Gothic analogues in Kay Boyle's Death of a Man: Modernist perspective and political reality

Cara A Minardi
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds

Repository Citation
https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds/1786
GOTHIC ANALOGUES IN KAY BOYLE'S DEATH OF A MAN:
MODERNIST PERSPECTIVE AND POLITICAL REALITY

by

Cara A. Minardi

Bachelor of Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2001

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the

Master of Arts Degree in English
Department of English
College of Liberal Arts

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2005
The Thesis prepared by

Cara A. Minardi

Entitled

Gothic Analogues in Kay Boyle's Death of a Man: Modernist Perspective and Political Reality

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in English

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College
ABSTRACT

Gothic Analogues in Kay Boyle's Death of a Man: Modernist Perspective and Political Reality

by

Cara A. Minardi

Dr. Darlene Unrue, Examination Committee Chair
Distinguished Professor of English
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

In order to flesh out obscured meanings of Death of a Man, one must understand the political and social milieu between 1917-1936 in America and Europe. Incorporating a new historicist approach, this paper considers the social and political warnings contained in Boyle's Death of a Man. That American critics rejected Boyle's novel is evidence of American biases toward Europe during a period of American isolationism. The novel itself confronts European attitudes that in many cases were the result of The Treaty of Versailles and that led to World War II. Viewing Boyle's novel as a piece of Gothic writing overlaid with modernist technique enables us to see the novel in a different light. Considering the historical period, I analyze reasons scholars have misunderstood the novel. Furthermore, I ask that Death of a Man's importance be reconsidered in terms of Boyle's canon as well as the modernist canon as a whole.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ....................................................................................................................... iii  
INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................... 1  
CHAPTER 1 KAY BOYLE; THE MAKING OF AN ARTIST AND ACTIVIST ...... 6  
CHAPTER 2 DEATH OF A MAN IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT ............................ 19  
CHAPTER 3 THE TRADITIONAL GOTHIC MODEL ............................................ 25  
CHAPTER 4 GOTHIC ANALOGUES IN *DEATH OF A MAN* ......................... 33  
CONCLUSION.................................................................................................................. 53  
WORKS CITED ................................................................................................................ 58  
WORKS CONSULTED .................................................................................................... 60  
VITA ..................................................................................................................................... 62
INTRODUCTION

In the 1929 fall issue of transition magazine William Carols Williams predicted that Kay Boyle's work would never gain proper acclaim. According to Williams, Boyle's pieces "are of a high degree of excellence; for that reason they will not succeed in America, they are lost, damned. Simply, the person who has a comprehensive, if perhaps disturbing view of what takes place in the human understanding at moments of intense living, and puts it down in its proper shapes and colors, is anathema to United Statesers and can have no standing with them" (Bell 133). He was right. To this day only two books have been dedicated solely to Boyle, Sandra Whipple-Spanier's Kay Boyle: Artist and Activist, published in 1986, and Joan Mellen's Kay Boyle: Author of Herself, published in 1994.

While this paper does not encompass Boyle's entire canon, it does provide reconsideration of one novel, Death of a Man. In some ways, it is difficult to place Death of a Man within Boyle's canon. It is normally considered part of her political period, and critics stop with that point. Feminists, trying to revive interest in Boyle, often give Death of a Man only a few sentences in passing and focus instead on her novels that are more obviously feminist. However, the incorrectly identified pro-Nazi character depiction has given many scholars and critics a difficult time with Death of a Man. In his 1936 review, Henry Seidel Canby of The Saturday Review wrote that the book was the depiction of a "likable Nazi" and that the text itself was "outside the range of Miss Boyle's powers"
Canby considered the book "incomplete, unconnected, impressionistic and partial" in the London Times Literary Supplement the anonymous reviewer claimed that "the glamour which Miss Boyle cast over the National-Socialist movement in Austria seem[ed] anything but true" and that the novel "flounder[ed] all through in a mist of unreason and inexpressible sentiment. The reviewer concluded that Boyle "indulged her romantic manner to the exclusion of almost everything else, and the result is not very happy." In Time, another anonymous reviewer observed that "the love affair between Dr. Prochaska and Pendennis involves much political talk" ("Nazi Idyll"). Reviewers from the New Republic and the Forum agreed. However, some reviewers, such as Helen Moran, were kinder. Moran states, "Unfortunately, it is a book, wherein the talent for short stories is used wastefully" (443). While Mark Van Doren's review for the Nation claimed that Boyle attempted to "hypnotize the reader into a state which might be called mystical fascism," he added, "So topical is she here that many of her pages would be unintelligible to one not conversant with the foreign news" (494).

Few reviews were positive; one of them was by A. C. Boyd and appeared in The London Mercury. Boyd claimed, "Boyle's nervous and emotive prose is an admirable instrument for conveying the undercurrents in the life of the people in this small mountain town" (562). Boyd observed the characters' "consuming passion for one another" and their separation that is "subtly worked into the pattern of current events" (562). Negative perceptions remained until September 1989 when the book was re-released in paperback and reviewed by Steve Kettmann in the San Francisco Chronicle. In his review, Kettmann stated that the "fresh confident prose carries the narrative to a
realm in which our conceptions about the obvious ignominy of anyone associated with Nazism loses much of their focus. This effect led contemporary reviews of the book to charge Boyle with pro-Nazism, but that was clearly not her point" (E5). Though Kettmann called *Death of a Man* "potent and elegant," he wrote that Boyle's "strength lies not so much in fashioning plot but in presenting an array of telling images that evoke an emotional pitch that stays with us" (E5). In spite of pro-Nazi accusations, and negative reviews, Marilyn Elkins called *Death of a Man* "an early indictment of Nazism" in her 1993 *Metamorphosizing the Novel: Kay Boyle’s Narrative Innovations* (4).

Boyle biographer Sandra Whipple-Spanier, recognizes the misinterpretation of the Nazi doctor's character but agrees with Elkins. Whipple-Spanier notes that while "it is true that [Boyle] has presented her Nazi protagonist with some sympathy ... what the critics apparently overlooked is ... [that] she expressed ... deep reservations about the cause itself" (122). As evidence, Whipple-Spanier adds, "Even the dedicated doctor doubts the value of his cause when weighed against the value of human love and the harmony of nature" (122). Whipple-Spanier concludes, "Kay Boyle most definitely is not pro-Nazi or pro-war in this novel. What she does espouse is the need for a bonding between human beings, both individually and collectively. *Death of a Man* is a story of human connections obstructed not only by stubborn pride but by external circumstances beyond the individual's control" (122, 117).

Joan Mellen's biography does not come to such clear conclusions. Mellen notes that Boyle "decided to write about fascism in Austria from the point of view of the Nazi, the better to reveal why good people might be attracted to such a force" (186). This perspective, according to Mellen, allowed Boyle "to dramatize amid the intolerable
circumstances of Austria how fascism might be seen as a means to self-respect by
ordinarily moral, indeed virtuous, people . . . [and] how in this fallen land Nazism
represents a triumph over despair " (187, 192). However, Mellen also criticizes Boyle for
political naiveté, stating that Boyle "exhibits so narrow a political understanding that she
fails even to mention the socialist and democratic opposition to fascism which had
distinguished Vienna upon her arrival" (191). Mellen continues, "The novel suffers from
deep confusions ...; Boyle's most political novel, and potentially her most powerful,
succumbs to her limited political and historical understanding of what was happening to
Austria" (193). What Mellen missed here is that Boyle was not interested in politics per
se; what she was interested in was the human condition.

Aside from the books noted and the occasional chapter here and there about her life,
little scholarship of this particular book exists. Because this novel has been dismissed,
critics failed to draw important conclusions from Death of a Man. In turn, this has
contributed to undermining the novel and to the dismissal of Boyle as an unimportant
writer of the Modernist period. Scholars and critics have ignored Death of a Man since
its publication in 1936 for many reasons, one of which is that scholars have
misunderstood Boyle's priorities and politics. They also misunderstood, and continue to
misunderstand, social, political, and economic events that took place in Austria during
the time and that are an integral part of the novel. Whipple-Spanier mentions that Boyle
also has been ignored because she wrote about love: "when expressed in terms of
woman's experience--apparently [many such novels] were considered so much female
fluff" (215). Elkins agrees that "reviewers were generally displeased with Boyle's
[romantic] subject matter" and like many romance novels, including the Gothic mode, the novel was simply dismissed from serious scholarly studies (Elkins, *Critical Essays 7*).

There is no doubt that Kay Boyle wrote about the problems in the world caused by the lack of connection between and among human beings. Sometimes Boyle's novels cast the important theme in the midst of a romance, other times she situated her characters during a time of political or social upheaval, and sometimes her characters are cultural outcasts. Nonetheless, Boyle's concern was singular: human beings must care for one another. Boyle lived her life believing that it was an artist's duty to mold society into a compassionate one through art and activism. To present a better understanding of *Death of a Man* in this paper, I attempt to reconcile Kay Boyle's life and values with the events in Austria and with Gothic in the hopes that others will reread and reconsider the importance of *Death of a Man*. 
KAY BOYLE: THE MAKING OF AN ARTIST AND ACTIVIST

Kay Boyle was born on Feb 19, 1902, in St. Paul, Minnesota, to Katherine and Howard P. Boyle. The household Boyle grew up in was marked by contrasts, in particular Howard's and his father's political conservatism opposed to Katherine's liberalism. According to Boyle, "I knew from my father and grandfather what I didn't want to be, and the kind of person I really didn't have any respect for at all" (Mellen 21). Katherine Boyle was interested in progressive ideas in "innovation, imagination, and the liberal sensibility born at the turn of the century" (Mellen 12).

Kay was never formally educated and relied instead on her mother for everything. In Being Geniuses Together, Boyle wrote, "I had read very little (not only because since the age of six I had written so much but because there seemed no practical reason for reading)" (16). Katherine would not even hire an art teacher for her daughters, concerned that under "systematic instruction something precious might be lost" (Mellen 13). Later Boyle explained that her mother's "modest but untroubled intuitions about music and people had been [her] education" (Boyle 18). Biographer Joan Mellen reveals that "by the time Kay was six years old, Katherine had convinced Kay that she was a poet and a writer" in spite of the fact that Kay could not read or write well (25). When Kay was ten
she had her own typewriter, and she and her older sister Janet published their own magazine, *The Blue Heron* (30).

In 1913, Katherine took her daughters to New York to the controversial Armory Show, which introduced the American public to modern, abstract art. Mellen reports, "Little Kay felt the shock of wonder, understanding even at eleven what her mother's friend Alfred Stiegliz called 'the battle cry of freedom'" as evidenced in art (14). When Kay was about twelve, she was permitted to join the adults and their guests at dinner. During these dinners, Katherine would read avant-garde literature to her guests alongside Kay's early efforts. Katherine Boyle "asserted that the difference between Gertrude Stein's writing and [Kay's] was that while Miss Stein's was true, Kay's was as original as Miss Stein's while being allegorical and humorous as well" (Mellen 28). As Boyle put it herself, she and Stein "were equal in prominence as writers in Mother's eyes" (Boyle 20). Kay Boyle the writer was formed at an early age.

