adaptation for Scriptwriters* (2019), *Science Fiction for Survival* (2019), *Music, Memory and Memoir* (2019), *The Arena Concert* (2015), *The Music Documentary* (2013), *The Language of Film* (2010; 2015), *Screenwriting* (2009) and *Directing Fiction* (2009). He is also co-editor of the forthcoming volume, *Alan Garner: The Work of Time*. Robert is a member of the York Centre for Writing, and he is the co-convener of the Music Memoir Research Group and the Hauntology and Spectrality Research Group. He is a member of the York St John Unit for Satire and he works on the Terra Two Project.

Benjamin Halligan is the director of Doctoral College of the University of Wolverhampton, UK. His publications include *Hotbeds of Licentiousness: The British Glamour Film and the Permissive Society* (2022); *Desires for Reality: Radicalism and Revolution in Western European Film* (2017) and *Michael Reeves* (2003). He has co-edited the following books: *Diva: Feminism and Fierceness from Pop to Hip-Hop* (2023); *Adult Themes: British Cinema and the X-Rating in the Long 1960s* (2023); *Politics of the Many: Contemporary Radical Thought and the Crisis of Agency* (2021); *Stories We Could Tell: Putting Words to American Popular Music* (2018); *The Arena Concert: Music, Media and Mass Entertainment* (2016); *Resonances: Noise and Contemporary Music; The Music Documentary: Acid Rock to Electropop* (2013); *Reverberations: The Philosophy, Aesthetics and Politics of Noise* (2012) and *Mark E. Smith and The Fall: Art, Music and Politics* (2010).

Max Hart is an archivist and independent researcher living in Chicago, Illinois. In 2019, they received a Bachelor's of Arts in Visual and Critical

Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, United States. Born out of an interest in performance art and queer theory, their undergraduate research focused on the relationship between commercial children's media and emerging sociopolitical metanarratives at the turn of the twenty-first century in the United States. Their thesis, *An Adult Nightmare: Garbage Pail Kids and the Fear of the Queer Child*, utilizes the controversy surrounding the popular children's trading cards to bring the problematic of a 'queer child' into conversation with the work of queer theorist Lee Edelman. Currently, they work as a video archivist at the non-profit Media Burn Archive in Chicago, and are rekindling a studio practice. Their current research interests revolve around the importance of play, childishness and monstrosity to the philosophy of Georges Bataille.

Alexander Hartley is a graduate student at Harvard University, United States, originally from the UK. He researches the movement of terms and ideas between the realms of law, politics and culture in the English, French and German-speaking worlds. His dissertation examines the relationship between British and French colonial copyright law and modernist ideas of authorship. His other writing has addressed Samuel Beckett and Bertolt Brecht's lawsuits, the American midcentury policy and poetry of 'urban renewal' and ideas of 'tolerance' in late critical theory.

Wayne Johnson is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies and Media and Communication at York St John University, UK. He has published on religion and popular culture in the UK and the United States, and the representation of New York City in American culture. He is the co-author (with Keith McDonald) of *Contemporary Gothic and Horror Film* (2021). His current areas of research are children's TV Gothic horror as well as the spectral Western. He is co-editor of the forthcoming volume, *Alan Garner: The Work of Time*.

John Marland is Senior Lecturer in Literature at York St John University, UK, where he has both taught and developed undergraduate courses in literature and film. He has published on *Thomas Hardy and the Folk Horror Tradition* (2023), *Adaptation for Scriptwriters* (2019), *The Language of Film* (2010; 2015) and *Screenwriting* (2009). He is co-editor of the forthcoming publication, *Alan Garner: The Work of Time*.

Keith McDonald is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies and Media and Communication at York St John University, UK, and holds a PhD from Birkbeck College, University of London, UK. He is the co-author of *Contemporary Gothic and Horror Film: Transnational Perspectives* (2021)

with Wayne Johnson and *Guillermo del Toro: Film as Alchemic Art* (2014) with Roger Clark. He is currently involved in teaching and writing about hauntology and popular media on a number of projects and is co-writing a book on the Gothic and supernatural in the Western film genre. Other interests include pedagogy, transnational media and fan culture as online activism.

