

Transnational War Gothic from the American Civil War to World War One

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It has been customary to speak of the British and the American Gothic as significantly distinct strains, and such differences do seem to exist when focusing on specifically American themes, such as the frontier or Southern slavery. Nevertheless, these differences are more thematic than substantial. In fact, British and American Gothic writers consistently read and cross-fertilized each other throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, and Jay Fliegelman has pointed out that publishers in the nineteenth century assumed the existence of a “transnational gothic tradition” (Fliegelman, “The Thing Itself” 22). As a result, most important scholars working on Gothic literature and culture today consistently use a transnational framework simply because it makes the most scholarly sense.¹ Transnationalism is also an important trend in American studies, growing out of a recognition that “exceptionalist” and nation-centered scholarship has left significant gaps in our understanding of how literature functions in an international network of cultural production.² This is especially the case for British literature, which shared a language and often a publication history with American writing (in the nineteenth century, for example, books often came out in the United States and Britain at nearly the same time).

The Gothic was a staple of both British and American literature throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and understanding how the Gothic stages specific issues, problems and situations that circulate across the Atlantic is more urgent now than

further deepening of the isolated national approach. War is one such transnational issue. One scholar has argued that the Gothic has had a special relationship to “military discourse” from the very beginning, pointing out the militarist elements in *The Castle of Otranto* and other texts such as *Dracula* (Alexander, *Dracula* 16). My argument is somewhat different. My focus is on the result of military combat: injuries and psychological effects of violence. In other words, I will examine how the Gothic offered writers of the American Civil War and the First World War a rhetorical toolbox for describing physical mutilation, fear, horror, and the dissolution of boundaries (such as between the living and the dead, man and machine, real and unreal) that are put under pressure in war situations.³

Occurring in different centuries and on different continents, the Civil War and WWI seem at first to have little in common and are rarely if ever discussed together as historical events. Yet, when regarded from a wider historical lens, these wars present certain significant similarities. For example, each represents for their respective country the first modern war: a lethal war of attrition that decimated the population and reset the clock of national time. Moreover, each war involved a clash between traditional and modern value systems that left pre-war cultural paradigms in tatters.

The literature of each conflict also seems significantly different at first view. If the First World War has been rendered immortal in Britain by its poets, the American Civil War is best known through the prose of Stephen Crane and Ambrose Bierce.⁴ Besides genre, another major difference between British and American war writers identified by Paul Fussell in his magisterial work on the “Great War” is literary exposure. He argues that many British soldiers came to the First World War imbued with a deep

knowledge of their national literature (especially of the Romantic and Victorian poets), and produced a highly literary, self-conscious, and intertextual poetry. In contrast, Fussell observes that American soldiers were far less familiar with the English or American literary tradition and used far fewer allusions and literary references in their work: Fussell cites the American soldier-poet's Alan Seeger's "I Have a Rendezvous With Death" as a typical example (*The Great War* 158). Although Fussell is writing about World War I, it is likely he would consider American Civil War soldiers as similarly underexposed.

These differences notwithstanding, there is another literary tradition that comes into the picture when looking at the writing of the two conflicts through a wider – a transatlantic -- lens: the Gothic, which provides the writers of both wars with a rich repertoire of aesthetic strategies and references.⁵ In fact, Alan Seeger's poem itself, though lacking in allusions to canonical English or American poetry, is heavily indebted to the Gothic. Its irreverent personification of death as a figure who will "take [the poet's] hand/And lead [him] into his dark land" evokes a situation faced by many Gothic protagonists confronted with ghosts, demons and other figures of Death and the unknown (Silvin, *Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* 86). While allegory may be the poem's explicit generic affiliation, the texture and rhetoric of the poem are drawn from the Gothic. This hybridity is typical of the way the Gothic functions, i.e., as a mode or rhetoric that can combine with virtually any other generic form or medium.

