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The Horrors of the Great War on the London Stage: The Grand Guignol season of 1915.

Helen E. M. Brooks

In the summer of 1915, just under one year into the Great War, the Parisian Grand Guignol theatre company, famous for their macabre, horrifying and thrilling dramas, arrived in London. Opening at the Coronet, Notting Hill on 14 June, with a gala in aid of *La Croix Rouge Française*, the season of French-language plays was only intended to last four weeks. With audiences packing the 1,143 seat-theatre, however, plans were soon made to transfer the company to the Garrick for a further five weeks.¹ With 1,250 seats the Garrick was only the slightly larger than the Coronet but it had the benefit of being a prominent West End theatre and accordingly the number of performances was increased from seven to nine each week.² The repertoire was also extended, with the addition of five translations given by a new English-language company which was put together especially for the Garrick residency. When the Grand Guignol season closed on 21 August, the company had performed seventy-three times over nine weeks. In total, they had presented twenty-six French plays, almost half of which were thriller or horror pieces, and they had thrilled audiences of up to eighty-eight thousand.³

That same summer, whilst audiences were flocking to see the fictional horrors of the Grand Guignol, men and women just over 160 miles away were experiencing the very real horrors of the Great War. When the Coronet season opened, less than three weeks had passed since the end of the Second Battle of Ypres: a battle know best for the first use of poison gas on 22 April. Closer to home, civilians had been experiencing Zeppelin air raids since January 1915 and, with the first attack on the capital taking place on the evening of 31 May, Londoners had recently experienced the horrors of war too. By the time the season closed in

late August, the Gallipoli campaign was well underway and the first anniversary of the Great War had passed with no end to hostilities in sight.

For a number of cultural commentators, the disjoint between the horrific realities of war and the demand for the fictional horrors of the Grand Guignol was hard to reconcile. As 'F. G. B' commented, after going to the Garrick in early August, 'reminded as they must be every day of the ghastly realities of war, that there should be people in these times prepared to spend money so as to contemplate invented horrors in the playhouse seems strange and even troubling'.⁴ This question of why anyone would want to be 'thrilled' by fictional horrors, when a swift glance at a newspaper could bring the sharp reality home, underlay a number of critical responses to the Grand Guignol season. Yet, as I argue in this chapter, the macabre plays of the Grand Guignol appealed not in spite of the war, but because of it. By focusing new attention onto this long-forgotten season presented around the anniversary of the first year of the war, moreover, we gain an important insight into an entirely ignored and fascinating aspect of wartime culture: the ways in which horror fictions might provide a safe space for audiences to confront the trauma of the war. Pre-war plays such as *Le Baiser dans la Nuit* and *Sous La Lumière Rouge*, with their themes of facial disfigurement, bereavement, and premature burial, I argue, took on new resonance when performed in the summer of 1915: mediating the fears and anxieties of the war they provided a space in which audiences of British civilians, French and Belgian refugees, and men on leave from the fighting fronts could contemplate the all-too real horrors of war from the temporary safety of the theatre auditorium.

The Appeal of Wartime Horror

The standard formula for a Grand Guignol programme, as Richard Hand and Michael J. Wilson have shown, was a careful ‘alternating of terror and laughter’, with the actor negotiating ‘the precarious journey between horror and comedy’ across the four or five short plays presented in each bill.⁵ Reconstructing the programme from newspaper adverts reveals that this balance was carefully managed throughout the season, despite a somewhat tentative start in the first week, prompting Desmond MacCarthy to complain that there was only one ‘play to make us shudder’ and ‘they would do better to give us more horrors’.⁶ The draw for audiences, as MacCarthy’s comment reveals, was rarely in the laughs. As another commentator noted, ‘when the company turns to more ordinary plays they seem a little insipid. They are, in fact, not what we come to see’.⁷ The particular appeal of the horror pieces is also evident in their life beyond the season. Both Jean Sartène’s *La Griffé* (perf. Garrick 2-7 Aug) and Paul Autier and Paul Cloquemin’s *Guardiens de Phare* (perf. Coronet 28 June-3 July), the latter of which the *Manchester Courier* described as a twenty-minute piece of ‘realistic horror...an onslaught on the nerves so painful that one shudders continuously and wishes it were all over’, were soon ‘snapped up by variety managers as being greatly to the taste of a public in search of a good thrill’.⁸