Jackson Phoenix Nash is an associate lecturer at the Open University in the School of Arts and Humanities. He completed his PhD in gender studies at the University of Sussex in 2019 with a focus on transgender YA literature. He is a fellow of the Lambda Literary Foundation Writer's Retreat for Emerging LGBTQ Voices in the YA workshop, and his fiction and poetry have appeared in over thirty publications. His debut poetry pamphlet will be published by Little Betty in 2024. Jackson identifies as a queer trans man.

Stella Miriam Pryce is a PhD researcher and ESRC scholar in Children's Literature at the University of Cambridge, UK. Her thesis entitled 'The Spectre of Childhood' bridges the gap between Children's Literature Studies and Spectrality Theory. Specifically, her research examines childhood identity and positions the figure of the child as spectral in British children's fiction. In addition to her academic work, Stella is a keen creative writer and runs her own theatre company.

Michael Schofield is a multi-modal artist and Lecturer in Media Studies at the University of Leeds, UK. His practice-led doctoral thesis (2018) examined the 'hauntology' of rephotography. Since completing his PhD, he has published research on hauntology in the *International Journal of Film and Media Arts* and in his book, *Narrating the City* (2020). His current research into spectrality, memory and media expands its scope to address sound and the moving image. Schofield also makes experimental films, publishing and exhibiting work under the alias Michael C. Coldwell, and he releases hauntological music under the name Conflux Coldwell. His critically acclaimed album CC – AM was described as 'everything hauntology could and should be in 2017' by *The Wire Magazine*. As an academic, he has taught photography and film-making at the University of Leeds, Leeds Arts University, Sheffield Hallam and York St John University, UK.

Merinda Staubli is a PhD candidate at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. Her research focuses on children's horror television in Australia in the 1990s and early 2000s. She has previously researched the reach of horror beyond the cinema screen and has published on the potential effects of VR on the horror genre. She is a horror film-maker and her short

films have screened at multiple national and international film festivals, including: Monster Fest, A Night of Horror International Film Festival, Ax Wound Film Festival, El Vampirascopio, MidWest WeirdFest, Women in Horror Film Festival, Atlanta Horror Film Festival and Idaho Horror Film Festival. Her film *Helminth* (2017) was awarded 'Best Midnight Short' at Nightmares Film Festival (2018).

Lauren Stephenson is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies and Media and Communication at York St John University, UK. Her research interests include horror cinema (in particular, British, American and New Zealand horror), gender and horror, cinema and social justice and representations of women's friendship on-screen. She has written on the British TV series *Dead Set* (dir. Yann Demange, 2008), the 'Hoodie Horror' film cycle, representations of transplantation in *The Eye* (dir. David Moreau and Xavier Palud, 2008) and women's friendship in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (dir. Woody Allen, 2008). She has also written pieces on the film-maker Coralie Fargeat for the *Cut-Throat Women Database* and on Jennifer Kent's *The Nightingale* (2018) for the *Bloody Women* online journal. Most recently, she has written for *The Routledge Companion to Folk Horror* (Edgar & Johnson eds., 2023) on 'Restoring Relics – (Re)-releasing Antrum (2018) and film as Folk Horror'. She is the executive producer of the short film *Cost of Living* (2022), and the co-founder of the Cinema and Social Justice project at York St. John University, UK.

Elizabeth Tussey is an Appalachian writer and genealogist residing in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, United States. She is a graduate of the Northeast Ohio MFA Consortium, United States, and her poetry and prose have appeared in *Barn Owl Review*, *Postcolonial Text*, *The Women of Appalachia Project*, *I Thought I Heard a Cardinal Sing* and *The Encyclopedia of LGBTQIA+ Portrayals in American Film*.

Adam Whybray is Lecturer in Film Studies at the University of Suffolk, UK. In 2015, he received his PhD in the Philosophy of Film from the University of Exeter, UK. He previously contributed the chapter "'Well futile": Nathan Barley and Post-Ironic Culture' to James Leggott and Jamie Sexton's 2013 publication, *No Known Cure: The Comedy of Chris Morris*, and has articles published in the journals *Comedy Studies*, *Childhood Remixed* and *Gothic Studies*. He has previously given conference papers on the fairytale games of Stephen Lavelle, Emily Short and Edgar Allan Poe, the 2010 London student protests and the avant-garde band The Residents. In his spare time, he co-hosts *Still Scared*, a podcast on children's horror.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors would like to thank Katie Gallof, Stephanie Grace-Petinos and Alyssa Jordan at Bloomsbury for their ongoing support in the development of this book.