If many soldiers find themselves in a "dark land," figuratively speaking, when they go off to war, never had so many turned to the Anglo-American Gothic for a language in which to write about it as during the First World War.⁶ The Gothic is a

constant bass-note in the work of the war's most famous British poets: Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owens, Isaac Rosenberg, Herbert Read, Arthur G. West, and others. Key prose works to emerge from the war also share a Gothic imagery and tone; for example, English writer Frederic Manning's *Her Privates We* (1929) and William Faulkner's *Soldier's Pay* (1926) both describe soldiers as ghosts or living dead creatures, voided of their will and reason by the war.⁷ In the United States, the Gothic had been used to explore the effects of violence on bodies and minds decades earlier, in the wake of the Civil War. The most important Civil War chronicler to systematically use the Gothic was Ambrose Bierce, though other writers such as Herman Melville and Stephen Crane dipped into the Gothic toolbox regularly. Even if there exist Gothic elements in the war writing of other conflicts, the similarity of imagery, tropes and the sheer ferocity of the Gothic rhetoric of American Civil War and First World War writing create a unique transnational continuity between these two literatures. I have chosen to focus on American prose (mainly Bierce) and British poetry (the poets named above) in order to emphasize the way the Gothic can span other formal differences.

Although the War Gothic of both conflicts produced graphic descriptions of physical violation, I will be arguing that it was more than just an effective way of depicting violent death. In fact, the Gothic was, first and foremost, a tool for depicting the psychological effects of war: the mental strain of living on a daily basis with death and loss and fear. This role grew out of a long tradition of using the Gothic to depict the suffering of real people in addition to fictional ones. In the United States, for example, the Gothic had been the genre of choice for abolitionists for decades.⁸ However, Ambrose Bierce and his WWI heirs would take the psychological Gothic to a [new](#) level, one where

horror, the grotesque, black humor, and compassion for the damaged soldier intermingled. What was original in this new species of war writing was the emphasis on mental states and mental trauma. When the Gothic was employed, its purpose frequently was to render the psychopathology of war. PTSD was only officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980, but the notion of mental war trauma first emerged in the late nineteenth century. Although there was little consensus about how to define and treat it, mental damage suffered by soldiers became increasingly hard to ignore. The condition that would later be called “shell-shock” had already been described by nurses and other witnesses to the Crimean War at mid-century, but it was assumed well into the twentieth century that such trauma was really physiological in origin: that it was caused by exploding shells or other physical shocks to the nervous system.⁹ If the soldier could not prove that he had been literally shocked by an explosion of some sort, he would often be regarded as a malingerer or coward.¹⁰

The importance of the work of Bierce and his British counterparts in the First World War lies in their emphasis on the psychological rather than purely physiological aspect of war trauma. These writers use the Gothic to depict the horrors of the front, forcefully promoting the notion that certain sights and experiences are enough to drive a person mad. They also used the Gothic to depict the effects of the madness itself. In short, the Gothic, with its familiar language of haunting and mental disarray, helped war writers to exteriorize the mind damaged in war.

No war story ever written surpasses Bierce’s “Chickamauga” (1891) for its depiction of war as a surreal insanity-producing event. Although it contains almost no descriptions of psychological interiority and its main focalizer is a deaf-mute child, the

story is emblematic of the power of Bierce's War Gothic to evoke both the physical and mental damage caused by war. The tale describes the retreat of wounded Union soldiers after their defeat in the battle that caused the second highest number of casualties in the war (after Gettysburg). The soldiers are all crawling on their knees or all fours or dragging themselves by their arms, their useless legs trailing behind them, and appear at first to the child's perception as fantastic creatures or strange animals. Their movements are grotesque and they "did nothing naturally, and nothing alike" (*Collected Works II*, 50). Defamiliarized by their injuries, the men are described in dehumanized and monstrous terms. Yet they are not terrifying or threatening to the child at first. Only after the toddler tries to climb on top of one crawling man to ride him like a horse does he get furiously shaken off and frightened by the man's appearance, which is particularly terrifying and piteous: the man has no lower jaw. Injuries to the face and especially the mouth are often portrayed in the literature of both wars as instances of the worst kind of wound precisely because they are so dehumanizing in their effect.¹¹ They turn human faces into uncanny masks, and they deprive their victims of the ability to speak and reassert their humanity through language.

Hence in "Chickamauga" the crawling soldier cannot address the child and merely shakes his fist, and the true horror of the scene dawns on the child as he sees that the face before him "lacked a lower jaw—from the upper teeth to the throat was a great red gap fringed with hanging shreds of flesh and splinters of bone" (52). The man looks not human but like a "great bird of prey crimsoned on throat and breast by the blood of its quarry" (52). Yet the bird comparison does not hold for long; instead it yields once more to a description of the men as "crawling figures" with "monstrous shadows," like an army

of ghastly mutants (52). Though alive enough to slowly crawl along the ground, the men are so severely injured and exhausted that they seem more like corpses than living men, inaugurating a key trope of World War One: the soldier as a living dead thing, an amalgam of ghost and material corpse that will fill both the literature and landscape of No Man's Land, an uncanny term that itself implies that the many soldiers inhabiting it were no longer men but something else.