Katherine Boyle also taught her daughter that art was inseparable from politics. As Kay would succinctly tell biographer Sandra Whipple-Spanier, her mother held that "the writer has the obligation to revolt not only in writings but also to walk the picket line" if necessary (93). It was with this attitude that during the First World War Kay participated in the war effort by knitting scarves and making bandages for the wounded. Her political awareness shaped her early art, too; by the time Boyle was fourteen her poetry "evinced a growing social consciousness ... [as] she wrote about exploitation of child labor and working women, the suffering of slaves, and the carnage of war" (Mellen 35). During a short enrollment in school, Kay even circulated a petition demanding improvements in the food (Mellen 35). For Katherine Boyle, talk about the responsibility of the artist was
supported by action, which she modeled for Kay. In 1918, when the Children's Crusade for return of World War I soldiers passed through Cincinnati on their way to Washington, D.C., Katherine took some of them in. Kay remembered that her mother "bathed them, and washed their hair, and cut their toenails, and fed them, and put them to bed" (Boyle 21-22). Clearly, Kay's biggest influence during her childhood was her mother.

It was in the environment where art and politics merged that Kay Boyle developed a social consciousness that would fuel her writing as well as her political activism later in life. Fed up with her father's and grandfather's bourgeois values, Kay joined sister Janet in New York City in 1922. Boyle told Sandra Whipple-Spanier that she "left home at seventeen, outraged by [her] father's and ... grandfather's traditional, conventional lives" (205). She would never see either of them alive again.

In New York, armed with letters of introduction arranged by her sister Janet, Boyle looked for a job. One editor told Boyle "to go back west again and get a job on a small-town paper" (Boyle 12). After a stint as secretary to a fashion writer, Boyle was hired by Lola Ridge to work on Broom magazine. Ridge exposed Boyle to additional liberal ideals. In Ridge, Boyle "discovered a woman artist on whom she could model herself" (Mellen 50). In Being Geniuses Together, Boyle wrote that Ridge's "work expressed a fiery awareness of social injustice," and "Lola's causes" became her own (Boyle 15).

Boyle's fiancé, Richard Brault, followed her to New York. Boyle believed their "life together was going to be a confirmation of [their] impatience with convention and ... commitment to something called freedom in which [they] believed so passionately" (Boyle 13). On June 24, 1922, they married in city hall with a group of other couples; she was twenty years old. The couple horrified conservative members of their families.
when they sent out their own marriage announcements. "By appropriating the conventional parental function, Kay believed she was committing an act of outrageous rebellion and she enjoyed it" (Mellen 48).

In New York, the couple was poor in spite of the fact that Richard completed a degree in electrical engineering. However, Boyle, having spent much of her life in luxurious surroundings, accepted their poverty. When faced with her first bedbug she "accepted it as a badge of honor" and made it a symbol of their rejection of the bourgeois (Boyle 17). They planned to summer in France but had to borrow the money for their expenses (Boyle 14). They arrived in Le Havre on June 5, 1923. Kay Boyle thought she and Richard would be gone a few months, but this was in fact the beginning of her expatriate life, which would last for eighteen years.

In France, Boyle and Brault moved from Le Havre to Harfleur. Their continued poverty and bad living conditions eventually caused Boyle's lung ailment. Fearing she had tuberculosis in 1926, Boyle accepted an invitation from Ethel Moorehead and Ernest Walsh to spend some time in the south of France. While there, she and Walsh fell in love and began an affair that lasted only until his death in October of the same year. In March of 1927, Boyle gave birth to her and Walsh's first child, Sharon, and remained with Moorhead until the relationship became too strained. In an effort to escape Moorehead, Boyle returned to Brault, who had moved to Stoke-on-Trent, England. In April 1928, Boyle returned to France, this time to Paris, where she moved in with Archibald Craig's cousin, Gladys Palmer, the Princess Dayang Muda of Sarawak. Boyle later joined Raymond Duncan's commune in Neuilly. At this time, she commuted into Paris to manage the colony's store while writing on scraps of paper. Once certain that Duncan's
colony was a sham, Boyle moved in with Harry and Caresse Crosby, who introduced her to Laurence Vail.

Boyle and Laurence Vail were together from 1928 until their divorce in 1943, having married in 1931. Mellen asserts, "In the twelve years she spent with Laurence Vail, Kay Boyle was to do her best work" (133). In addition to Boyle's daughter Sharon and Vail's children, Sinbad and Pegeen, the family included their own children, Apple-Joan, born in 1929, and Katherine, born in 1934. Between following a good exchange rate around Europe and rearing their children during the period of 1928-1936, Boyle published two translations, three collections of short stories, six novels, and a collection of poetry. Additionally, she won the first of two Guggenheim Fellowships in 1934, and in 1935 she won her first O Henry Award. Mellen observes that "competence, energy, [and] ambition ... defined Kay Boyle from her earliest years as a woman combining life with a man, and the raising of many children, with the writer's life" (Mellen 146).

In 1933, the family moved to Austria, where they lived in the only anti-Nazi hotel in Kitzbühel and remained there until 1937 (Whipple-Spanier 121). Interested in politics and inspired by contemporary events, Boyle recorded what she would observe in Death of a Man. Whipple-Spanier correctly sees Death of a Man as Boyle's first step away from her commitment to an aesthetic revolution and one toward her concerns regarding the social world around her that would continue to take priority through the course of Boyle's career (124, 125).

In 1935, the family moved to England. In the same year, Laurence Vail's uncle George died leaving him a significant inheritance, which allowed the Vails to return to France. In Mégève, France, Boyle and Vail bought a chalet they named Les Cinq

In 1939, Boyle published her first children's book, *The Youngest Camel*, and won another O. Henry Award. She also met Baron Joseph von Franckenstein, who became a tutor to Boyle's children, Sharon, Apple-Joan, and Pegeen. Her affair with Franckenstein ended her marriage to Laurence Vail, and neither Vail nor their children would forgive Boyle for it. In January 1941, Boyle moved to Marseilles, where she hoped to obtain a visa for Franckenstein in order for them to go to America and avoid the new war in Europe. Joseph and her children joined her later. Boyle's ship arrived in New York on July 14, 1941, and *The World Telegram* photographed her with her family in the terminal. She won her third O. Henry award in the same year.

Boyle took Sharon and Clover while Vail took Apple-Joan, Kathrine, Pegeen, and Sinbad. Once separated from Vail, she became the sole breadwinner for her new family until Joseph took a job at a California citrus ranch. In order to support her family, she joined the lecture circuit and gave readings until the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. She raised money for European refugees. She taught writing at night, published stories, modeled, and wrote book reviews. She also published *Primer for Combat*.

In January 1942, Joseph returned from California, and in August 1942, Joseph was drafted. On Dec 3, 1942, their first child was born, daughter Faith. In January of 1943, Kay relocated to Reno, Nevada, in order to procure a divorce from Laurence Vail. The
divorce was final in February, and she married Joseph quickly. The day of her marriage also marked the day the FBI began their investigation of Kay and Joseph fueled by what the FBI deemed Joseph's lack of morality for having an affair and producing a child with the married Kay Boyle. Just a few months later, on August 5, Joseph shipped out to war, and Kay and the children returned to New York. In November, son Ian was born. In 1944, she published *Avalanche* in seven installments in the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Boyle's politics were clear during World War II. She believed that Germany should be broken up and policed. In January 1945, she was invited to tour Europe and Africa by the Army Air Forces. She and a group of journalists were gone for three months. During this time, Joseph worked for the Office of Strategic Services (the O.S.S.). His mission in 1945 was a dangerous one; his goal was to create a liberated zone in western Austria. He infiltrated the Gestapo, and passing as a Nazi, assisted the resistance. After he was behind enemy lines for a month, the Germans arrested him and shipped him to a concentration camp in Reichenau, where he was beaten and tortured. Joseph never revealed who he was or what his mission was. On May 1, taking advantage of a distraction that he told his guards was the arrival of American soldiers, Joseph escaped and remained in Austria, where he identified war criminals and established postwar courts, schools, and universities (Mellen 288).

In 1946, *The New Yorker* hired Boyle as staff correspondent in Europe. The $175.00 a month allowed her to stop producing material quickly and worry less about finances. She moved to Paris and traveled back and forth across Europe in her position as correspondent while Joseph took a job as a civilian employee of the Army stationed in Germany. Boyle also published another novel, *A Frenchman Must Die*, and a short story
collection, *Thirty Stories.* Kay traveled to Germany and Spain and wrote short stories until she joined her husband in Germany in 1948. Through her work as a correspondent with the *New York Times* and later the *Nation,* Kay became known as a social commentator as well as a fiction writer. In the fall of 1948, Joseph began to support the family when they moved to Frankfurt, where Boyle began teaching at the Frankfurt Women's Prison. Although she published her novel *1939* in 1948, *His Human Majesty* in 1949, and *The Smoking Mountain: Stories of Postwar Germany* in 1951, her writing career slowed between 1948-1952.

The FBI continued to investigate Boyle and Franckenstein. By the spring of 1951 investigator Franz Borkenau "denounced Joseph as 'one hundred percent pro-Soviet'" and reported that "as for his wife Kay Boyle, she was nothing less than an 'organized communist'" (Mellen 334). It seemed they were cleared in 1952, but in an attempt to clear herself, Boyle presented letters from Heinz Pol, a known communist, to the Loyalty Security Board (Mellen 334). The High Commission in Bonn removed Joseph from his position and gave him one with less responsibility, effectively ending his Foreign Service Career.

The couple was not notified that they were cleared of allegations until December 6, 1952. However, the damage to Franckenstein's career was permanent. By May 1953, he was terminated, and just a few months later, the State Department again concluded that Joseph was a security risk. Boyle suffered because of the allegations, too; the *New Yorker* refused to sign her accreditation forms necessary for continued work as an overseas correspondent. Defeated and without financial resources, Kay and Joseph moved to West Redding, Connecticut, dependent on the generosity of a friend.
Joseph finally found work as assistant headmaster and language teacher at the Thomas School for girls. One of the benefits of his position at Thomas was a rent free house on school grounds. He supplemented his small income by teaching Latin at Columbia University on Saturdays and classes in Greek, French, and German at the Norwalk Adult Education Program. However, after their return in 1953, Joseph discovered that he was being investigated by the FBI again. Kay continued to write and submit short stories, but she was not being published. According to Mellen, the reason was no longer the threat of McCarthyism but rather Boyle's rushing her writing and submitting pieces that were unpolished (375). Boyle nevertheless managed to publish *The Seagull on the Steps*.