Many thanks to all the participants and attendees at the Horrifying Children conference held at York St John University, first planned for 2020 and resurrected in 2022 following the pandemic. Very special thanks to the keynote speakers, Abi Curtis, Catherine Lester, Richard Littler and Diane A. Rodgers. Our thanks also go to Henry Jenkins for giving us a preview of his latest research. Special thanks go to Stephen Brotherstone, Bob Fischer and Dave Lawrence for their *Scarred for Life* live performance and for their remarkable publications, which were inspiration for this collection.

Our work on Horrifying Children has extended into creative writing and our thanks go to Imogen Peniston and all at Greenteeth Press for their collection, *Horrifying Tales*, which was published to coincide with the planned 2020 conference. With the help of Rob O'Connor and Reaper Press, we had a second collection, *Stories from Under the Bed*, to enjoy/unsettle for the 2022 conference.

The editors would like to thank the staff and students of Film and Media, Creative Writing and Literature in the School of Humanities at York St John University for their support and inspiration.

Introduction: The Edwardian legacy and children's fiction

*Lauren Stephenson, Robert Edgar
and John Marland*

There has been an explosion of interest in the impact of children's television and literature of the late twentieth century. In particular, the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s are seen as decades that shaped a great deal of the contemporary popular-cultural landscape. Television of this period dominated the world of childhood entertainment, drawing freely upon literature and popular culture, and much of it continues to resonate powerfully with the generation of cultural producers (fiction writers, screenwriters, directors, musicians and artists) who grew up watching the weird, the eerie and the occasionally horrific: this seems the essence of twenty-first-century hauntology, although it may not actually be that new.

In these terms this book is not about children's television as it exists now, but rather as it features as a facet of memory for contemporary audiences. The ghostliness of memory, the presence of things absent, is redoubled when what is remembered is immersion in outlandish fictional worlds from which one never completely escaped. The (not so little) box in the corner of the living room produced the narratives that millions of school-aged children held in common. And for many contemporary creatives, late-twentieth-century television remains a haunting dreamscape, at the centre of which sits their childhood self, still shaken and stirred by ideas and images that continue to shape their own work. That so many of these TV series featured porous realities and broken chronologies, blurring the boundaries of past, present and future, only adds to the sense of temporal vertigo explored here.

The ‘strange’ material to which they were exposed is a formative influence upon the present. Such is the legacy of the television programmes at the core of this collection.

It doesn’t feel as if the 21st century has started yet. We remain trapped in the 20th century ... in 1981, the 1960s seemed much further away than they do today ... cultural time has folded back on itself, and the impression of linear development has given way to a ‘strange simultaneity’. The ghost here, is a ‘spectre understood not as anything supernatural, but as that which acts without (physically) existing’. (Fisher 2014)

The ‘haunting’ of adults by what has been seen on the screen is crucial to the phenomenon that Fisher identifies. This book directly addresses that which ‘scared us’ in the past and remains with us in the present, interrogating a correlation between individual *and* collective cultural memory. The influence of these previous works is evident through the space they continue to occupy in nostalgic discourse, providing haunted frames of reference for child viewers which, as we see in many of the chapters to follow, hold fast as these viewers age and mature. Indeed, the memory of unsettling images and characters often evolves to become shorthand for adults to express their childhood experience and, potentially, a shared generational identity (Lester 2021; 2023).

As Derrida commented, ‘I believe that Ghosts are a part of the future’ (Coverley 2020) and as Helen Wheatley confirms, ‘Television is full of Ghosts’ (Wheatley 2020, 69). Television therefore provides an effective liminal space, within which past, present and potential futures can be experienced simultaneously. Wheatley’s statement resonates with a broader conception of visual media as haunted space (Sayad 2021; Leeder 2015), one in which the subjects are held in time, existing within a perpetual present. Revisiting these texts then becomes a séance of sorts, where adults seek to commune with past selves and past experiences. However, this book is not simply for adults remembering or reconnecting with their past. The cultural manifestation of these past horrifying representations can be felt in contemporary fiction and witnessed by a new generation. In part this is not necessarily new; the generation who made the programmes that appeared on very modern television screens were themselves young in the very early part of the twentieth century. These Edwardians were themselves replaying experiences they had as children. On British television this can be seen in the BBC adaptations of E. Nesbit’s 1904 novel *The Phoenix and the Carpet* in 1976 and John Masefield’s 1935 novel *The Box of Delights* in 1984, among many others. However, what is, or rather was, new was the technology that allowed for the simultaneous distribution of these programmes to an audience at the same time. Despite the presence of new technology this was a move from the permanence of the printed word on the page to flickering