"Chickamauga" is exemplary of the modern War Gothic mode for several reasons: one is its dehumanized and defamiliarized depiction of the soldier as both monstrous and piteous, thus activating the ambivalence that is paradigmatic for the Gothic;¹² another is its use of a single maimed soldier (the jawless man) as a representative of a much greater class of soldiers. One of the characteristics of the Civil War and World War One was the unprecedented scale of the conflicts, and the huge numbers of men involved, as combatants and as casualties.¹³ "Chickamauga" tries to evoke this sense of the numerical sublime by its description of the crawling men as so many that the "very ground seemed in motion" and "the whole open space about him was alive with them" (50), suggesting that the horde of wounded crawling figures is so large as to appear a feature of the landscape.

A third feature of the story that makes it paradigmatic of the War Gothic as I employ this term is its use of the physically grotesque to evoke mental injury and pain. The end of the story offers a powerful example: the deaf-mute child discovers his mother with her head blown open. In the gruesome description of the "frothy mass of gray, crowned with clusters of crimson bubbles" of the mother's brain, we are also given a figurative description of the emotional explosion inside the child's skull, suggested by his

“wild, uncertain gestures,” “indescribable cries,” and “quivering lips” as he looks down upon “the wreck” (57). Although the latter term is used to designate the mother, it is equally appropriate for the child. Both are “wrecks” now and we know that the toddler has joined the ranks of the damaged and dehumanized soldiers by the way his cries are compared to that of an “ape” and a “turkey” (57). The fact that he is a deaf-mute, and therefore physically unable to hear the shells that killed his mother and wounded the other men make his “shell-shock” no less real and no less damaging. As he stands “motionless” above her, we can see that his psychic injury “is the work of a shell” just as much as the hole in his mother’s forehead (57).

Between the Civil War and World War One, both the U.S. and England fought at least one major colonial conflict each, the Spanish-American War and the Anglo-Boer War. While both produced important written accounts, and that of the Anglo-Boer War in particular seemed to anticipate the later war, the graphic imagery and irony of “Chickamauga” would not re-emerge with the same savagery until WWI, when the conditions of large-scale industrialized killing returned. Once disenchantment with the war had set in, the poetry of the British war poets often used the imagery and rhetoric of Bierce’s surreal tale. The technique of describing injuries unsparingly, especially injuries to skulls, eyes and mouths, is particularly common. Brains and bones and disfigured faces appear often in Wilfred Owen’s work, for example. In his single most famous war poem, “Dulce and Decorum Est,” the effects of a gas attack are described in terms of “the white eyes writhing in his face/His hanging face” and the sound of “blood/Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs” (*Collected Poems* 55). Similarly, in A.G. West’s “God! How I Hate You!” (1916), the head of a soldier is “Smashed like an egg-shell, and warm grey

brain/Spattered all bloody on the parados” (*Diary of a Dead Officer* 80). We can notice how West strives for a variation on the common word “splatter” with the more arresting “spatter,” all the while straining for a maximum of gruesomeness. In Isaac Rosenberg’s “Dead Man’s Dump,” brains and faces are also particularly foregrounded: “A man’s brains splattered on/A stretcher-bearer’s face” (Walter, *Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* 147). Similarly gruesome, Rosenberg’s poem emphasizes dead or dying men’s silence while “their bones crunched” as “the wheels lurched over the dead” (147). In Wilfred Owen’s “The Kind Ghosts,” the mouths of the dead soldiers are “torn” and open. Like “Chickamauga,” the poem attempts to render to great number of deaths by evoking a “wall of boys on boys,” in which the bodies of dead soldiers become indistinguishable from the trench walls around them, recalling the merging of the wounded and the landscape in Bierce’s story (*Collected Poems* 102). Finally, Siegfried Sassoon’s “Counter-Attack” also describes a scene of many corpses: “The place was rotten with dead; green clumsy legs . . . And naked sodden buttocks, mats of hair/Bulged, clotted heads slept in the plastering slime” (*Collected Poems* 68). The hideous anarchy of heads and legs together depicts dead soldiers in as estranging a way as the unnatural figures in Bierce’s Civil War tale, creating an impression that there are too many to count.