In April 1954, Joseph was officially suspended from the Foreign Service, and within a month, the State Department filed new charges against him. Kay Boyle and her bohemian lifestyle were the focus of the charges. Citing her "adulterous living," the State Department determined that Joseph was "a man of weak morals and character" (Mellen 381). Late in 1955, however, when Kay and Joseph went to Washington to testify before the Hennings Committee, Senator Thomas Carey Hennings Jr. (D-Missouri) "was personally outraged" by the injustices suffered by Kay and Joseph. On April 1, 1957, the State Department finally cleared Joseph for the last time (Mellen 367).

While Joseph maintained his position as headmaster, Boyle started to teach creative writing at the Thomas School and continued to look for work that would pay better. She lectured at Southern Illinois University and conducted fiction workshops at the New York City Writers' Conference by presenting herself as an expert on Germany. Her attendance at the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference led to a semester-long teaching position at the
University of Delaware in 1957. In the same year, she published *Three Short Novels* and provided financial support for eight people, including Joseph's mother in Austria, Joseph's brother in Istanbul, and Sharon and her three small children (Mellen 391). As financial pressures increased, Boyle's health suffered, but she continued to publish short stories in the *Saturday Evening Post* while attempting to sell her work to television.

In 1958, she was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and in 1960 she was selected as a jury member for the National Book Awards. In 1960, her thirteenth novel, *Generation Without Farewell*, was published, and she won a second Guggenheim fellowship and published *Collected Poems*. In 1962, she began to edit Robert McAlmon's *Being Geniuses Together*. In 1963, *The Smoking Mountain* was reprinted in Germany and became a bestseller, and she received an honorary degree from Wesleyan University in Connecticut. However, personal tragedy was on the horizon. Daughters Clover and Sharon attempted suicide, as did stepdaughter, Pegeen, who would succeed on March 1, 1967 (Mellen 447). In addition, Apple was diagnosed as an ambulatory schizoid. In 1961, Joseph was finally rehired by the Foreign Service and took a position as deputy cultural attaché in Teheran. However, by December 1962, Joseph was very ill.

During her semester at the University of Delaware, Boyle became sharply aware of racism pervasive in the country. Her sense of obligation as an artist enabled her to become "a writer of social conscience as never before" (Mellen 403). Mellen notes that Boyle's activism increased between 1957 and 1966. By the early 1960s, she spoke out against Viet Nam, and Mellen states that at this point Boyle "was less a writer than the activist" (423). In 1964, she actively protested against Vietnam, marched with Cesar Chavez's farm workers, and organized the San Francisco chapter of Amnesty.
International. In 1966, she was tear gassed at a sit-in at Berkeley and went to Cambodia on a fact-finding mission with the Americans Want to Know Citizen's Mission.

In June 1963, Kay and son Ian departed for Teheran to join Joseph. When they arrived, Boyle hardly recognized her husband, who had suffered a stroke. Doctors soon performed surgery to remove a brain tumor and sent Joseph to Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C. Pressed for money, Boyle moved to San Francisco for a teaching position at San Francisco State College and placed Joseph to a local hospital, where he died on October 7, 1963. According to Mellen, "The best of Kay Boyle's writing life was over" (428). With her husband's insurance and death benefits, she purchased a house in San Francisco a few blocks from Haight Street. In 1966, she published a book of essays, *Nothing Ever Breaks Except the Heart*, and another children's story, *Pinky, the Cat Who Liked to Sleep*. In 1967 she published *The Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali* and in 1968, her last children's story, *Pinky in Persia*.

Instead of dedicating herself solely to writing, Boyle continued to be active in political causes. By 1968, Boyle became "an exhausting conscience" (Mellen 450). In October 1967, she and Joan Baez were arrested for their sit-in at the Oakland Induction Center as a protest against Vietnam. Boyle was arrested a second time in December and spent forty-five days in jail. In 1968, she took up with the Black Panthers because she believed "they were playing an important role in exposing police brutality in the ghetto," and she eventually joined them herself (Mellen 462). In December of the same year, she traveled to Paris, Frankfurt, and Innsbruck to spread the Panther message. Before the end of the year, Boyle was granted tenure at San Francisco State College. She joined the Faculty Action Committee at San Francisco State, which promised to get between
students and police if violence broke out. In 1968 she also published her version of *Being Geniuses Together*.

In 1970, Boyle published another book of essays, *Enough of Dying*, and a poetry collection, *Testaments for my Students*. Later the same year, Boyle had a slight stroke, and she began to sell many of her papers and letters, most of which went to Southern Illinois University. She spent that Christmas with Native Americans on Alcatraz Island, site of the infamous prison. In 1971, Boyle received honorary degrees from Skidmore College and Columbia University. She retired from San Francisco State College in 1973, earning the title professor emeritus and teaching the occasional course. In 1975, she published *The Underground Woman*, and in 1979 she retired permanently from San Francisco State although she would teach elsewhere. After selling the house in San Francisco in 1980, she moved to Oregon, where Ian had already settled. During January and February of 1982, she was writer in residence at Eastern Washington University, and in April 1982, she taught at the University of Colorado. In 1986 she taught at Bowling Green State University in Ohio.

In 1978 she claimed, "I have become a non-writer" (Mellen 505). However, in April 1977 after a diagnosis of breast cancer and her second mastectomy, *Monday Night* was reissued, and other books followed: *Fifty Stories* in 1980; *The Year Before Last* in 1986; *Life Being the Best and Other Stories* in 1988; *Death of a Man* in 1989; *Plagued by the Nightingale* in 1990; *Three Short Novels* and *Collected Poems* in 1991; and in 1992 *Fifty Stories, Crazy Hunter*, and *Gentlemen, I Address You Privately*. She also published some new works in the 1980s including her 1985 translation of René Crevel's *Babylone* and *This is Not a Letter*. In 1992, she was nominated for membership in the American
Academy of Arts and Letters, but she was too ill to accept the award in person. In 1993 she published an essay collection, *Words that Must Somehow be Said*.

In 1987 Boyle began to edit her diaries and managed to read, edit, and comment on Sandra Whipple Spanier's book, *Kay Boyle: Artist and Activist*. By 1989, she felt she should not live alone anymore, and she moved to a retirement community in Oakland, California. She nevertheless managed to demonstrate from a wheelchair against the death penalty at San Quentin. In 1990, Boyle sold more of her personal papers and letters in order to support herself. Discovering her desperate financial need, the Lannan Foundation awarded her an Outstanding Literary Achievement Award, which included a grant of $35,000.00. In 1992, The Northern California Booksellers Association gave her the Fred Cody Award for Excellence of a Body of Work and $1000.00. Boyle's health continued to decline until her death on December 27, 1992.
CHAPTER 2

DEATH OF A MAN IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In her ninety years, Boyle wrote and published numerous short stories and magazine articles, fifteen novels, four translations, three poetry collections, three essay collections, eight short story collections, and three children's books. She also ghostwrote two more books and edited an autobiography. Considering her canon, awards, and recognition, many scholars have ignored or avoided Kay Boyle. Harry T. Moore offers one explanation. In his preface to the 1990 reprint of Plagued by the Nightingale, he concluded that "social bias of the decade had prevented her novels from gaining widespread approval" (Mellen 433). While it is true that Boyle suffered from gender discrimination, her steadfast denial of feminism did not help her in the 1960s and 1970s when feminists were looking to rediscover female authors. Feminism to Boyle "was synonymous with separatism," and she did not want to be a part of it (Mellen 487). Boyle's outspoken attacks on feminism during the sixties and seventies made it easy for later feminists to repay Boyle by ignoring her and her canon (Mellen 489).

Another reason Boyle was ignored is that many of her novels are love stories, a genre not readily accepted as canonical. However, read as novels in which Boyle shows a concern for the need of connection between humans, the novels are approachable by a
larger audience, especially when considered within the historical context in which they were written.

In order to understand the novel that is the focus of this paper, *Death of a Man*, we must understand the political climate in the United States and in Europe. The history of Austria between the first and second World Wars is one of political, economic, and social instability. After World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, Austria suffered a financial breakdown as borders were redrawn and the monarchy was dissolved (Hutton 522). The alteration left Austria besieged with strikes, food shortages, high unemployment, inflation, and political instability. The Treaty of St. Germain failed to provide a hoped for solution and left Austrians defeated, destitute, and humiliated (see Hanno Scheuch "Austria 1918-1955: From the First to the Second Republic"). In addition, the treaty limited Austria to independence it did not want. Apparently, Austrians believed that *Anschluss*, unification with the German Republic, offered respite from the military and political humiliation of World War I (Gould 223).

The question of *Anschluss* came up repeatedly between 1918-1936. In October 1918, the Austrian Right "stressed the cultural unity of the Germanic inhabitants of the two empires and expressed anticipation of the union of a 'German Austria,'" which they claimed dated to the German Revolution of 1848 (Gould 222). Austria tried to unite with Germany in spite of the Treaty of St. Germain. On November 12, 1918, the German Austrian national assembly met in order to announce that Austria was part of the German Republic. However, this declaration did not succeed because Austria could not legally unite with Germany through a government declaration (Gould 222). Because the country was in desperate shape economically, "in the face of the vanished Austro-Hungarian
Monarchy leading to "the highly unsatisfactory supply of food ... a strong antidemocratic feeling and resentment" arose, and the Anschluss movement continued to grow in the ensuing chaos (Scheuch 179).

Internally, the clause forbidding the union of Austria to Germany contributed to the variety of political parties rallying for control. Seton-Watson observes that internal disunion was the mark of post World War I Austria and notes that these rival parties maintained rival armies (331). The Schutzbund sustained the Socialists while the fascist Heimwehr supported Chancellor Dollfuss (Seton-Watson 337). The Austrian atmosphere was filled with uncertainty and fear of terrorism. Newspapers were censored easily because most presses were in Vienna (Seton-Watson 338). It is in this environment that the Nazi political machine used its propaganda, primarily through radio speeches, to develop and nurture the Austrian Nazi party.

In 1929 a reform of the federal constitution weakened parliament and strengthened the office of the chancellor (for a general overview of the period, see Hanno Scheuch, "Historiographical Review: Austria 1918-1955: From the First to the Second Republic"). After 1930 the balance of political force changed with Dollfuss on the right and Steidle and Starhenmberg on the left (Seton-Watson 332). In 1931, after an unsuccessful coup d'etat by the Heimwehr, Dollfuss and his party asked Heimwehr members to join them in order to strengthen the majority already won (Seton-Watson 336). The political unification led to Nazi acts of terrorism, which led to a ban, arrests, and deportation of known Nazis. In June of 1933, Chancellor Dollfuss declared the Austrian Nazi Party illegal, effectively removing a legal choice of party affiliation from Austrians. The Nazis responded by changing their methods of operation; "exiled party leaders relied on the
underground organization" and continued speeches aired over radio, easily broadcast into
Austria because of the proximity of the countries (Zeman 23).