light on a screen; these were shown and, if missed, they disappeared forever. It was crucial to watch them live only for them to live in memory. This is a form of Dyscronicity, where forms of TV replay – literally as well as metaphorically. However, this book is not simply for adults remembering or reconnecting with their childhood. The cultural manifestation of these past horrifying representations is felt in contemporary fiction and witnessed by a new generation. In itself this is nothing new but rather the way cultural production inevitably carries the past into the future:

[Bagpuss] makes me feel both simultaneously reassured and unsettled. It's filled with old things, lost things, tatty puppets and sadness; folk tales, ships in bottles, abandoned toys and long-ago kings. It's like television made by the ghosts of those Edwardian children themselves. It makes me feel, for want of a better word, haunted. (Fischer 2017)

Fischer continues this with a discussion of his notion of 'lost things'; the idea that in an analogue world where the television in the corner of the room dominated, all we have are fractured memories of what we may have seen as children. The frailties of memory mean that these memories may not be accurate and instead exist as phantasms, however there is the chance that these visual artefacts could be found, slowly degrading in a dusty attic. As new audiences move to 'on-demand' clinically crisp, digital programmes, the idea of the cathode ray tube humming and glowing in the corner of the room seems perhaps even more archaic than an Edwardian bookshelf.

Fischer's idea of 'the Haunted Generation' is important in recognizing the psychological impact of the popular and in providing a counter to common conceptions of nostalgia:

Pop-Hauntology stems from the melancholic memory of growing up in often quite trying, but oft fondly remembered days, as well as the additional memories of an anticipated future that never came to pass. Our *Tomorrow's World* daydreams may be summed up by the word 'anemoia'. 'Anemoia – noun: Nostalgia for a time you've never known.' (Koenig, Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows 2012) 'Anemoia' is actually a deliberately 'made-up word', but indeed all words are made-up. With 'anemoia' we know its origin is within *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*, a lyrical art project by John Koenig. Perhaps 'anemoia' will make its way into a more everyday lexicon or spoken language as it defines an actual feeling. One all too common to many children of the Haunted Generation. (Paciorek 2023)

Svetlana Boym (2007) similarly considers nostalgia as an inherently unreliable phenomenon, 'a romance with one's own fantasy' (1). Indeed, Boym traces the etymology of nostalgia back to the seventeenth century,

at which point it was used distinctly within the medical field as a disease or symptom which could (and should) be cured (1–2). Nostalgia, memory and past experience combine to create the sense of an unreliable narrator – we erase, emphasize or otherwise imagine an experience, and so much of that experience then becomes a fiction of our own making. The chapters that follow will explore, in many different ways, the slippage between imagination, text and self.

Finally, this collection not only engages with the thorny notions of memory and nostalgia, but also intervenes and intersects with the recent creative and scholarly invocation of the analogue itself; collective fascination with, and mistrust of, the analogue form has been particularly pronounced in recent horror film and television, and over the last decade or so we have seen a growing corpus of analogue horror produced across a wide range of media. From YouTube (*Marble Hornets* (Wagner 2009), *Mandela Catalogue* (Kister 2021) *The Backrooms* (Pixels 2022)) to film (*V/H/S* (Bettinelli-Olpin et al. 2012), *Skinamarink* (Ball 2022)) to TV (podcast adaptation *Archive 81* (Sonnenshine 2021) and *Yellowjackets* (Lyle and Nickerson 2022–present)), long-dormant analogue forms are being mined for their potential to evoke a sense of uncanny familiarity. Analogue modes of TV broadcast and film-making are being recalled in the digital age as embodied relics of a recent past. As Stephenson (2023: 175) notes, analogue ‘as a medium demonstrates a “dead” (outmoded) form, whilst its embodiment as a diegetic relic simultaneously represents a living entity – a tangible body just as susceptible to harm, manipulation and possession as its human counterpart’. That the aesthetic feel of the programmes discussed here is actively emulated by more recent media demonstrates the haunting (and haunted nature) of these original texts and seems to imply a collective understanding that analogue serves as effective shorthand for something both homely and, ultimately, profoundly unsettling.