Whilst demand for tickets clearly spoke to the popularity of these macabre plays with audiences, commentators struggled to understand the appeal. For some, distance from the direct experience of war offered one explanation. With the Grand Guignol transferring from Paris to London in the summer of 1915, the *Bystander* concluded that in a city which was ‘sadly up against the genuine article’ and where ‘the playfully extravagant horrors of the Grand Guignol Theatre have already been surpassed in real life’ there was ‘no use for cheap imitations’.¹¹ The *Tatler* drew a similar comparison between the two capitals, noting that whilst in Paris the ‘atmosphere of death is too near to find a counterfeit of it at all amusing’,

in London, people were ‘not being asked to face death bravely, but merely to “wake up”’.¹² Yet London audiences were not as detached from the reality of war as these commentators suggested. Only two weeks before the Coronet season opened, Londoners had experienced their first direct Zeppelin raid, with bombs being dropped in Whitechapel and Stoke Newington, only eight miles from theatre. The presence of servicemen on leave and of ‘French-speaking visitors’ at the Coronet, also reveals that the season appealed to those with direct experience – whether as combatants or refugees - of the horror of war.¹³

Taking a different approach to the commentators in the *Tatler* and *Bystander*, it was to these French-speaking ‘visitors’ that *The Sunday Times* turned in attempting to explain the popularity of the Grand Guignol. The Garrick’s programme ‘leaves a good deal to be desired,’ reported their commentator in late July:



Foreigners may not understand it, but it is a fact that at the present time we are not in a mood to be fed with horrors. If we want these, alas, there is enough and to spare in the daily press.¹⁴

In seeing the season as being primarily aimed at French-speaking audiences, whose different temperament might enable them to enjoy these fictional horrors, there was, however, little recognition of the evident appeal of the plays to both British audiences and to non-French speakers.¹⁵

Reflecting back on the season of Grand Guignol at the end of August 1915, a commentator in the *Tatler* concluded that it could ‘only be curiosity and a certain craving for the morbidly horrible’ which could turn ‘a season of such plays into a success at a time when the world is already drenched in blood sufficiently, and the blood, alas! is real.’¹⁶ To an extent, it was an argument underpinned by the few critics who were vocal in supporting the

season. As Desmond MacCarthy argued:

The point is simply the thrill of horror...I would rather see [a play] which makes me feel something, even if it is only a thrill of horror. I would sooner be horrified than gently led to the fountain of easy tears, far rather be excruciated than look on at the travesties of heroism as the patriotic plays are at present exhibiting.¹⁷

For MacCarthy, there was more value in the macabre thrills of the Grand Guignol than there was in heartwarming romance, or heroic melodrama; indeed such ‘false sentiment’, he went on to argue ‘hardens people more than shocks’. In being affected by these fictional horrors, MacCarthy suggested, audiences might even be prompted to reflect again on the heroism of those men and women who experienced such horrors for real.