With the support of the Christian Socialist party, on March 4, 1933, Chancellor
Dollfuss dissolved parliament, abolished free speech and freedom of the press, outlawed
public assembly and the Communist Party (Scheuch 184). Abolition of political
freedoms allowed a German takeover of Austria, which denied Austria's status as a
sovereign country (Scheuch 186). The Nazis responded with increased propaganda into
Austria and concentrated on the government's proposed restriction on political freedoms.
In the months that followed the despairing population turned to Communism or Nazism
for respite (Seton-Watson 333). Nazi propaganda was effective. The results of the
election on April 24, 1933, in Innsbruck, the capitol of the province of Tirol, "gave 41%
of the total poll to the Nazis" (Polayani 588). After outlawing the Nazi Party, German
Schutzstaffel (SS) troops assassinated Dollfuss in June. However, the Nazi coup d'état
failed, and the Christian Socialists arrested every suspected Nazi in the country (Zeman
127).

While these events were happening, the United States underwent a revisionist
movement and, after the stock market crashed in 1929, became isolationist. The
revisionist movement between 1919-1936 occurred for several reasons: political leaders
of former Axis countries were willing to disclose a great deal of information in exchange
for American book royalties; the American historical profession renewed ties with
German scholars, and the modernist movement, with its denial of everything bourgeois,
provided fuel for the movement (Adler 25, 6). According to Adler, revisionism was well
organized and well underway as Americans greedily read everything written about the
war (4). The Germans exploited this material. New details of World War I allowed former enemy leaders to "make the most successful case of historical propaganda" unknown up until the time (Adler 5).

Adler claims this movement produced an American guilt complex over Germany (7). In 1923, Senator Robert Latham Owen of Oklahoma went to Europe to try to settle the matter of blame. When he returned he felt that the Allies in Europe "had greatly deceived the people of the United States ... [and] ... the theory that the war was waged in defense of American ideals was untrue" (Adler 14). By the 1930s, the question of war guilt was prominent, but conflicting stories made a strong impression on the American mind, and Americans had difficulty distinguishing any sort of blame (Adler 6). American thought and policy was a reaction to the fear of being taken in again (Adler 28). The proliferation of materials and the difficulty Americans had separating truth from German propaganda led to an isolationist movement in the United States. After the stock market crash in 1929, Americans turned to domestic issues and worried little, if at all, about the events in Europe.

Americans were clearly not interested in current European events, and without understanding the political context of *Death of a Man*, many scholars dismissed its importance. Only one critic, Mark Van Doren, understood the importance of the context: "Many of [Boyle's] pages would be unintelligible" he wrote, "to one not conversant with foreign news" (241). It is on the foundation of this political, social, and economic situation that *Death of a Man* takes place. For critics to suggest that Boyle was a Nazi sympathizer is ridiculous. Political events were of primary importance to Boyle, who was described as "an unrelenting political activist" (Elkins, *Metamorphosizing the Novel*).
Hers is a depiction of events that were current and vital to her because she was living in Europe. Rather than write a novel that was pro-Nazi, Boyle illustrated the cumulative events that led to the growth of the Nazi party in Austria. Her depiction of Dr. Proschaska is easy to describe as flattering, but in addition to missing Boyle's indictment of him, many have also missed Boyle's concern with the question of how a nice man like the doctor could become a Nazi. Unlike most Americans, "Boyle understood the political implications of events ... with greater clarity than did her American contemporaries" (Elkins, Critical Essays 9).

Scholars and critics familiar with Boyle's life assert that "the possibility that Kay Boyle wrote a pro-Nazi novel in the mid-1930s must startle anyone who knows anything about her life" (Hatlen 348). Because Boyle believed artists had a "moral responsibility not only to reflect life but to improve it," her work focused on political and social injustice wherever she found it (Whipple-Spanier 4). In fact, Death of a Man displays "the courage ... in Boyle's willingness to go beyond stereotypes of gender, nationality and politics" to enlighten, inform and involve readers in the world around them (Hatlen 360). Marilyn Elkins confirms Boyle's ability to "move us to deeper understanding" (Elkins, Metamorphosizing the Novel 18). That Boyle attempted to help readers understand is of no doubt. What remains to be done, however, is to correct Boyle scholarship and criticism. Boyle's Death of a Man has earned an important position in the Modernist canon; it is now up to scholars to redeem her and ensure that Death of a Man gains its rightful place. What many reviewers, critics, and scholars have missed is that Death of a Man is a Gothic novel in the Modern style.
THE TRADITIONAL GOTHIC MODEL

The Gothic novel relies on architecture for its name. Its tall spires, vaulted ceilings, flying buttresses, and pointed arches easily identify the gothic style of architecture. The emphasis on vertical alignment in gothic architecture encourages churchgoers to look upward to heaven, and the vast interior space was meant to make people feel insignificant in comparison to God. Horace Walpole loved gothic architecture, and inspired by his gothic mansion, Strawberry Hill, he wrote *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764, which marks the formal beginning of the Gothic romance. According to E. J. Clery in the introduction to the 1996 Oxford edition, it was Walpole's second edition with the added subtitle, *A Gothic Story*, that overturned many literary assumptions of the time (x). According to Walpole's own introduction to the second edition, *The Castle of Otranto* was his "attempt to blend two kinds of romance, the ancient [medieval romance] and the modern [novel]" in what Clery calls a reaction to neo-classicism (Clery 9). Writers noticed and imitated Walpole's new style, and tales of terror became bestsellers in the eighteenth century. Among these, *The Monk*, by Matthew G. Lewis, and *The Italian*, by Ann Radcliffe, continued to shape and define Gothic as a genre. *The Monk* represents the German vein of Gothic called the *Schaueromantik*. The *Schaueromantik* is more violent and graphic.
and includes actual supernatural events. The Italian represents the English vein of Gothic that is less violent and graphic and relies on coincidence or on natural phenomena rendered supernaturally for similar effect. In the English branch, torture is threatened but never takes place, for example. However, the goal of Gothic novels is to allow the reader to feel terror while reading in safety. Authors evoke fear similarly, by what I call Gothic analogues, which can be traced in specific authors’ treatment of time, place, and theme.

The Gothic novel is usually set in a time and place removed in some way from the time and place of the intended audience. Walpole’s story takes place in Italy, far from Londoners. The Monk is set in Spain, and The Italian in Italy. Like the Castle of Otranto, The Italian uses a framing device. The story Radcliffe imparts supposedly comes from an English traveler touring a church in the area of Naples. A monk begins to tell the old story to an Englishman and because it is a long tale, later sends the manuscript to satisfy the traveler’s curiosity.

A historical context is important in the traditional Gothic. Both The Monk and The Italian take place during the Catholic Inquisition, an emotionally and politically charged period of history that immediately contributes to the oppressive and frightening atmosphere. Both Lewis and Radcliffe placed their stories in this period to take advantage of the mystery and subsequent fear of the Catholic Church in order to put readers on edge from the beginning. The Inquisition represents the nightmare of the Catholic Church, its willingness to harbor criminals, and its overall corruption of Christianity.

In order to complete the physical setting, old, sometimes enchanted, buildings are an important part of the background. The buildings are often decrepit and falling apart and contain secret passageways, secret entrances, and secret rooms where some of the action
takes place. In *The Castle of Otranto*, the setting is the medieval castle, and the plot centers on the issue of rightful ownership of that property. There are tunnels beneath the castle, and at one point, Isabella retreats from Manfred to hide there. In *The Monk*, the main character, Ambrosio, is a prideful Capuchin Monk who lives in an ancient monastery in Spain. Ambrosio serves the women at the convent of St. Clare's, another old building with secret passageways and rooms. Ambrosio rapes and kills Antonia underneath St Clare's convent, and Agnes is chained in another secret room under the convent. Radcliffe positions her novel in faraway and exotic Italy in a monastery named Spirito Santo, where the villain, Schedoni, has joined the Catholic Church to hide his identity. Schedoni often steals out of the monastery through secret passageways. The heroine, Ellena, is imprisoned at the convent at San Stefano's and eventually secluded in a secret room underneath the building. In *The Monk* and *The Italian*, the dungeons of the Inquisition threaten.

Another element Gothic authors use is the supernatural. In *The Castle of Otranto*, for example, a gigantic foot and leg appear, and in the end, it is a ghost, announced by a thunderclap, who puts all to right again. There are voices heard in the night, but these are always explained. In *The Monk*, the sorceress Matilda bewitches Ambrosio to abide by the will of Satan, and she uses a magic mirror to entice Ambrosio to commit more serious crimes. Typical of the English branch of the Gothic novel, *The Italian* exploits natural rather than supernatural elements in *The Italian*. Radcliffe creates convenient coincidences or describes natural phenomenon supernaturally creating a similar effect. For example, voices may seem disembodied and mysterious, but they are later explained. While the characters think they may have witnessed supernatural occurrences that never
develop, any time something is about to happen, there is a storm with high wind, thunder and lightening to warn the reader and to chill the characters. Gothic novels that employ the natural in supernatural terms render the same nightmare quality as those that use true supernatural events.

Stock characters are common in the Gothic novel. In *The Castle of Otranto*, the characters are flat; they are what they seem. Isabella and Matilda are beautiful, and their beauty mirrors their natural goodness. Manfred's evil is superficial; he is evil only until caught and confronted by the proper heir. However, in both *The Monk* and *The Italian*, characters are more complex. In *The Monk*, for example, although Ambrosio is a Capuchin monk famous for his sermons and Christian righteousness, over the course of the novel he becomes twisted by lust, which leads to his malevolent and horrible crimes. The hero and heroine, Raymond and Agnes, are not so simple as Walpole's Isabella and Theodore. Instead, Raymond and Agnes, like Ambrosio, commit the sin of lust and are discovered. Unlike Ambrosio, however, they are obsessed with each other and their love rather than lust for the sake of physical pleasure only. Ellena and Vincentio are simplistic because they are beautiful and noble through and through. However, Radcliffe's villain Schedoni is only superficially decent, and as the story unravels readers become aware that he took vows to conceal his past and the atrocious crimes he committed. Furthermore, his position as a confessor allows him to hide his identity and become involved in crimes he hopes will lead to material gain.

Characters are similar in other ways. In the Gothic, characters are often orphans suffering some injustice. In *The Castle of Otranto*, the hero, Theodore, is an orphan, but he has a birthmark, which heralds his ancestry, his natural goodness, and nobility. His
character alone warns the reader of the injustice he has suffered. In *The Monk*, Ambrosio is an orphan found on the stairs of the church, Antonia's father is dead, and her mother is murdered during the novel. In *The Italian*, Ellena thinks she is an orphan until her mother and ancestry are revealed to her.