“Gothic” is a particularly apt term for another feature shared by Bierce and the later poets: a fascination with ghosts. In some cases, these are literal; in most cases, they are figurative or imagined. Yet even these are given an oddly material agency and existence. In Ambrose Bierce’s “A Baffled Ambuscade,” a recently killed Union soldier warns an officer away from an area occupied by Confederate soldiers, and the story leaves unclear if the figure is a ghost or an animated corpse. The narrator simply

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describes “Trooper Dunning,” standing next to his dead horse and a dead figure lying across the horse, silently pointing to the direction where the ambush lies. Hours later, his comrades find the spot again and realize that the dead body lying on the horse is *his*, and that he must have been dead already when they came by the first time. In another story, “Two Military Executions,” a young private strikes his lifelong friend who now happens to be a superior officer. The lower-ranking friend is executed for breach of respect, but answers to his name when accidentally called during roll call a few weeks later. This inadvertent invocation seems to allow the disgruntled ghost the opening it needs to exact revenge, and a single shot is heard before the officer stumbles forward and dies from a wound to the heart (*Collected Works* III, 365). Yet the story is more than a simple revenge tale: it evokes the fact that the war dead were often not just anonymous men but friends. In dying, they did not always disappear but could linger on in the hearts and minds of the living, sometimes to the point of killing them with grief or guilt.

A third short story combines the ghost conceit with that of the double, giving the ghost an uncannily physical materiality. In “The Man With Two Lives,” a first-person narrator describes his experience of waking up after a battle and discovering two months had passed and that in the interim his body had been found and buried. To make matters more gruesome and strange, the men who claim to have buried him tell him that his body had been mutilated and scalped. Neither he nor they are able to account for his claims to be the man they believed they buried. “The Man With Two Lives” gives a Western tall-tale spin on a conceit that Bierce would use effectively in other stories: that of the war survivor as a kind of ghost or animated corpse. In “The Major’s Tale,” for example, the narrator interrupts a longish comic anecdote about a practical joke to unexpectedly

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describe himself in gothic terms as the only survivor of the participants in the story.

Breaking with the jocular tone and flow of the tale, the narrator suddenly begs the reader to “bear with him yet a little while ... he is but one of the horrors of war strayed from his era to yours” (*Collected Works* VIII, 43). Describing himself as a “skeleton ... with rattling fingers and bobbing skull,” the narrator portrays himself as a figurative ghost

haunting the present. This passage has often been quoted and discussed, because of its strikingly discordant image of the writer as a “horror” and its suggestively

autobiographical elements. In one of Bierce’s later non-fiction pieces called “A Sole Survivor,” he tells not one but several stories of which he has become the only survivor.

The repetition of the same scenario gives the non-fiction story an uncanniness every bit as unsettling as the interruption of “The Major’s Tale.” One begins to sense that there are different ways of “surviving” and possibly more than one way of dying.

One thing is certain: there are different ways of haunting. Unlike many civilian ghosts, most war revenants lack malicious intent. With the exception of the vengeful friend in “Two Military Executions,” soldier ghosts rarely return with intent to harm the living. They are often lost or confused, as in “The Man With Two Lives,” or have a mission to complete, as in “A Baffled Ambuscade.” In Sassoon’s “Sick Leave,” soldier ghosts haunt the poet when he sleeps while away from the front: “They come, the homeless ones, the noiseless dead ... They whisper to my heart; their thoughts are mine” (85). These ghosts may seem sinister since they call the poet back to the front, but their threat seems impersonal and not intended to deliberately harm the speaker. Many of the World War One ghosts are simply dead comrades who have not yet fully disappeared: recently killed, or deeply loved, they linger. In the case of Owen’s “Strange Meeting,”

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the speaker is a dead soldier recounting his meeting with the ghost of a dead enemy in Hell. “I am the enemy you killed, my friend,” says one to the other, the paradox of the “killed” man speaking matched only by the strangeness of the collapsed difference between “friend” and “enemy” in this sentence (36). The Gothic tendency to undermine firm borders and binaries is nowhere more obvious than this parable of ghostly camaraderie in the afterworld. Owen’s work is replete with talking ghosts, the startling rhetorical effect of a speaker describing his own death being one that Owen found particularly attractive. In “The Show,” the speaker describes his corpse in a particularly arresting way. He speaks of a personified Death showing him “a manner of worm” half-hidden in the ground, which the speaker recognizes as both himself and his fellow soldiers at once: “its feet, the feet of many men,/And the freshly-severed head of it, my head” (51). With this gruesome image, the persona realizes that he is dead and the reader realizes that the poem is narrated by a decapitated ghost.