Ultimately, of course, the varied reasons why audiences flocked to the Coronet and Garrick to experience the horrors of the Grand Guignol are too broad to examine here. For readers interested in exploring the wider questions of horror’s appeal, works such as Noël Carroll’s *The Philosophy of Horror; or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, Brigid Cherry’s *Horror*, or Mathias Clasen’s *Why Horror Seduces* offer useful starting points.¹⁹ Rather than looking to such philosophical explanations of the appeal of the Grand Guignol, however, my interest in the following section is in offering what Andrew Tudor describes as a ‘particularistic account’ of horror’s appeal.²⁰ As such, I follow film scholar Cherry who argues that:

What works as horror and the pleasures that horror cinema engenders can undoubtedly be explained in a number of ways but any explanation must also consider what works for particular social groups in particular cultures at particular times.²¹

Whilst Cherry is talking specifically about cinematic horror, the principal is equally relevant to live performance. The appeal of the macabre plays staged during the summer of 1915 can only fully be understood, I would argue as the product of the specific historical and cultural

context of the Great War. In a context in which death, violence and suffering were being taken to new extremes, the macabre horrors of the Grand Guignol provided, to draw on Joseph Gixti's theorization, 'a safely distanced and stylised means of making sense of and coming to terms with phenomena and potentialities of experience which under normal...conditions would be found too threatening and disturbing.'²² In analysing themes within two of the most celebrated works of the London season, *Le Baiser dans la Nuit* and *La Lumière Rouge*, I will demonstrate the ways in which the Grand Guignol's pre-war plays spoke to and mediated the horrors of war.

Facing the Disfigured: *Le Baiser Dans La Nuit*

In the first week of the Grand Guignol season only one play, as the *Athneanum* put it, was 'of the special character associated with the Grand Guignol Theatre'.²³ Maurice Level's *Le Baiser dans la Nuit* had first been performed in Paris in December 1912 but made its British premier at the Coronet and was performed there between 14 and 26 June 1915. The central character in this 'melodrama of vitriol-throwing' is Henri or, as he is known, *le Vitriolé*, (played in 1915 by M. Chaumont): a man who has been blinded and disfigured in an acid attack perpetrated by his jilted lover, Jeanne (played by Renée Gardès).²⁴ On the pretence of having forgiven her but in fact seeking his revenge, *le Vitriolé* has lured Jeanne to his room in the middle of the night. The play climaxes in a terrifying acid attack, which was repeatedly described in reviews, such as this one from the *Stage*:

Horrified when she turns the lights up, and sees his disfigured visage and bandaged eyes, the girl first allows him to pass her fingers over his mangled and indeed eaten-away flesh, and also consents to give him the farewell embrace that he requests. Then, with ferocious yells, the man seizes his victim, casts her down, and deliberately pours

vitriol over the face of the shrieking woman, whose countenance is shown all red and scarred, by way of a final touch of horror, as the curtain falls.²⁵

The horror of this final scene fulfilled every thrilling expectation of the Grand Guignol. ‘The wonderful acting of Renée Gardès and M. Chaumont’, the *Athenaeum* reported, gave ‘the slightly artificial horror of the play an almost overwhelming effect of realism, which was too strong for some of the audience’. Indeed, on the evening the *Sunday Mirror* reviewer attended there were two ladies who simply ‘couldn’t stand it’.²⁶ Other reviewers also celebrated the affective thrill of the play. *The Times*’ critic considered it ‘blood-curdling enough for the most jaded nerves’; the *Stage*’s reviewer concluded that it was ‘quite likely to give one the horrors’; and *The Sunday Times* commentator found it ‘harrowing and repellant’.²⁷ Beyond this, however, this reviewer refused to say more, noting that the performance was so ‘horribly horrible in these times of war, when many hearts are bleeding’ that they would ‘refrain from comment.’²⁸ They did, however acknowledge the play’s ‘phenomenal success’ with audiences.²⁹ So well-received was *Le Baiser* that Colin Messer, the season’s producer, took the unusual step of retaining the piece in the repertoire for the following week making it one of only five plays—and only two horror pieces—staged for longer than one week across the nine-week season.³⁰

The play’s exquisite tension, its origins in the late-nineteenth-century French vogue for *vitriolage*, and the use of body horror make *Le Baiser*, as Richard Hand and Michael J. Wilson have argued, ‘one of the definitive plays of the Grand-Guignol’.³² Yet whilst the play firmly pre-dated the war, its popularity in 1915 should also be considered through the central figure of *le Vitrolé* and his particular resonance in a wartime context. At a time when men were returning from the front with severe facial injuries, the character of *le Vitrolé*, with his head wrapped in bandages and clearly suffering in the wake of horrific facial wounds, was

not just a victim of an acid attack, but a figure which challenged audiences to confront their anxieties around veterans with facial disfigurements.