Characters may be twisted and distorted by obsession or have some unnatural combination of traits; they are grotesque. They are monstrous. In *The Castle of Otranto*, Manfred is desperate for an heir after the death of his son, Conrad. Desperation has twisted Manfred to the point at which he is willing to do anything to accomplish his goal. For example, he tries to divorce his wife, Hippolita, on the claim that they are too closely related despite the fact they have had two children together. The supernatural appears grotesque when servants witness the appearance of gigantic, ghostly limbs. Both Ambrosio and Schedoni are twisted and grotesque characters. From the beginning, Ambrosio suffers from excessive pride, and his pride impels him to dispense justice with an iron hand. The witch Matilda exploits his pride and manipulates Ambrosio to indulge in physical pleasure early in the novel. Obsessed, Ambrosio becomes twisted by the pursuit of pleasure to the point that he commits not only rape, but murder as well. By the novel's end, Ambrosio has broken all his holy vows in order to appease his lust. Schedoni's character does not undergo changes that Ambrosio does; he is evil from the beginning. However, readers do not know this initially because his past is slowly revealed, and readers discover that Schedoni committed crimes for advancement, material wealth, and power. For example, he killed his elder brother to gain the family estate and to marry his sister-in-law, Olivia.
The plots of most Gothic novels follow a similar course as each involves a mystery, lurid detail, torture, imprisonment, and conflict over power. In The Castle of Otranto, the plot is a simple one; Manfred is unlawfully trying to keep the castle in the family and wants to provide an heir to whom it can pass upon his death. Manfred and his family, however, are not the rightful owners of the property; Manfred's father stole it from the rightful heir, and Manfred has kept the crime a secret. In the beginning of the novel, Conrad, Manfred's only son and heir, is killed when an enormous helmet falls on him just prior to his marriage to Isabella. There is the mystery of Ambrosio's family as well. It is not until the end of the novel that readers learn that Elvira is his mother and Antonia is his sister. Lurid details in The Monk are often of a sexual nature and revolve around Ambrosio's lust for flesh. For example, Ambrosio kills Elvira and rapes Antonia. The plot of The Monk is more complicated in its theme of power abuse; it is not so simple as Manfred's theft of property. Ambrosio abuses his power at will, and he abuses many innocent victims. On a larger scale, the nuns and friars at the convent at St. Clare's do the same with their charges. In The Italian, the story centers on the romance between Vincentio and Ellena when Vincentio's mother initiates a series of events meant to stop the marriage because Ellena is not from a noble family. The Marchesa's plans come to naught, however, when Ellena's true heritage is revealed. Lurid details normally involve Schedoni and include his lust for sister-in-law Olivia. Lust drives Schedoni to murder his own brother so that he may claim Olivia for his own. Later in the novel, Schedoni partners with the criminal Spalatro. During his partnership with Spalatro, Schedoni plans and executes more vile crimes.
A threat of torture or actual torture within the plot adds to the atmosphere of doom or terror. *In the Castle of Otranto*, it is psychological torture that drives Jerome to confess his and Theodore's identity. In *The Italian*, the torture is threatened but never takes place. Hence, when Vincentio is in the prison of the Inquisition, he suffers psychologically from the torture he expects, but never physically suffers. In *The Monk*, however, the torture is real when Inquisitors physically torture a confession from Ambrosio.

Related to torture is the element of imprisonment. In *The Castle of Otranto*, Manfred is metaphorically imprisoned by the secret of the rightful ownership of the castle, Isabella is accidentally imprisoned for a night when she attempts to flee Manfred, and Theodore becomes Manfred's hostage. In *The Monk*, Agnes and Antonia are imprisoned in the underground tombs at St. Clare's. Agnes is isolated in a chamber, chained to the wall and nearly starved to death. Antonia is drugged and moved to the tombs, where Ambrosio rapes and stabs her. Later, Ambrosio is imprisoned in the dungeons of the Inquisition. In *The Italian*, Olivia Rosalba has retreated to a convent to hide from Schedoni, a move which in effect has imprisoned her and kept her from her daughter, Ellena. When Ellena is brought to San Stefano, she is eventually imprisoned in a secret chamber under the convent. Later, Schedoni kidnaps and holds Ellena in a tower with the intention of murdering her in his position as hired brute for the Marchesa de Vivaldi.

The Gothic novel can be depended upon for an ending consistent with the concept of poetic justice. Hence, endings are often didactic and moral. The villains are punished and the victims rewarded, and readers are warned of some evil they must avoid. In *The Castle of Otranto*, Theodore marries Isabella, and they take rightful ownership of the

31
castle while Manfred and Hippolita remain on the property as servants. The moral is that people should keep to their station in life. In *The Monk*, Ambrosio sells his soul to Satan and suffers a horrific death while Agnes, imprisoned at St Clare's convent, escapes, returns to her family, and marries her paramour, Raymond. The moral is that even a holy man can be corrupted by evil, and therefore the less-than-holy reader must be ever vigilant. In *The Italian*, Ellena and Vincentio marry without obstacle and are granted the blessing of Ellena's mother, Olivia, and Vincentio's father, the Marchese di Vivaldi. The Marchesa dies, and Schedoni commits suicide. The moral is that evil people always pay for their sins, allowing those who are good to be justly rewarded.
CHAPTER 4

GOTHIC ANALOGUES IN DEATH OF A MAN

Many scholars have remarked on the Gothic novel's ability to criticize society. In the introduction to the 1996 Oxford Press reprint of *The Castle of Otranto*, E. J. Clery states that the rise of the Gothic novel was a "symptom of the troubled times in which the novels were written" (xvii). As *The Castle of Otranto* was an indictment of feudalistic practices of inheritance involving the theme of property over man, *The Monk* and *the Italian* were an expression of religious criticism, a topical subject in England in the eighteenth century.

The basic Gothic elements are present in modern literature. Characteristics of the Modern Gothic include a time and place removed from the audience, supernatural elements, old buildings, grotesque characters, mystery, lurid detail, torture, imprisonment, and conflict over power. As Linda Bayer-Berenbaum points out in her book, *The Gothic Imagination: Expansion in Gothic Literature and Art*, the Gothic transcends a specific historical or literary period; “Although the standard conventions for the Gothic novel were developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Gothicism itself is not restricted to a single time and culture or even to a single style of writing” (20). Gothic analogues can be found in novels by William Faulkner and Henry
James and continue to appear in contemporary pieces by Toni Morrison and Joyce Carol Oates, to name a few.

The Modern Gothic employs the same elements as the traditional. What differs is the presentation of them. John Paul Riquelme accurately observes that Gothic novels "are significantly transformed [and] intensified" in the Modern (586). The Modern Gothic alters traditional Gothic in several ways. The setting in time is more recent, and the backdrop is often a war-torn country. Placing a novel in the more recent past readily calls such horrors to minds of the intended readers. Old buildings still take a part in the setting, but events do not always take place solely in them. Rather than a single building or set of buildings, the setting can include an entire region or country in decay. Secret passages need not be restricted to subterranean tunnels of old buildings; in the modern version, land can have secret pathways. The supernatural gives way to realistic elements presented in a haunting mode and thereby exists only metaphorically. These characteristics, combined with metaphorical imprisonment or torture complete the setting.

Modern Gothic is more complicated than its traditional predecessor in other ways, too. Though characters are still orphans of one kind or another, the depiction of characters differs. Rather than clear-cut, flat characters, the Modernist style complicates the characters so that it is difficult to easily define them (Riquelme 587). For example, the Modern Gothic complicates the idea that if characters are beautiful, they are good. Physically beautiful characters can be selfish and self-centered, and ugly ones can be decent, caring, good-hearted, and moral. Often, the Modern Gothic complicates characters by adding psychological depiction, development, and depth manifested by
symbolic grotesqueness. Characters are frequently traumatized by past events making them unable to cope or function well in modern society. Characters are obsessed, traumatized, and unable to make good decisions or lead normal, healthy lives.

Endings are not clear-cut; instead they are ambiguous, and the reader is left wondering how things will end because there is no clear conclusion. Endings do not depend on poetic justice, either. Characters are not rewarded or punished according to their behaviors. Instead, noble characters can be struck by misfortune and evil characters can be rewarded.

The most complicated element in the Modern Gothic is the fact that elements bleed into one another. For example, the psychological center of the novel is not necessarily a single building. Instead, it can include an entire country torn by horrible and recently passed events. Torture and imprisonment can be metaphorical by including psychological trauma and economic or political oppression. Orphaned characters are more intricately drawn and complicated by psychological development to the point of the grotesque. Lurid events can be the result of power struggles. Mystery is complicated by the Modernist style in which important details are imagistic, fragmented, or left out resulting in a narrative that is labyrinth-like. The result is that Modern Gothic is "a discourse that brings to the fore the dark side of modernity" (Riquelme 586).

The events in Death of a Man, which was published in 1936, take place in 1934. It is a love story between the American Pendennis Jones and the Austrian Dr. Prochaska. Their worldviews clash while Austrian Nazis prepare for their coup d'état of the Austrian government. The assassination of Chancellor Dollfuss combined with their separation force each to reconsider the views that separated them. Like Radcliffe's and Lewis' use
of the Inquisition as a threatening backdrop, Boyle uses the threatening history of World War I (1914-1918) and combines it with political, social, and economic details of contemporary Austria. The Austrians in the Tirol Valley live "under the dark shadow of the valley" (53). The atmosphere is threatening. The mountains are a "quiet and dark ... presence ... " as if they are waiting to attack the valley below (54).

Boyle's novel depends upon old buildings as an important part of her setting. The hospital where Dr. Prochaska works was once a palace of the old monarchy: its "ancient marble stairs ... ready to drop ... from the sagging wall" (Boyle 17). The Infektionhaus is "abominated" and "shunned and isolated as if a group of felons were confined within it" (55, 56). It is "where the diseases of the flesh may flower or fade in isolation" (14). Rooms in the Infektionhaus are "unnatural, corpse-like, white" (125). The hospital lawn swarms with bugs that predatory birds hunt. The dilapidated condition of the building and its current function as a hospital for infectious disease describe the state of Austria. Dr. Prochaska lives "underneath the wards" (20). The door to his rooms is "old and unused," and in the summertime it is obstructed by vegetation, "grass that grew almost to its sills in summer," ivy and cattails (21).

The Praxlmann's Gasthaus is one of "the oldest taverns in town" and an important venue (64). This is where Dr. Prochaska meets and gets his orders from the owner and fellow Nazi, Fati Praxlmann. In order to find the tavern, one must go "through [an] alleyway" which conveys the sense of a secret passage (64). Inside, it is "dark" and everything is "dark-stained" (64). Death hovers in the décor; "with the delicate stiff-throated heads of deer stretched out ... and the fragile horn-set skulls of the chamois" (203). Death and imprisonment threaten public meetings between the doctor and
Praxilmann because their private content, determined by the Austrian Nazi Party, is illegal.

