

**It's so overt, it's covert.**

## **The double life of windows in popular culture**

### **ABSTRACT**

My talk will explore two aspects of popular culture from a transmedia and transhistoric perspective. Drawing on the complementary vantage points offered by two popular genres, horror and detection, I will examine the changing ontology and significance of windows, focusing on their evolving and dynamic connection with identity.

In horror fiction, the window is the locus where the transparency of architecture as a signifier of CULTURE comes into contact and clashes—in a conceptual aporia—with the horror of the abhuman and (super)NATURE. The logical geometry of the window frame and the reassuringly mimetic transparency of the pane are challenged and often reversed by the morphic capacity and ontological uncertainty of the horrific body in transit and transformation, seen behind or outside a window. The thing on the glass threshold could be the restless spirit at the casement seeking admission into *Wuthering Heights*; the apparition of Jekyll/Hyde, exhaling 'abject terror and despair' before his window is 'instantly thrust down'; the vampire creature of Croglin Grange, prying the lead from the window frame in his victim's bedroom; or, finally, the ember eyes of the possessed Regan MacNeil, superimposed in the film montage on her eerily lit bedroom windows (*The Exorcist*).

In detective fiction, specifically in the Sherlock Holmes stories, I will show how the window can be considered a response to Dr Jekyll's notorious "history of a window" and a parodic transmediation of the theme of double identity. Finally, Sherlock's window at 221B Baker Street transmediates the detective's method of investigation and his rechannelling of the psychogeography of the metropolis.

In what ways do windows act as mirrors and prisms for identity in the uncanny spaces of horror and detection? Peering through my windows, we glimpse how identity is reflected, fractured, and transformed across the shifting landscapes of these popular genres