As Marjorie Gehrhardt has highlighted, facial injuries made up a significant proportion of wounds during the Great War: both because of the use of shells and machine guns combined with the lack of protective equipment, and also because of the ‘nature of trench warfare in exposing the head’.³³ Yet, as Gehrhardt and others have emphasised, facial wounds remained the ‘worst loss of all’: being experienced as a loss of identity, masculinity and ultimately humanity.³⁴ Across numerous accounts, including the oft-cited 1918 memoir of Ward Muir, the facially disfigured were not only dehumanised but figured as something almost monstrous. ‘Hideous is the only word for these smashed faces’ reflected Muir, an orderly at the 3rd London General Hospital in Wandsworth:

the socket with some twisted, moist slit, with a lash or two adhering feebly...the skewed mouth...and worse, far the worst, the incredibly brutalising effects which are the consequence of wounds in the nose, and which reach a climax of mournful grotesquerie when the nose is missing altogether.³⁵

Calling to mind an image of something monstrous rather than human, Muir’s description speaks to the mix of pity, fear, disgust and revulsion that Suzannah Biernoff has argued was felt both by ‘the men who suffered these injuries and ... those who came into contact with them’.³⁶

Understanding the mix of emotions provoked by facial injuries is key to appreciating the significance of *Le Baiser* during the Great War and its mediation of ‘the complex nature of violence, suffering, and mortality’ which Thomas Fahy argues is at the heart of horror’s enjoyment.³⁷ In *le Vitriolé* audiences were confronted with a man who has been transformed

into a monster by his facial injury. As such this terrifying figure was the realisation of the fears and visceral responses scholars such as Gehrhardt, Susannah Biernoff, Joanna Bourke and Sophie Delaporte identify as being at the heart of responses to facial disfigurement. Yet, at the same time, and just like real-life victims of facial wounds, *le Vitriolé* also suffers as a result of a horrific experience and, as such, is a figure of pity. These tensions between *le Vitriolé's* status as victim and monster, as the subject of both pity and terror, sit not only at the heart of the play but at the heart of questions around, and cultural attitudes towards victims of facial disfigurement.

In forcing audiences to confront their fears around facial injury *Le Baiser* was, for critics like Desmond MacCarthy, 'more wholesome than those [plays] in which brutality is made unreal'.³⁸ It also contrasted with the collective 'looking away' which Suzannah Biernoff has identified within wider society.³⁹ Rather, in *Le Baiser*, the dramatic structure of the play with *le Vitriolé* facing away from the audience with his 'hideously scarred face' masked by bandages, builds towards this ultimate, terrifying reveal.⁴⁰ As a letter in a Cornish newspaper in August 1915 reveals, it was this anticipation of horror that audiences loved. 'In some of the Grand Guignol plays' wrote C. King of Chapel Hill, Stratton, North Cornwall on 7 August, 'the audiences are thrilled simply by looking at an open door'.⁴¹ It 'hypnotises them', they added; 'they gaze at it with anticipatory shivers, and nothing that follows, no matter how terrible, is to be compared in horror with that silent suggestion'. In the Grand Guignol's staging of *Le Baiser*, of course, it was the imagined face beneath the mask that prompted such anticipatory shivers: a face, audiences may have reflected later, that was also far worse imagined than seen.

For C. King, the experience provided by the Grand Guignol, of waiting for the horror to

come, was directly parallel to the experience of living through the war. As such, their comments provide a further insight into the particular pleasure of fictional horror in wartime.