Unlike the traditional Gothic that uses one or two buildings as the psychological center, Boyle expands the setting to the entire country of Austria. The country is darkened by shadows and is physically dirty; "a square shadow ran rapidly up the land" (4). In the Tirol valley citizens move "under the dark shadow of the valley ... through the gulf of silence of the darkened land" (54). Snow is "soiled and scattered with pine needles," and where the grass comes through it is "bruised" (6, 8). There are trails leading into the mountains. Signs giving direction are "red paint" splashed on tree trunks. Roads are "foul" and the country "shabby" (148). The Austrian countryside is in tense anticipation of what is to come. A hut keeper tells the doctor that "it is very quiet" (26) in the mountains and people are waiting to discover "what's going to happen to the country in the end" (38). They sense a "time of need was coming and they held their breaths, knowing it was coming fast" (66). Even the mountains wait and watch, and Pendennis complains that when she sits for dinner, "there's a mountain at the window looking in" (11).

Furthermore, Boyle uses metaphors to impose the supernatural on the scene. The country is often described as diseased, dying, and dead. It is "a grave" (296). Austrian men "only caricature the attitudes of the living" (214). The undead are "feeling their way slowly back to life again" (213). The atmosphere of death and despair hangs about Dr. Prochaska though he is seemingly untouched by it, although he claims otherwise. Many in the hospital are children with infectious diseases. Because the economy is in a crisis, mothers rarely visit their own children. When we see them they are accompanied by,
"the ghostly crowd of women who were not there and could not come" (103). The laywoman and nurse Resi is a hunchback. Boyle describes her deformity as a "muscular and naked monster that rode astride her and that she sustained and nourished" (235). The Austrian night skies are filled with fires in the shape of swastikas lit in secret by members of the Austrian Nazi Party, rarely caught in action and more rarely identified. They are political phantoms of the country, and the fires seem to emerge from nowhere. When Dr. Prochaska vaguely explains the fires to Pendennis, he says the "fires you see on the mountain at night," are "a sign of what is going to happen" (114). Additionally, the Austrian home guard, the Heimwehr is also a ghostly organization. When the doctor and Pendennis light fires on the mountain, they are followed by Heimwehr men who they could not see or hear, but sensed were close (175).

Contributing to the ghostly, dead, undead atmosphere, voices haunt the country. They are faceless, shapeless, and unidentifiable. As Hella and Cilli walk in the vicinity of the prison when they are in the country, the young women are terrified by "the laughter of ... men ... as if it leapt from the roadway, out of the very substance of the land" because they cannot see anyone (166). Even Pendennis' voice, as she tells the horrible story of her childhood to Dr. Prochaska, is "disembodied in the darkness" (117). The doctor is not immune to the voices either. In the beginning of the novel, Dr. Prochaska "would sit ... listening ...to the words of the men speaking the German tongue from Germany" (21). He is not horrified by disembodied voices, but entranced. No one sees this radio, and he is careful to close his windows before turning it on, but it can be heard in parts of the Infektionhaus, unknown to him. While discussing reassignments for fire lighting, Prochaska stares into space "listening for this message to come" (112). In the memories
of his childhood he relates to Pendennis he says he "heard the voice of Death calling up through the pines" (49). The written speeches he transcribes become mute voices, moving and spreading their diseased ideology through Austria. After the explosion at the Praxlmann's, the only noise is "the voice of [an unknown] man [saying]...'Air Raid! Lights out!'" before utter silence descends (231).

Contributing to the nightmarish atmosphere Boyle created using descriptions of disease, death, the undead, monsters, and ghostly voices, is the imagery of birds and that of an unnamed, dying child. Boyle uses the imagery of birds through *Death of a Man* to increase the threatening atmosphere and to symbolize savagery and hopelessness. The birds are everywhere "settled on the edge, unmoving, with their wings folded down for the night" (54). They are "savages" with "bright callous eyes ... eyeing the ground for signs of life" (51 16). The birds "scavenge before the last drop of blood is cold, the last breath taken" (15). They carry diseases, "smallpox or typhoid-fever or diphtheria or scarlet-fever" on their beaks (249). Birds are harbingers of spring, but as winter turns to spring Austrians fear that "the swallows won't come back this year" adding to their sense of hopelessness (164). Boyle also uses a dying child in the *Infektionhaus* as symbolic. The child's cheeks are "stained with fever," and as his condition worsens "death [holds] him fast and grim by the feet" (124). Like Austria itself, the child is "a string drawn taught" that would "snap in two" (124). But before long, the child is screened off to hide his gruesome state from other children "or from whatever terrible apparition might seem to advance upon him out of the unlighted room" (132). Like Austria, the child's experiences cannot be witnessed by others because of the imposed boundary. Austrians are unnamed victims and the child's disease reflects the diseased politics of the country.
Unlike the traditional Gothic, characters are more complex. Traditional Gothic characters are simple, if they are beautiful readers know they are good and wholesome in character as well. As Riquelme points out, Modern Gothic characters have "characteristics ... [which] evoke the mixed, ambiguous, character of human experience ... [and they are] androgynous" (591). The main characters in *Death of a Man* are androgynously beautiful or have androgynous characteristics, though neither is beautiful nor healthy in terms of their psychological state. In a 1953 article, Richard Carpenter noted that Boyle's "people are complex souls undergoing a variety of torments, prevented either by their own weakness or by the devils of circumstance from living the rich and full lives which should be theirs ... but they are beautiful and damned" (Bell 135).

The main characters in the novel, the American woman, Pendennis, and the Austrian, Doctor Prochaska, are illustrated in the Modern Gothic mode. They are both studies in contradiction; he is sensitive to the needs of his patients but "hot-eyed [in his Nazi] resolution," and she is elegant and beautiful yet psychologically distressed (Boyle 18).

Dr. Prochaska is Hungarian-looking with "gypsy richness" (18). He comes from a wealthy family in Vienna. At the age of thirty, he is a "tall, black-browed young man ... in immaculate white [doctor's] dress" (236, 18). He is "a lively alert-eyed elegant young man" who is thought of by the local girls as "a remote and truly special creature removed from any of their possibilities" (75-76). He is well dressed, too, "his clothes ... always the best" (70). Boyle states in her narration that the doctor is so beautiful "he could have walked into a box at the opera with Greta Garbo on his arm or danced all night with Ginger Rogers" (77). The problem, however, is that Dr. Prochaska has secretly turned to the Nazi Party for the promises it offers for the future. According to John Paul Riquelme,
it is common for the "central characters [of Modern Gothic to] embody an ugliness hiding deceptively beneath an attractive social veneer," a description that unmistakably applies to the doctor (593).

Dr. Prochaska is nurturing and sensitive with the children in the ward. During his first Christmas, "Dr. Prochaska bought ... [and] trimmed the tree himself ... [and he] came upstairs with ... things for the children," something no doctor before him had ever done for the children (Boyle 221-222). When the doctor and his love are on a swastika-lighting excursion in the mountains, they decide to stay on the mountain for the night. The lodgings they find are in a hut, and within it, a sick child. Dr. Prochaska cares for the child and writes a prescription for him (190). Though he knew he was risking identification as a Nazi responsible for lighting the illegal fires, Dr. Prochaska writes the prescription and cares for the child anyway. After the Nazis assassinate Chancellor Dollfuss, the prescription is the single piece of evidence that leads the Socialists to Dr. Prochaska and precipitates the doctor's flight from the Tirol.

As stereotypically masculine as he may seem, Dr. Prochaska exhibits personal tendencies more often thought of as stereotypically feminine. He is clean, giving, and desperate for love. He keeps himself well maintained, "his hands and nails [are] immaculate" (70). In his personal space, he sees to it "that all the elegant things he had were kept well-polished, well-brushed and clean" (20). After duty on the ward, Dr. Prochaska would take his pipes "into the laboratory and clean them out with chloroform" (57). Furthermore, the doctor is "fearful of becoming as soft as other people" (18). However, he probably does not need to worry since Pendennis' English husband looks at the doctor and sees "the pure white teeth in the animal-dark, animal perfect face" (37).
Marilyn Elkins indicates that androgynous characters are typical in Boyle's novels; "Boyle ... portrays characters who openly assume both exterior and interior qualities usually defined with the opposite sex" (Elkins, *Metamorphosizing the Novel* 63).

Dr. Prochaska has been influenced by the recent history of World War I and its aftermath. The result is that he is twisted. Dr. Prochaska has an obsessive, grotesque passion for Austria. From the very beginning of the novel, he thinks of Austria as a "possession as if no one, not even the patriots, had ever known the soil of her before" he did (Boyle 5). He loves his country to the point that it "possesses him" (35). He believes that "he ... like the politics of his time, were moving forward, impregnable" (20). Though he never mentions Hitler by name, it is clear that Dr. Prochaska is talking about and believes in him: "because of one man we can now lift our heads again...remember our history without shame" (87). Hitler is "the one man who might give prosperity" to the Austrians (128). Dr. Prochaska believes that the Nazi Party will be able to restore Austria to its former dignity because "the promise has been made by one of our own people that it is no longer necessary to despair" (Boyle 88). It is not until the end that the secret kept from the reader is clear: the doctor is a Nazi, and the reader sees this when he "gives the salute and receives ... the forbidden salute in answer" (247). Whipple-Spanier notes that "the doctor's feelings toward the people's "savior" [Hitler] ... is chilling" (119).

The doctor is emotionally grotesque. He is obsessed and desperate for love and tells Pendennis that he has "been alone, living ... with no possible thing to look to, no future of to grow old ... because of the absolute cessation of living" (85). In many ways, the doctor is dead; he tells Pendennis "like every other man of my nation" he has "ceased to live" (85). In an early discussion with Pendennis, he explains he "is no longer a man" but
has become "a signal, a sign of what is about to happen" (91). He claims that he "cannot separate" himself from his politics (84). Because of it, "his human responses are paralyzed" and he cannot choose a life of love (Hatlen 353). He asks Pendennis to support him and she replies saying she does not "believe in anything" (92). He tries to convince her by explaining that it is "not necessary to think, only to follow" (174). Because he will not choose Pendennis over his politics, Pendennis leaves him.

In the beginning stages of their relationship, Pendennis makes the first move. When she searches for and finds Dr. Prochaska, she tells him she "wants to sit and talk with [him] to smoke [his] cigarettes and drink beer and Schnapps" with him (79). Though a moment later she claims she "didn't come ... to talk about love or anything like it" since she knows the relationship will not work, he is "hearts and flowers" and she is not (79, 94). He allows her to make the first move, and she comments on it, asking if the reversal is a local custom. If there is a reversal at all, it is the traits of these two characters.

Rather than the "idealized femininity ... common in Gothic" Pendennis is androgynous (Beyer-Berenbaum 24). First, she is athletic and dressed in boyish shorts when she and her husband meet the doctor in the mountains. However, she is wearing lipstick and her hands are "thin and narrow and white, with the fingernails painted red and the elegant white diamond rings" (Boyle 31). Though Pendennis claims her "father made a man" out of her, she is described as a "theatrical [womanly] figure ... her hair...thick and pushed behind her ears ... so slender ... so delicate-boned ... it seemed she might break in two if anyone said a word" (93, 6-7).