The ubiquity of the speaking corpse is perhaps the single most striking element of World War One poetry. One need to think no further than the most famous poem of the war, Canadian physician John McCrae’s “In Flanders Fields,” which contains the lines, “We are the Dead ... and now we lie in Flanders fields” (Silkin, *Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* 85). A.E. Houseman also wrote a poem that began, “Here dead we lie.” And Sassoon’s “Memorial Tablet (Great War)” contains the lines, “I died in hell--/(They called it Passchendaele)” (104). The dead of World War One may have been so loquacious partly because they were so often addressed by the living. Sassoon’s “To Any Dead Officer” is entirely addressed to the dead: “You’re beyond the wire: No earthly

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chance can send you crawling back” (84), and the later poem “Words for the Wordless” begins with the injunction, “Smile on, you newly dead” (219).

The dead soldier-speaker of McCrae’s “In Flanders Fields” also received an ardent answer from the living, written by the American woman who began the custom of wearing poppies as a sign of remembrance. Moina Michael’s 1918 poem, “We Shall Keep the Faith” speaks directly to the Flanders dead: “Oh! You who sleep in Flanders fields/Sleep sweet – to rise anew!”¹⁴ The image of resurrection used here may sound like the standard Christian notion of the dead rising on Judgment Day, but the words that it answers in McCrae’s poem are less Christian in their implied threat: “If ye break faith with us who died/ We shall not sleep.” The image conjured is more of an angry ghost who cannot rest because of the treachery of the living. Sassoon strikes a similarly ominous note in his poem “On Passing the Menin Gate,” which bitterly criticizes the pompous monument erected at a charged site of war sacrifice: “Well might the Dead who struggled in the slime/Rise and deride this sepulchre of crime” (188). The spectacle of the war dead rising up from the battlefield where they died to verify if the living are conducting themselves in a manner worthy of their sacrifice was realized cinematographically by French director Abel Gance. *J’Accuse* (1919) is an experimental anti-war film which culminates in an unforgettable scene of the dead soldiers marching into town to check on forgetful civilians.

Another kind of living dead figure emerged from the First World War: the survivor. Like the narrator of Bierce’s “The Major’s Tale,” many former soldiers saw themselves or were figured by the chroniclers of that war as a species of the partly-dead. Like the way the poet Ted Hughes described his father, a veteran of the First World War,

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many men returned “killed but alive” (“Dust As We Are” 10). William Faulkner made such a man the “hero” of his first novel, *Soldier’s Pay* (1926). The young American Donald Mahon has been severely injured as a volunteer fighter pilot with the British Air Force. Silent, detached and barely functional, he is befriended by another soldier and a young war widow on his way to his Southern hometown. In addition to a dramatic scar on his face, Mahon is nearly blind and mentally so damaged that he seems completely absent most of the time. At the end of the novel, he remembers the moments just before his injury, and reliving the instant of trauma, is released from his half-life and able to finally die. The enigmatic title of the novel lends itself to various readings, all ironic. Since the other soldiers he meets all envy Donald his facial scar, his “red badge of courage,” even in spite of his severe mental damage, it is possible that his wound is the ironic “pay” alluded to by the title.¹⁵

One possible transatlantic source for Faulkner’s title is Siegfried Sassoon’s “I Stood With the Dead,” a poem that ends with the speaker shouting “Fall in for your pay!” to the dead soldiers lying around him (103). The poem is in fact a moving and disturbing glimpse of the war madness caused by grief, as the speaker first exhorts the dead “You must kill, you must kill,” and then watches “the shapes of the slain ... through the thin cold rain,” before revealing the true cause of his mental disintegration: “O lad that I loved, there is rain on your face./And your eyes are blurred and sick like the plain” (103). The speaker’s desolation over the loss of a beloved friend (or more than friend, since Sassoon had passionate feelings about men, like many of the British war poets) is depicted in terms of his slightly mad behavior: standing with the dead, repeating “They were dead, they were dead,” and finally calling to them to “Fall in!” (103).