‘There are occasions,’ King wrote:

when the daily newspaper exercises a similar hypnotic effect; blank days when a veil is carefully hung over military and naval movements. Then the mind is possessed by dread. People imagine that something terrible is happening, has happened, or that inertia has overtaken our leaders. The citizen’s gaze is fixed upon the open door.

In the finite and safe space of the darkened auditorium, King recognised, there would always be the final moment of what horror writer, Stephen King, many years later described as ‘reintegration and safety’: the moment when audiences faced their fears, and realised that ‘for now, the worst has been faced and it wasn’t so bad after all’.⁴² Yet the same could not be said of reality. In facing a world in which no one knew when that release would come, the pleasure of the Grand Guignol was, for some at least, in providing a safe and contained space in which the full cycle of ‘anxiety, fear, relief and mastery’ could be experienced, in which the tension of wartime life might be temporarily relieved.⁴³

Dealin with Death: *Sous La Lumière Rouge*

Whilst *La Baiser* was the first thriller to be staged at the Coronet, *Sous la Lumière Rouge* (1911) was the last. Maurice Level and Étienne Ray’s play features Philippe, a young man whose actress-lover has just died of influenza. Being a keen photographer but only having photos of her ‘in character’, Philippe wants to remember her as he knew her and takes a deathbed photo. After the funeral, however, when he develops the photo, he discovers that her eyes are open. Fearing that she had simply been catatonic — the flash-bulb having momentarily roused her — Philippe immediately calls for an exhumation. But it is, of course,

too late. With Philippe waiting in the next room, the coffin is opened revealing his lover's failed attempt to escape being buried alive. Philippe, however, is ultimately left in the dark: his friend, who had been present at the exhumation, lying to reassure Philippe that his lover had died peacefully in bed.

Whilst, like *Le Baiser*, *Lumière* was written before the Great War, the themes of grief, loss and being buried alive, all spoke to the experience of war in ways that could not have been imagined four years earlier. 'The play has, apparently, been written with the object of securing greater precautions against accidents of the kind', the *Bystander's* reviewer noted, 'but its production with such a wealth of morbid detail at the present time is, taking the most charitable view possible, a serious error of judgment'.⁴⁴ Examiner of Plays George S. Street, who licensed the play for performance, concurred, commenting that 'this is another horrible play, and it is almost incredible that in such dreadful times as these there can be any demand for artificial horrors.'⁴⁵

By July 1915, as such comments implicitly acknowledge, being buried alive was no longer just the subject of gruesome tales or terrible accidents; it was a real and deadly possibility. For civilians on the home front, increasing air raids brought with them the risk of being buried alive 'at home'.⁴⁶ At the same time, accounts in newspapers revealed the quotidian danger of being buried alive in shell bursts on the Western Front. Newspapers frequently published letters from men who had survived such deaths, such as the following from Corporal F. Robinson of the 1st Battalion West Kent Regiment, whose experience of being buried alive was published in the *Evening Dispatch* in early 1915:

One day I was in a trench with three privates when a shell came on to the earthwork. I felt a great weight holding me down, and it was completely dark. I could not stir a

muscle: my face was pressed into the earth, and I realised that I was buried alive, face downwards. I felt myself gasping for breath, and then gradually going to sleep. Luckily comrades were rapidly digging me and the others out...on four other occasions I have been buried, but usually I have got out with the aid of a pal. In any case it's better than being blown to bits.⁴⁷

The light-hearted and reassuring tone of Corporal Robinson's account was echoed in other letters in the press, but was a sharp contrast to accounts in uncensored diaries such as Arthur Graeme West's. West, a Captain in the 6th Battalion Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, recorded his search for men buried in shell explosions in September 1916:

Two men were buried, perhaps more you were told, certainly two. The trench was a mere undulation of newly-turned earth, under it somewhere lay two men or more. You dug furiously. No sign. Perhaps you were standing on a couple of men now, pressing the life out of them, on their faces or chests... You dig and scratch and uncover a grey, dirty face, pitifully drab and ugly, the eyes closed, the whole thing limp and mean-looking: this is the devil of it, that a man is not only killed, but made to look so vile and filthy in death, so futile and meaningless that you hate the sight of him...here is the first, and God knows how many are not beneath him. At last you get them out, three dead, grey, muddy masses, and one more jabbering live one. Then another shell falls and more are buried. It is noticeable that only one man was wounded; six were buried alive.⁴⁸

It is an account that vividly depicts the horror, as well as the ubiquity, of such a death: a horror that *La Lumière* dramatises not only in its climactic, macabre moment when the body is disinterred, but throughout the whole play. The audience, after all, would have been all too aware of Philippe's lover slowly suffocating in her dark coffin throughout the action of the play, and ultimately share in the knowledge of her painful and horrifying death: a knowledge

kept from Philippe, in much the same way that families were often protected from the truth of their loved ones' deaths by the men who were with them when they died.

It is not hard to see how *Lumière* could have tapped into contemporary anxieties over the kinds of death men faced in the trenches: both for those in the audience with loved ones at the Front, and those who were on leave from the Front themselves. More fundamentally, however, *La Lumière* was about the experience of loss and grief: an experience which, Adrian Gregory suggests, would touch virtually the entire population by the end of the war, with almost everyone having lost a cousin, friend or neighbour and around three million out of a population of less than 42 million having lost a close relative, son or brother.⁴⁹ Throughout the play, the audience follows Philippe as he deals with his lover's death. 'You can't imagine how quickly the dead leave us', he reflects:

She's fading away...Fading away...her eyes...her mouth...her expression...it all eludes me. It's like being bereaved all over again [...] One minute she's there in front of me and then suddenly she's vanished! No, that's not what I want. This void, this darkness, it's horrible.⁵⁰



Whilst the disinterring of the body was the climactic moment of horror in the play, it was in Philippe's articulation of his bereavement that the play tapped into the ultimate wartime anxiety: the shared and acute possibility of imminent bereavement. For those in the audience who had been bereaved, those who had seen friends killed on the battlefields, or those who feared that the photos they held, like Philippe, would be the last image of their loved ones, these words would have resonated in ways unforeseen when the play was first performed in 1911.

Staging the reality of war: *La Veillée de Jean Rémy*

Like *Sous la Lumière Rouge* and *Le Baiser dans la Nuit*, the majority of plays in the 1915 Grand Guignol season pre-dated the war. Only on one occasion, for the opening of the Garrick residency, was any attempt made to directly tackle the war within the Grand Guignol format. *La Veillée de Jean Rémy* by MM Yoria Walter and P. De Wattyne was performed in the week of 19 July and was more of a war melodrama than a Grand Guignol horror play. Depicting a 'Boche captain' killing a young French woman's children just before the slightly-too-late arrival of the English soldier, reviewers were split as to whether this was 'an awful war sketch, which even surpasses the atrocity pamphlets which are published from time to time' or 'disappointing because one felt that that brutal German Captain ought to have met a more horrible fate than that of being bayoneted by a British soldier'.⁵¹ Speaking directly to the atrocities of the invasion of France and Belgium, it is no surprise that *La Veillée* was the only new horror play to be produced during the Grand Guignol season. In the pre-war macabre thrillers of the Grand Guignol audiences could encounter their fears, but at one remove from the reality of the horrors of war. *La Veille*, on the other hand, represented what many perceived as reality, particularly in the wake of the recent publication of the *Bryce Report on Alleged German Outrages* in May.⁵² As the reviewer of the *Westminster Gazette* commented, *La Veillée* could be watched not as a dramatic fiction but rather 'as a perfectly realistic transcript of scenes such as we know on unimpeachable evidence to have actually occurred again and again'.⁵³