Though depicted as an elegant, spoiled, American tomboy, Whipple-Spanier observes that Pendennis "is a child of the Waste Land" (118). Pendennis is "a hard, bitter cold-
eyed old woman, a tight fisted witch, unmasking, ungiving" (Boyle 13). Like many in the United States Pendennis feels nothing, and she is sarcastic when she and Prochaska first meet and discuss the United States. She claims she is "Miss America" and that she has "done everything there is to do in America" including traveling Niagara Falls in a barrel, holding the record for staying in the air for the longest time with the same make up, and being married twelve times (31). However, Pendennis has reason to be hard-edged. One night, she tells Dr. Prochaska about her childhood. Reared in an affluent family, Pendennis had a twin brother, Gerald. When they were eight, Pendennis, Gerald, and their mother went horseback riding. During the ride, their mother became afraid of the horse she was on and asked Gerald to switch with her. He would not, and this resulted in their mother's death. Pendennis, too, then is an orphan without a mother and with a father rarely available. When the twins were seventeen Gerald hanged himself from guilt. Pendennis explains the event as prophetic of her continual abandonment: "it was just the beginning of what had happened ... not once, but over and over" (122).

Although Pendennis is an "assertive female character ... with a strong sense of autonomy," she is tortured and paralyzed by the horror of her past (Elkins Metamorphosizing the Novel 7, 9). She cannot move forward because it might mean leaving someone behind, and according to her, "something happens to people when you leave them behind" (Boyle 116). Pendennis simply has "too many parts [that are] gone" in order for her to maintain a relationship (94). Pendennis swears the relationship will not work out because she is "hard broken bits and pieces of things they threw out with the skeletons and cactus" (94). Furthermore, Pendennis is unwilling to consider the doctor's passion for his country. She is resolute in her unwillingness to commit to any ideology.
Like the doctor Pendennis is grotesque, her "damaged psyche" resulting in her inability to function (Elkins, *Metamorphosizing the Novel* 3).

Their love is grotesque because it is also obsessive. Pendennis and Prochaska meet by chance. They meet on a Sunday, the doctor's day off, which he spends mountain climbing. After seeing her, Prochaska "could not take his eyes from her" even though he thought, "her face was scarred for life ... by the arrogant look she wore" (Boyle 24). Before the day is halfway through Prochaska needed to "shield ... the violent marks his face must bear now of this savagely disputed love" (36). By the time the sun sets, Pendennis and the doctor are in silent agreement to make "no move ... so that" her husband would not notice what as happening between them (45). When the party is ready to leave Prochaska's "eyes met hers again and his breath came suddenly short as if she had laid her hand for silence in caution on his mouth" (46).

A few days later, Pendennis returns to the town and finds the doctor in the Praxlmann's *Gasthaus* having dinner. Pendennis tells Prochaska that it is "time to bury the dead," meaning she sent her husband home (78). The doctor confesses, "Nothing has happened ... since Sunday night;" he tells her he has not drawn breath, eaten or spoken. He continues, "I don't know if I am alive or dead. It's impossible what's happened" (81). Pendennis responds with "I know, that's why I came" (81). But it isn't long before Pendennis, seeing her "shadowy and skull-white face" in the mirror, thinks that the doctor's blood will continue to heat "until she is destroyed" (191) and becomes "nothing, nobody" (190).

Pendennis leaves the doctor as quickly as she sought him out. On one occasion, the couple goes into the mountains in order to light fires in the shape of swastikas. After the
event, Pendennis gains an understanding of the Nazi movement and later gives the doctor an ultimatum: he must choose her or the party. Dr. Prochaska chooses the party, claiming she does not understand what they are trying to do. Pendennis accuses him of not thinking for himself, and she returns to her hotel and leaves the next morning. He does not follow her, although by the next day he realizes that his "doom [was] not to be without her but to be" with his people (259). Pendennis remembers that she is so free she has "nothing to do but take tonight or tomorrow night to a café table and stretch it out like a corpse on public exhibition" (279). In the end, they both decide to go back for one another. However, as Pendennis is returning to the Tirol valley from Salzburg, the doctor's train is leaving the valley for Salzburg.

Minor characters are physically grotesque and complicated. The lay sister Resi is a deformed nun unwilling to give up her remaining comforts to take vows with the order attached to the Infektionhaus. She and her companion lay sister, Marianna, are doomed to "be neophytes forever" (55). Although physically deformed, Resi is a kind and generous woman, given to comforting and calming the ill. Described as "yellow as bile and dwarfed beneath the hump that rode up on her blades," she is "twisted and goblin-like ... [and smiles as if] her tusks would drop in transport from her head" (17, 58). "There were moles scattered ... on her face, and her long transparent lids were veined with red ... [her] pores as thick as leather" (58). She has a "yellow camel-lip, hanging lose and twitching [and] large crippled hands" (104). The narrator describes Resi as a "practical joke of God's" but the irony is that Resi does not know she is hideous; "she could not see the twist and hump and evil eye[,] ... because of her gentle look for herself it was evident she saw beauties there that were masked to every other eye" (236, 59). Although Resi is
not pleasing to the eye she pleases others with her kindness. Bayer-Berenbaum indicates that "when we dissect the grotesque, we may find its parts are pleasing," as is the case with the caring Resi (Bayer-Berenbaum 29).

Even childhood innocence in this novel is marred and grotesque. Cristabel is a three-year-old child who has lived in the Infektionhaus since she was a year and a half old. Dr. Prochaska performed something like a tracheotomy on Cristabel to keep her alive. Originally diagnosed with diphtheria, Cristabel ends up with a "gold ring around her neck, like a beautiful necklace a little princess might be wearing ... but [there is a] small jaw of steel holding something live and leaping[;] ... the severed end of her windpipe fluttered" there (100). The gold jaw keeps "what remained of [Cristabel's] youth or her life from spilling down her nightgown" (99). She is required to keep a rubber stopper in her mouth and the narrator only says that "it might have been... to hold her cries of terror and anguish in, or to keep her breath from passing" (100). Disease and surgery deformed what otherwise would have been a beautiful child.

Hella, Multi Praxlmann's niece, is the young serving woman with a neck goiter who works at Praxlmann's Gasthaus. She feels a need to make an "apology and... blame for her hair and her limbs and the goiter swelling in her neck" (75). Her deformity leaves her open to criticism from Multi, who tells Hella's mother, Gertrude, "It has been remarked...that customers don't like" the goitre (167). The imperfection leaves Hella unmarriageable to anyone, and her mother hires her out to the Praxlmanns because the family is too poor to afford the necessary surgery to remove the goiter and increase Hella's chance of marriage. Like the characters and the country, Hella is trapped within limitations she did not create.
Like the traditional Gothic, Boyle uses mystery, lurid detail, torture, imprisonment, and conflict over power as parts of her plot. To create mystery and add to the secret element in the book, Boyle waits until after the middle of the novel to reveal that Dr. Prochaska is a Nazi. Even when she does, the passage is so subtle that a careless reader can miss it. It is only one sentence of narrative description that clarifies his affiliation in the entire novel: he "gives the salute and receives ... the forbidden salute in answer" (247). The only other hint that Prochaska a Nazi lies in descriptions of him listening to and transcribing German political speeches, which he then distributes, secretly among other Nazis (27-29, 296).

Equally secret and mysterious are Hitler and Mussolini. They too, are mentioned only once by name. When they are named, they are called "the outstanding dictators of our time," and nothing more is said (69). The concentration camp Dachau is not mentioned until half way through the book. When it is mentioned, it is in a positive light; "this boy says the food's good and [there is] plenty of it too in Dachau" (131). Although it is the military enforcement agency in the land, Heimwehr members are not publicly known. It is not until the end of the novel that the tavern owner, Toni, tells Cilli Praxlmann that he is a member of the Heimwehr, and he only reveals it to impress her and denounce the doctor, whom he chased in the mountains. The "incomplete, unconnected, impressionistic and partial" elements Canby identified in his 1936 review are what work to create the mystery surrounding the plot (12). Additionally, by exposing the reader to Nazi propaganda and its secretive ways, Boyle allows readers to become entangled in the events that shape fascists from a nearly first person-point of experience.
Boyle adds lurid details of violence in *Death of a Man*. There is an explosion at the Praxlmann's *Biergarten*. The description of the explosion foreshadows the coming events; "the sound of the explosion splitting the darkness in the garden and the sight of splintering window frames were simultaneous manifestations of disaster" (Boyle 30). When the Praxlmann's Gasthaus is bombed, Fati blames the watchman from the newspaper office next door. During an argument over who is at fault, the newspaperman accuses Fati's party, the Nazis, for setting the bomb off. A transcribed news report reports more violence: "'The Austrian Government ... bombarded the Karl Marx House with howitzers,'" and the Socialist defenders make it clear they plan "to carry on the fight no matter how great the cost of life.'" The Socialist response continues to "accuse the Dollfuss government of the crime of mass fratricide ... [this] brutal war against women and children has kindled a fire of undying hatred" (28). Newspapers are filled with "propaganda ... pages of what no one believed" (208). After Pendennis leaves the doctor and is in Salzburg, she finds out that the Austrian Nazi Party assassinated Chancellor Dollfuss in an attempt to take over. After the assassination, martial law is imposed on the country, further restricting personal freedoms.

Torture, illustrated metaphorically as poverty, adds to the lurid detail. In a scene when Dr. Prochaska explains the economic situation in Austria to Pendennis, he says, "We have been starving, a peasantry starving, townfuls of starving beggars, not only children, but men and women without shoes walking the streets of Vienna" (87). In the summer when the weather is good the doctor asserts that "men walk into the restaurants ... and ask for the bread off the table" (45). The depiction of extreme poverty threatens death at every turn. In the hospital during Christmas, there were "children who had never
had anything ... at all" before Dr. Prochaska brought them gifts (221). Mothers cannot visit their sick children in the hospital because "they were poor ... without the time to come" (102). The life of these women is so harsh that rather than coddle their children when they could visit they come with "the familiar harassed shrewd look ... to set the bedclothes straight with the side of the hard, work-coarsened hand ... [and say] 'ain't you ashamed when everything's so nice here, twice as nice at home" (102). Multi's sister, Gertrude, is so poor, "she must hire her own daughter out" to the Praxlmann Gasthaus in order to make ends meet (159). Severe poverty afflicts the citizens of Austria; it is a "country where little work [can] be had" (135). Poverty and food shortages contribute to disease. The country is facing an epidemic of infectious diseases including scarlet fever, smallpox, and diphtheria. According to Prochaska, "About half the children under the age of three die" of diphtheria, and there is nothing that can be done (32). Austria is tormented not by a ghost, which may be sensed but not always seen, but by everyday evil witnessed, impending, threatening.