While all the chapters include discussion of the ideas of ‘hauntings’, the book is organized in two parts. The first considers the artefacts of television themselves as haunted and spectral objects. Initially, Stella Miriam Pryce considers the haunting effects of the BBC children’s television drama *Tom’s Midnight Garden*, a programme which itself draws an Edwardian cultural past into the 1980s. This is a foundational chapter in providing discussion of the nature of hauntology and spectrality. This debate continues in Fernando Gabriel Pagonini Berns’s discussion of the adaptation of Alan Garner’s young adult, proto-folk horror novel *The Owl Service*. The function of fictional texts allowing for an explanation of the inherent trauma of youth is explored in subsequent chapters. This begins with Fiona Cameron analysing the function of 1970s and 1980s drama for female audiences. Merinda Staubli’s analysis debates children’s television as an ‘uncanny mirror’. The impact of forms of unsettling television on the construction of youthful identity, in terms of gender and sexuality, is debated in the next series of

chapters. Max Hart continues this theme to discuss *Garbage Pail Kids* and queer representation. Jackson Nash discusses gender non-conformity and transgender representation in *Round the Twist*.

The function of children's dramas as representing 'coming of age' for its young viewers is significant in the form having a lasting impact on the psyche of its audiences. Miranda Corcoran discusses the domestic space and the trauma inherent therein for the adolescent in a discussion of *Stranger in Our House*. These chapters mark a tonal change in the collection in moving from nostalgia and pop-hauntology into difficult territory. Adam Whybray extends the discussion to the 1990s with an examination of the unsettling effects of *The Demon Headmaster*, discussing the 'suburban eerie' of the two iterations of *The Demon Headmaster* as an expression as neo-liberal folk horror and, in doing so, politicizes the form. The section finishes with Ben Halligan's analysis of Jimmy Savile; an exemplar of how the recent past has taken a darker turn with terrifying revelations. This chapter deals with the broader social context of the 1970s and 1980s and deals with revelations of institutional sexual abuse. That which appeared to be simply haunted turned out to be truly demonic.

Part Two, 'Memory, Process and Practice', more formally integrates memoir and self-reflection as an analytical tool. The inclusion of memoir is an important facet of this book and indeed is a feature of much writing about hauntology and popular culture, as can be seen by the quotations above from noted experts in the field, many of whom come from without the academy and write first and foremost as 'fans'. This has three functions; firstly, it acknowledges the critic is also an active participant in perpetuating the effect of the programmes in question. Many of the writers who have written for the book have been affected in a variety of ways and this forms the basis of their discussion. Secondly the use of memoir breaks with a fantasy of a unified historical perspective. These are programmes that are viewed in a variety of contexts with different and plural perspectives; in these terms there is no singular narrative or perspective which is right. Thirdly this acknowledges the importance of the analogue nature of the period being considered. Some of the material is recorded and available on discs, YouTube and streaming services, but not all is. Memoir allows us access to the half remembered and subjective. Part Two opens with a detailed analysis of memory and hauntological in Michael Schofield's own artistic practice. This opens up debates about the nature of memory and the function of video artefacts as forms of 'memory prosthetics'. Flannán Delaney discusses how the nature of horror provides a mechanism for dealing with societal fears, including the past threat of nuclear annihilation and the more recent fear of the pandemic. Alexander Hartley outlines the presentation of trauma to a young audience through 'killing a cow on television', as an ideological output of the DDR. Elizabeth Tussey's powerful discussion of *Watership Down* and the Kent State shootings outlines the function of television as

a method for processing trauma, as far as that is possible given the events discussed therein. The function of the television as an artefact in the home is something that is identified in Wayne Johnson's work, through his reflective analysis of the hauntological impact of the BBC's serialization of the German children's film, *The Singing Ringing Tree* (1957), itself a product of a totalitarian regime. The function of the television as a hypnotic presence in the home is outlined in Jez Conolly's discussion of the haunting effect of watching television as an unwell adolescent. In Keith McDonald's chapter, the theme of adolescence is further explored via a critical analysis of the haunting effects of being witness to programmes that one perhaps shouldn't have seen via a discussion of the original TV mini-series *V* (1984–85). The section concludes with Hollie Adams's detailed and hopeful consideration of the practical outcomes of many of the themes contained in the book with a discussion of how eco-horror can be used as a tool for social change in schools.