La Veillée, and the other 'atrocity plays' that were produced in the first years of the war demand fresh attention in the context of atrocity literature and propaganda. Yet, as I have argued here, the appeal of the Grand Guignol's horror in 1915 was not in its direct commentary on the war but in its reflection on the experience of war from a distance. These

pre-war plays translated easily and gained new resonance in a world facing previously unimagined horrors and in doing so provided audiences with the opportunity to ‘encounter the dangerous and horrific in a safe context’.⁵⁴

Finally, it is also important to recognize how the experience of the Grand Guignol itself provided a mirror for wartime life. As Hand and Wilson have argued the skill of the Grand Guignol actor was to take audiences on a journey ‘from bourgeois security to mortal danger, from the rational to the insane’.⁵⁵ In this journey from security to danger, from normality to the extraordinary, the wartime Grand Guignol mirrored and thereby mediated the experience of war, at both a personal and global level. Immersing themselves in a fictional world where ‘action may or may not have meaning, where a monster may or may not be sympathetic, where evil people may or may not win out in the end’ and coming out the other end, audiences experienced for a brief moment the release from terror which they would have to wait more than three years to experience in reality.⁵⁶

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Notes

¹ The popularity of the Coronet season was commented on the press. The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, for example, noted on 1 July 1915 that ‘Mr Colin Messer is attracting big audiences at the Coronet Theatre with his Grand Guignol Company from Paris’.

² Matinees were only given on Saturdays at the Coronet; when the company moved to the Garrick they performed matinees on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The number of plays per programme was also increased to five at the Garrick, other than in the final week (w/c 16 August) where four plays were given, as had been standard at the Coronet.

³ There is no firm evidence for audience numbers. This estimate is based on each theatre’s capacity and the popularity of the season.

⁴ *The Sunday Times*, 8 August 1915.

⁵ Richard J. Hand and Michael Wilson, *Grand-Guignol: The French Theatre of Horror*, (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000) p.39.

⁶ The season opened with the comedies *Le Chauffeur* and *Une Femme Charmante*. A further light-hearted piece, *Le Triangle*, was added on the Tuesday; Desmond MacCarthy, ‘The Grand Guignol Company’, *The New Statesman*, 5/115 (19 June 1915), 256.

⁷ *Westminster Gazette*, 29 June 1915.

⁸ *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 30 June 1915; *Cheltenham Looker-On*, 14 August 1915.

¹¹ “‘The Grand Guignol’ at the Coronet’, *The Bystander*, 14 July 1915.

¹² *Tatler*, 28 July 1915.

¹³ On 17 June 1915 the *Stage* commented that there were ‘a number of officers in the

audience’; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 1 July 1915.

¹⁴ *The Sunday Times*, 25 July 1915.

¹⁵ As the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* noted on 1 July 1915, ‘The audiences at the Coronet [were] not exclusively French and Belgian’.

¹⁶ *Tatler*, 25 August 1915.

¹⁷ Desmond MacCarthy, ‘The Grand Guignol Company’, *The New Statesman*, 5/115, (19 June 1915), 256.

¹⁹ Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990); Brigid Cherry, *Horror* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Mathias Classen, *Why Horror Seduces* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017).

²⁰ Andrew Tudor, ‘Why Horror? The Peculiar Pleasures of a Popular Genre’, in Mark Jancovich (ed), *Horror, the Film Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p.50.

²¹ Cherry, *Horror*, pp.94-95.

²² Joseph Gixti, *Terrors of Uncertainty: The Cultural Contexts of Horror Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p.164.

²³ *Atheneum*, 19 June 1915, no. 4573 p.558.

²⁴ *The Times*, 25 June 1915.

²⁵ *Stage*, 17 June 1915.

²⁶ *Atheneum*, 19 June 1915, no. 4573 p.558; *Sunday Mirror*, 27 June 1915.

²⁷ *The Times*, 25 June 1915; *Stage*, 17 June 1915; *The Sunday Times*, 20 June 1915.

²⁸ *The Sunday Times*, 20 June 1915.