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Sassoon's poem about a crazed soldier standing on a rainy corpse-filled battlefield

shouting at the dead brings us to the most important use of the Gothic in war literature, that is, as a means to represent mental trauma, strain and actual madness. Although there wasn't a coherent medical language for PTSD-type disturbances in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, soldiers did suffer from the effects of grief, terror, killing, and prolonged exposure to death and pain. Ambrose Bierce's work, though not psychological in the conventional realist sense of the word, is an important chronicle of such mental war trauma. Many of his Civil War stories are about the mental strain and damage of war rather than about physical injury. Although Bierce was not exactly an anti-war writer, since he never stopped believing in the ideals of honor, martial courage, and stoicism that characterize pro-war literature and which initially animated the World War One poets, nevertheless a surprising number of his stories deal with suicide: "A Tough Tussle," "A Son of the Gods," "One of the Missing," "An Affair of Outposts," "The Story of a Conscience," among others. None are simple or straightforward. As Cathy Davidson argues in her study of Bierce, these are "experimental fictions" with "surprisingly modern views on the nature of language, perception, and fictional form" (*Experimental Fictions* 3). And, one could add, surprisingly modern views of psychology. For example, in "A Tough Tussle," a Union soldier finds himself alone with a Confederate corpse. Struggling with his own fear of being a coward, he works himself up into a state of nervous agitation that ends with his conviction that the corpse is drawing closer to attack him. When he is found dead the next morning, with a fresh sword-wound made by his own sword, and the long-dead corpse pierced with "no less than five dreadful wounds" by the same sword, we realize that the "tough tussle" of the

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title has been with a dead body, or rather, with himself (*Collected Works* III, 119). For all its irony, the story assumes a power of the mind to shape perception in a way that seems to belong more to the post-Freudian twentieth century than to the nineteenth.

The image conjured up of a mad struggle with a corpse as a symptom of a mental strain has its echoes in the trench poetry of the later world war. For example, Herbert Read's "The Happy Warrior" imagines a similarly crazed English soldier: "His wild heart beats with painful sobs./His strin'd hands clench an ice-cold rifle ... His wide eyes search unconsciously/He cannot shriek/Bloody saliva dribbles down his shapeless jacket/I saw him stab/And stab again/A well-killed Boche" (*The War Poets* 138) The emotional state of the soldier is explicitly described by the "painful sobs" in his heart, but the irrational act of repeatedly stabbing an already "well-killed" German soldier evokes the mental state of this man far better.

The poems of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, who met each other at Craiglockhart War Hospital, an institution created expressly for treating the new epidemic of "shell-shock," contain many examples of soldiers driven mad by war. Owen's "Mental Cases," for instance, is about "men whose minds the Dead have ravished" and whose "eyeballs shrink tormented/Back into their brains" because they cannot stop seeing the "carnage incomparable" of the Front before their eyes (69). Sassoon's "Repression of War Experience" also figures mental war trauma as an inability to stop reliving the sounds and memories of war. The speaker is himself the haunted soldier, desperately trying to distract and master his thoughts from returning to the front. Sometimes speaking to the soldier as "you," and sometimes speaking as an "I," the poem enacts the self-alienation, nervousness, and morbid hallucinations of the haunted mind.

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Imagining “There must be crowds of ghosts among the trees,—/Not people killed in battle ... But horrible shapes in shrouds—old men who died/Slow, natural deaths,—old men with ugly souls” (90), the speaker is haunted not only by the sounds of guns from the Front (“I’m going stark, staring mad because of the guns”), but, ironically, by the ghosts of men who did not fight. It is these civilians, who died because of their “nasty sins,” who torment the speaker most, thus mixing resentment about the indifferent civilian population mentioned earlier with the uncontrollable memories of the constant gunfire at the front.

To conclude, the Transatlantic War Gothic of the Civil War and World War One not only served to depict the savage conditions and violence of war in graphic and unsparing terms, but it also provided a repertoire of images and a literary to evoke the psychological damage of war. The use of the Gothic in war writing coincided with the emergence of mental trauma as a cultural concept and represented an attempt to render the psychopathology of war in an intelligible way. In particular, the figure of the ghost or the living dead, or a combination of both, offered a readily recognizable trope for the absent presence produced both by war trauma in survivors as well as for the absent presence produced by the huge numbers of war dead. If survivors seemed to have been voided by the war, the dead of both wars seemed exceptionally unwilling to depart and be forgotten. The Gothic provided a framework that was both familiar enough to be safely distancing, and yet edgy enough to portray the unsettling physical and mental mutilations of modern warfare effectively.