References

- Boym, Svetlana. 2007. 'Nostalgia and Its Discontents'. *Hedgehog Review* 9, no. 2: 7–18.
- Coverley, Merlin. 2020. *Hauntology*. London: Oldcastle.
- Fischer, Bob. 2017. 'The Haunted Generation'. *The Fortean Times*, June. <https://hauntedgeneration.co.uk/2019/04/22/thehauntedgeneration/>. Accessed 24 September 2023.
- Fischer, Bob. 2023. 'The Haunted Feeling: Analogue Memories'. In *The Routledge Companion to Folk Horror*, edited by Robert Edgar and Wayne Johnson, 236–44. London: Routledge.
- Fisher, Mark. 2014. *Ghosts of My Life*. London: Zero Books.
- Leeder, Murray. 2015. *Cinematic Ghosts: Haunting and Spectrality from Silent Cinema to the Digital Era*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Lester, Catherine. 2021. *Horror Films for Children: Fear and Pleasure in American Cinema*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Lester, Catherine. (ed.) 2023. *Watership Down: Perspectives on and beyond Violence*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Paciorek, Andy. 2023. 'Yesterday's Memories of Tomorrow'. In *The Routledge Companion to Folk Horror*, edited by Robert Edgar and Wayne Johnson, 183–93. London: Routledge.
- Sayad, Cecilia. 2021. *The Ghost in the Image: Technology and Reality in the Horror Genre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stephenson, Lauren. 2023. 'Restoring Relics – (Re)-releasing *Antrum* (2018) and film as Folk Horror'. In *The Routledge Companion to Folk Horror*, edited by Robert Edgar and Wayne Johnson, 173–80. London: Routledge.
- Wheatley, Helen. 2020. 'Haunted Television: Trauma and the Specter in the Archive'. *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 59: 69–89.

PART ONE

Hauntings and Spectres

1

‘What is it like to be dead
and a ghost? Oh, do tell
me Tom, I’ve been simply
longing to know’: Hauntology
and spectrality in the 1989
BBC television series *Tom’s
Midnight Garden*

Stella Miriam Pryce

Ghosts, spirits and spectres play a vital role in the children’s television of the 1980s, appearing as creatures of the imagination (*Moondial* 1988), entities possessing child bodies (*Chocky* 1984), otherworldly or supernatural tropes (*The Box of Delights* 1984, *The Chronicles of Narnia* 1988) and anachronistic relics returning to embody forgotten histories (*The Children of Green Knowe* 1986; *The Watch House* 1988). Some such phantoms materialize as disturbing, Gothic figures returned from the dead (*Dramarama* 1983–9; *Ghost in the Water* 1982), while others are benignly comic (*Rentaghost* 1976–84). However, towards the end of the twentieth century, ghosts underwent a transformation where hauntings had the potential to move beyond merely a plot device, cliché or generic trope and, as Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren explain, they came to constitute

'influential conceptual metaphors permeating global (popular) culture and academia alike' (2013, 1). This essay will argue that the figurative child played a vital role in this specific metamorphosis in a way that is rarely acknowledged in extant criticism of the period. Through close consideration of the BBC's adaptation of *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1989), I will explore the ways in which childhood takes on the socio-cultural function of spectrality in the series, materializing a contemporary discomfort with the idealized Romantic child through its conflict with modernity, the passage of time and social change.