The Austrian people Boyle depicts are historically accurate; they are essentially prisoners in their own country with "the mountains closing in on three sides," and it is a country without hope (156). Borders are closed; Austria is isolated, nearly impenetrable at its borders. No one is allowed in or out; though there is "talk of [opening borders] ... it comes to nothing ... [.and there is no] hope for that" (27). No one has voted in two years; therefore, the country is trapped in its political state. Austrian exiles in other European countries are equally trapped, "waiting to return in triumph to their own soil" (207). The world assists in Austria's isolation, too, by remaining silent. As Pendennis tells the doctor, "God damn my speechless little country, Herr Doktor, it hasn't a word to say to
yours" (93). The workingmen are repeatedly imprisoned "every time they [the
Heimwehr] see a fire at night," and only the tops of their heads or their fingers can be
seen "clinging to the irons planted in the window's stone" of the prison (153, 161). The
sick children are imprisoned in the Infektionhaus and in their own diseased bodies.
Cristabel is imprisoned in her own bed by "white bars that cage her" (99).

There is metaphorical imprisonment, too. The day does not begin in the
Infektionhaus until "the lame and the halt and the blind begin to come ... like prisoners in
their prison garments" (213). Pendennis observes that Prochaska is not free because he
"never does anything" unless Fati Praxlmann approves it first (209). Yet, Pendennis is
imprisoned in her own ideology, too. She realizes that although she is free, she has
nothing to do, nowhere to go because she has not aligned herself with an external
ideology. The Austrians are imprisoned in the shame of their actions, which caused
World War I, their fear, desperation, and poverty.

*Death of a Man* also includes detail of the political power conflict between the Nazis
and the Christian Socialists. The conflict is illustrated in the scenes where characters
lighting swastika fires in the mountains are arrested by the Heimwehr, in the reported
terrorist acts in Vienna, and in the assassination of Chancellor Dollfiuss and the
subsequent arrest of Nazi party members. Power is also an issue in male-female
relationships. In "Sexual Politics in Kay Boyle's *Death of a Man,*" Burton Hatlen details
power and power struggles between men and women. Hatlen points to Multi
Praxlmann's indifference to her husband's politics, the clear dominance of Pendennis'
father over her mother, and by extension the power Gerald holds over their mother and
leads to her death.
A reader might expect *Death of a Man* to end with a climactic and definitive event that explains everything; however, this is not the case. The ending of *Death of a Man* is not so simple as traditional Gothic novels; there is no poetic justice, and it does not end clearly. When Pendennis discovers that Chancellor Dollfuss was assassinated by the Nazis she leaves Salzburg for Feldbruck in her concern for the doctor. Cilli Praxlmann warns the doctor that the *Heimwehr* knows he is a Nazi. He decides to leave Feldbruck for Salzburg to look for Pendennis. The two do not meet, however; they are traveling on trains whose paths cross. Readers never find out whether the couple reunites, the doctor goes to jail, or Pendennis is able to leave Austria safely. The ending is ambiguous.
CONCLUSION

The Gothic style of Boyle's novel combined with American isolationism contributed to negative reviews and to the continued dismissal of *Death of a Man*, as well as the rest of her canon. In *Death of a Man*, Boyle recreates the Austrian nightmare when she fuses Gothic analogues with the social, political, and economic anxieties of Austria. She adds depth to each element by using Modern Gothic complexities in characterization, setting, plot, and detail to bring Austrian humiliation, poverty, and political instability to the American reader who then might understand the appeal of the Nazi Party. *Death of a Man* is an indictment of the Nazi Party, and it attempts to question the causes for the Nazi rise to power. That Pendennis and Dr. Prochaska remain separated is Boyle's comment on their socio-political environment. Boyle shows that Austria's political nightmare is partly to blame for twisted characters, which rendered them unable to reach for and preserve love in their lives. *Death of a Man* is also Boyle's criticism of the failed treaties of Versailles and St. Germain that forced Austria's isolation, deformed its citizenry, and made Austrians vulnerable to Hitler's propaganda. Furthermore, the novel is Boyle's criticism of the United States, its isolationism and silence. Whipple-Spanier states that "as the social conflict that motivates [Death of a Man] snowballed into a world war and genocide, Kay Boyle saw with a cold realistic eye how little survived of the goodwill among men; ... she examined unflinchingly and sometimes bitterly the individual tragedies played out in the shadow of the global one" (116).
The ambiguous ending does not indicate that Boyle sacrificed a moral for the end of her story; it is still didactic. Furthermore, the message in *Death of a Man* is consistent with Boyle's politics and ideologies. Her message is a simple one: it is necessary for humans to connect; anything less is tragic. According to Whipple-Spanier, Boyle "maintained her firm belief in love as the sole source of meaning in human life" (195). *Death of a Man* is a novel that displays Boyle's anxieties over the conflicting socio-political ideologies on individuals and the results of those conflicts in a love relationship. The novel is consistent with Boyle's personal, humanist ideology, contrary to reviews of this novel in 1936. Boyle was simply not interested in intricacies of political ideologies any more than she was in joining an organization or movement that was too narrow to suit her. Furthermore, her life was one filled with activism in support of issues that concerned improvement of the human condition. Boyle was not and could not have been a Nazi sympathizer. Her interests were simple: she was concerned about individual liberty and the need for human connection in a world that impeded it. Her ideals simply did not fit a fascist agenda.

Canby's criticism that the doctor was a "likable Nazi" is not inaccurate, only misdirected. There are two reasons the doctor seems sympathetic. One is that Boyle complicated the traditionally bland Gothic hero to create a character with depth. The doctor is a contradiction. He cares for the ill, but is a secret Nazi. Further intensifying Dr. Prochaska's personality is the appalling atmosphere in Austria after World War I that allows the reader to understand the doctor's motives for joining the Nazis. Boyle's novel recreates horror in the most real and classical sense, especially considering European history between 1936-1945. The doctor is not a fascist in search of power; rather he is a
man who wants dignity and prosperity to return to Austria. Post-war circumstances combined with his passion for Austria make him vulnerable to the illusory promises of Hitler's régime. Boyle has written a character who is not just genuine, but fallible as well. Prochaska is human and humane, and this is why readers sympathize with him.

Another reason the doctor may seem sympathetic is that the Gothic typically subverts common ideologies. *The Castle of Otranto* subverted ideals surrounding ownership and inheritance of property. The novel additionally subverted orthodox literary aesthetics, or as Cleary puts it "cherished assumptions" of literature (x). *The Monk* similarly undermines the Catholic Church and, by extension, all organized religious orders. In what Clery calls the "fantasy of the inquisition," *The Italian* accomplishes the same (Clery xxiii). In addition to subverting ideals of spirituality, *The Italian* discloses anxieties over foreigners. The British were alternately fascinated and repelled by things Italian. As Clery notes in his introduction to *The Italian*, the British were "ready to assimilate certain aspects of foreign culture [while] rejecting others in order to reinforce the boundaries of British selfhood" (x).

Boyle subverts the political ideologies in the character of Dr. Prochaska. She accomplishes this by creating a character that is not clearly villainous. The doctor's humanity is an important element in understanding why critics disapproved of the novel. In isolationist America, critics would not tolerate a sympathetic character motivated by concern for his country after the incidents of World War I. In order to undercut world politics and show the effects of decisions made after World War I, Boyle had to create a complex character. Gothic is highly political when Gothic and Modernist sensibilities merge in a text that "insists that the truth about social realities is carried in those Gothic
elements and that the Gothic is inseparable from the realistic” (Riquelme 594). In *Death of a Man*, Boyle asks us to consider whether Prochaska had a choice to join the Nazi Party or whether events out of his control forced him to it. In an interview with Sandra Whipple-Spanier, Boyle said she wrote *Death of a Man* to "find out, on a human level, what the almost inexplicable fascination of Hitler was" (120).

Many scholars see the subversion of ideologies as an indication that something in society is awry. Critics have therefore always denounced the Gothic novel (Clery xvii, xxv). Lewis was harshly criticized for *The Monk*. The publication was scandalous, and he nearly went to trial for writing what was considered an obscene book. He saved himself only by rewriting the most offensive parts. After revision, it was still sold as pornography and harshly criticized. The poet William Wordsworth publicly disdained Anne Radcliffe’s work. The only author not censured was Horace Walpole. However, there is a general pattern here, which explains why critics demeaned *Death of a Man* and missed Boyle's message.

The subversive function of the Gothic is an important one. Clery states that the result of *The Italian* and other Gothic novels criticizing religion was the "gradual liberalizing" of religious ideas in Britain (Clery xv). Boyle used the Gothic mode as "a vehicle for staging and challenging ideological thinking" in the same convention of the traditional Gothic novel (Riquelme 588). It may be that critics denounced *Death of a Man* because the book challenged American isolationism. According to Riquelme, the Modern Gothic displays "a threat to the stability and future of culture" because it questions the status quo (586). Boyle questioned the status quo because she believed that "the serious writer ... shoulders a moral responsibility to speak aloud 'the inarticulate whispers of the concerned
people of his time" (Whipple-Spanier 172). Boyle was committed to speaking for others. She believed that the writer's responsibility was to announce the injustices and wrongs in the world as well as take action to correct misdeeds.

It is unfortunate that the first reviewers did not understand the political situation in Austria. Had they, Boyle's novel might stand out in the canon of Modernist literature, rather than being relegated to the rank of a minor piece written by a minor author. *Death of a Man* warrants further consideration within the Modernist canon. Based on evidence from Kay Boyle's life and the historical period combined with a definition and application of Gothic analogues in her work it is clear the novel was anything but an approval of political events in Europe.
WORKS CITED


Clark, Suzanne. "Revolution, the Woman and the Word: Kay Boyle." Twentieth Century\nLiterature [Special Kay Boyle Issue], ed. Sandra Whipple Spanier, 34.3 (Fall 1988): 322-23.

Rev. of Death of a Man, by Kay Boyle. Times Literary Supplement. 30 Oct. 1936. 788-789


58

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


Hutton, Graham D. "Politics and Economics in Central and Eastern Europe."

*International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1931-1939) 16.4 (July 1937): 518-539.


Scheuch, Hanno. "Historiographical Review: Austria 1918-1955: From the First to the


---. "Kay Boyle: 'No Past Tense Permitted.'" Twentieth Century Literature [Special Kay Boyle Issue], ed. Sandra Whipple Spanier, 34.3 (Fall 1988): 245-257


WORKS CONSULTED


Bell, Elizabeth S. "Call Forth A Good day: The Nonfiction of Kay Boyle." Twentieth Century Literature [Special Kay Boyle Issue], ed. Sandra Whipple Spanier, 34.3 (Fall 1988): 263-312.


Ellis, Kate-Ferguson. The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of


61

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Cara A. Minardi

Home Address:
326 Brilliant Summit Circle
Henderson, Nevada 89052

Degrees:
Bachelor of Arts, English, 2001
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Thesis Title:
Gothic Analogues in Kay Boyle's Death of a Man: Modernist Perspective and Political Reality

Thesis Committee:
Chairperson, Dr. Darlene Unrue, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Stephen Brown, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Evelyn Gajowski, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Rebecca Mills, Ph. D.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.