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¹ For example, Fred Botting's and Steven Bruhm's contributions to Jerrold E. Hogle's *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (2002) move seamlessly from British to American examples, as do the articles in Benjamin A. Brabon and Stéphanie Genz's *Postfeminist Gothic* (2007). As the second title suggests, Gothic studies currently are exploring specific transnational issues rather than elaborating national paradigms of the Gothic. For the nineteenth century, an obvious example of Gothic transatlanticism is Edgar Allan Poe's relationship to Blackwood's Magazine. Although Poe famously parodies the Blackwood style in "How to Write a Blackwood's Article," the influence of this literary journal on Poe's work in general is unmistakable, as is Poe's reciprocal influence on Blackwood's British contributors.

² In her 2004 Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, Shelley Fisher Fishkin argued that "stories of transnational flow" are both the history and the future of America itself, and urged Americanists in the United States to write about those stories. Studies that have begun to establish the field of a comparativist and transnational literary study include John Carlos Rowe's *Post-National American Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), Paul Giles' *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2002), and Brian T. Edwards and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar's *Globalizing American Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

³ For this definition I follow Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik's useful introduction to the Gothic in their study, *Gothic and the Comic Turn* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2005), p. 1.

⁴ I am speaking of influence and familiarity among the general population, and do not mean to diminish the achievements in war poetry by Walt Whitman and Herman Melville, among others. Edmund Wilson's nearly 800-page study of Civil War writing, *Patriotic Gore* (1962) also attests to the fact that many more writers (both prose and verse) emerged from the war than have been remembered by readers and scholars.

⁵ Of course, other genres, such as Naturalism, Modernism, the lyric, and allegory, to name just a few, can be invoked when discussing the war poetry of either conflict, and the Gothic combines readily with any of these.

⁶ Terry Phillips discusses the use of the Gothic in First World War prose in “The Rules of War: Gothic Transgressions in First World War Fiction,” *Gothic Studies* 2/2 (August 2000), pp. 232-244.

⁷ *Soldier's Pay* is discussed later in this chapter so I will only cite a few examples from *Her Privates We*: “They [the soldiers] were mere auotmatons, whose only conscious life was still in England” (54); “they moved as so many unhouseled ghosts” (117).

⁸ See, for example, Karen Halttunen’s “Gothic Imagination and Social Reform: The Haunted Houses of Lyman Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher, and Harriet Beecher Stowe,” *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin*, edited by Eric J. Sundquist (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986).

⁹ Jill L. Matus discusses the reports about psychological trauma written by nurses in the Crimean War and other accounts of mid-nineteenth century warfare in *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), pp. 48-51.

¹⁰ For a thorough account of the evolving definitions of trauma, see Roger Luckhurst’s *The Trauma Question* (New York and Abingdon: Oxford, 2008), especially pages 28-31 on the requirement that “nervous shock” be caused by a literal shock to the body.

¹¹ World War I saw a disproportionately large number of facial injuries because of the circumstances of trench warfare and the temptation for soldiers to look over the trenches. A recent study of the specific stigma attached to this injury is Suzannah Biernoff’s “The Rhetoric of Disfigurement in First World War Britain,” *Social History of Medicine* 2011 (available on open access at:

<http://shm.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2011/02/27/shm.hkq095.full>)

¹² For more on the paradigmatic ambivalence of the Gothic, see Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 8-9.

¹³ The last American war before the Civil War had been the Mexican American War, where 50,000 men had fought. In the Civil War, 2.5 million participated. See James

Dawes' *The Language of War* for a discussion of the new sense of crowdedness in Civil War writing (26). Nevertheless, this is admittedly a convention of *war writing* in general and not specific to the Gothic.

¹⁴ The poem is hard to find in print, as is Moina Michael's autobiography *The Miracle Flower* (1941), but can be consulted on the internet :

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/We_Shall_Keep_the_Faith

¹⁵ Noel Polk argues that Faulkner depicts scars as a markers "of chaos" rather than "badges of courage," but he concedes in his extended discussion of *Soldier's Pay* that Donald Mahon's scar is intensely envied by other young men ("Scar" 144). Another essay by John Lowe in the same volume demonstrates convincingly that Faulkner himself was fiercely jealous of his brother's war injury and affected a limp while pretending to have seen action as a pilot ("Faulkner, World War I, and Myths of Masculinity" 78). In light of Lowe's argument, it is quite plausible that Mahon's scar is his both his reward (his "pay") as well as the cause of his death.

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