By the end of the 1980s, when children's television and film had been preoccupied with the otherworldly, in ghost stories, fantasy, science fiction and the unexplained, the BBC aired *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1989). The narrative explored a world of time shifts and was steeped in a disorientating sense of nostalgia for the past. This adaptation of Philippa Pearce's Carnegie medal-winning 1958 novel had been adapted for television before, to varying degrees of success. It had a record of popularity with viewers, having initially aired on *Jackanory* voiced by Martin Jarvis, in 1967. It was followed closely by a dramatized three-part series for the educational programme *Merry Go Round* in 1968. It seems the intention was to encourage viewers to read the original text, and by 1988 with the dawn of the new English National Curriculum, and its emphasis on a literary canon, this novel was again worthy of revisiting. The 1974 version, produced by the BBC and directed by Dorothea Brookings, had offered a three-part series which, while far more fleshed out than the 1968 version, proved relatively unpopular, partially due to the extent it strayed unfavourably from the source material in its contemporary setting. However, by 1989, the BBC revived the story once again, in the hands of Julia Jones, this time as a six-part series which, in the main, aimed to remain far more faithful to the original text.

We meet our protagonist Tom Long (Jeremy Rampling) as he is sent to live with his aunt and uncle to quarantine because his brother is sick with measles. Tom is awoken on his first night at the house, to find that the large grandfather clock in the shared hallway of their block of flats has struck thirteen. Investigating this strange occurrence, Tom finds that, beyond the back door, there is a verdant, Victorian garden to explore. As the story progresses, we come to understand that Tom can only enter the garden at night; in the daytime it is gone, and grey dustbins exist in its place. Tom makes many nocturnal visits to the garden where he befriends a young girl called Hatty, yet as the nights pass, Hatty ages and Tom becomes increasingly spectral too, physically fading away. Until, at the denouement of the series, the garden is gone, and Hatty has grown up into Mrs Bartholomew, an elderly neighbour of his aunt and uncle.

Unlike contemporaneous television series such as *Moondial* (1988) and *The Children of Green Knowe* (1986) which also deal in what Roni Natov has termed 'the dark pastoral', what is particularly noteworthy about *Tom's*

Midnight Garden is that it is Tom, the child protagonist, who takes on the spectral guise of the ghost child here. Unlike other children's television of the period, the series does not hesitate in depicting the 'nightmare world of childhood' directly through the child protagonist at its heart (Natov 2006, 119). This deliberate focus can be identified markedly early on, the first time we meet Tom, only a minute into the first episode, when he is shown hiding in a tree. The camera first focuses only on his mother calling his name, with only the leaves of the tree in the foreground suggesting his presence. The next shot reveals only Tom's hands and the rest of his body remains concealed by the tree. Introducing Tom masked with greenery in this way anticipates the pastoral theme of the wider text certainly, but it also uses the visual possibilities of television to present him as corporeally indistinct from the beginning, spectral through his dichotomous presence and absence on screen. It foreshadows his links with the pastoral as he melds with the greenery like a figure of the Green Man, thus rendering him as a feature that is both spectral and part of a mythological past. In rendering Tom as ghostly here, the viewer is introduced to the wider discourse of haunting which permeates the text. Through Tom, the child is not focalized, rather the child and the highly physical connotations of childhood innocence, play and youth are indistinct and elusive. This theme then continues to operate in the narrative, plot and aesthetics of the rest of the series. Tom is not haunted *by* ghosts, as is demonstrated by his intangible corporeality on screen, it is Tom himself who *is* a ghost. Upon entering the garden, it is Tom whose bodily presence is depicted as vague and indistinct, he moves through doors and nobody, except Hatty, can see him.

Benefiting from an improvement of special effects in television technology, unlike the earlier 1973 adaptation, the BBC made the most of the more fantastic elements of the narrative here. There is an extended sequence, where Tom endeavours to pass through the boundary of a door – we see the house remaining fixed and still as Tom's body becomes increasingly faint, the edges of his hair and shoulders are seen blurring as he struggles. Then, as he explores the garden, he sees numerous people, and waves at each of them, but, one by one, they continuously ignore him, leading him to realize he is invisible to them. It is not until the middle of episode three that it is revealed Hatty could in fact see him all along, while the others could not. Depicting Tom as a ghost here, the series offers one of many 'generic conventions which may be used to categorise a programme as gothic' (Wheatley 2012, 385). Helen Wheatley's analysis situates *Tom's Midnight Garden* within a tradition of children's Gothic that she argues was prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s. Wheatley's account tracks the history of children's television in the period most succinctly and does not need repeating here. However, while Tom's spectrality is, of course, Gothic in its approach, I argue Tom's ghostly status operates rather more specifically in this adaptation as a potent conceptual metaphor of haunting. The association of the child and