²⁹ *The Sunday Times*, 20 June 1915.

³⁰ The normal pattern was for each week’s performance to be made up of entirely new plays; *The Sunday Times*, 27 June 1915. Over the whole season only four pieces were staged for more than one week: *Le Baiser* (w/c 14 June and 21 June); the comedy *Rosalie* (w/c 28 June

and 5 July); the comedy *La Delnissée* (w/c/ 19 July, 26 July and 2 August) and the English-language horror piece, *The Grip* (w/c 2 August and 9 August)

³² Hand and Wilson, *Grand-Guignol*, p.180.

³³ Marjorie Gehhardt, 'Gueules Cassées: The Men Behind the Masks', *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, 6/4 (2013), 267-281 (267).

³⁴ 'Worst Loss of All' *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, May-June 1918, quoted in Suzannah Biernoff, *Portraits of Violence: War and the Aesthetics of Disfigurement*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017) p.69. For further discussion of facial disfigurement see Suzannah Biernoff, 'The Rhetoric of Disfigurement in First World War Britain', *Social History of Medicine*, 24/3 (2011), pp.666-685; Sophie Delaporte, *Les Gueules Cassées: Les blessés de la face de la Grande Guerre* (Paris, 1996); Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion, 1999); and Anna Branach-Kallas 'Faces' in Anna Branach-Kallas and Piotr Sadkowski (eds) *Comparing Grief in French, British and Canadian Great War Fiction (1977-2014)* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp.12-14.

³⁵ Ward Muir, *The Happy Hospital* (London: Simkin Marshall, 1918), pp.143-144.

³⁶ Biernoff 'Rhetoric of Disfigurement', p.671.

³⁷ Thomas Fahy, 'Introduction' in Thomas Fahy (ed), *The Philosophy of Horror* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), p.2.

³⁸ MacCarthy, 'The Grand Guignol Company'.

³⁹ Biernoff 'Rhetoric of Disfigurement', p.668.

⁴⁰ *People*, 20 June 1915.

⁴¹ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 9 August 1915.

⁴² Stephen King, *Danse Macabre* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2010), p.14.

⁴³ Fahy, 'Introduction', p.2.

⁴⁴ “‘The Grand Guignol’ at the Coronet’, p.66.

⁴⁵ George S. Street, ‘Examiner’s Summary’ for *Sous La Lumière Rouge*, British Library, Lord Chamberlain’s Collection of Plays, 1915/17. Licensed for performance on 22 June 1915. <https://www.greatwartheatre.org.uk/db/script/501/>, accessed 30 May 2020.

⁴⁶ See for example, ‘Zeppelin Dangers’ in *Broughty Ferry Guide and Advertiser*, 18 June 1915.

⁴⁷ ‘Buried Alive’ in *Evening Dispatch*, 6 January 1915.

⁴⁸ Arthur Graeme West, *The Diary of a Dead Officer, being the posthumous papers of Arthur Graeme West*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1918), p.67.

⁴⁹ Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day, 1919-1946*, (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 1994) p.19.

⁵⁰ Maurice Level and Étienne Ray, *Sous La Lumière Rouge* (1911) in Hand and Wilson, *Grand Guignol*, pp.170-171

⁵¹ *The Sunday Times*, 25 July 1915; *Sketch*, 28 July 1915.

⁵² *The Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages*, better known as the Bryce Report after the commission’s chair, Viscount James Bryce, was published in May 1915 and documented accounts of German ‘outrages’ during the invasion. Whilst the accuracy of the report was challenged after the war, during the conflict it was seen as highly credible.

⁵³ *Westminster Gazette*, 20 July 1915.

⁵⁴ Fahy, ‘Introduction’, p.2.

⁵⁵ Hand and Wilson, *Grand Guignol*, p.269.

⁵⁶ Cynthia A. Freeland, *The Naked and the Undead: Evil and the Appeal of Horror* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018) p.274.