

# Haunting the Body: An Exploration of Scars as Ghosts

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**Trigger Warning: This essay contains discussions of self-harm.**

This essay examines how Gillian Flynn's novel *Sharp Objects* and the HBO miniseries adaptation raise questions about representations of female self-harm in entertainment. I argue that the protagonist's scars act as ghosts since both scars and hauntings are messengers and manifestations of trauma. This paper examines the distinction between read and watched trauma, and the psychological validity of these interpretations. I assert that Flynn and director Jean-Marc Vallée present self-harm as a haunting to exploit the uncanny and attract readers and viewers with dramatic content. Ultimately, I ask that readers practice empathy when consuming entertainment featuring trauma and self-harm.

Released in 2006, Gillian Flynn's debut novel *Sharp Objects* draws attention to the severely damaging effects of trauma and the physical manifestations of such emotional pain for the protagonist Camille Preaker. The mystery-thriller not only explores how murders haunt a small Midwestern town, but also raises essential questions about the connections between psychological trauma and the supernatural. Expanding upon and drawing from the novel, the *Sharp Objects* HBO television miniseries directed by Jean-Marc Vallée portrays Flynn's story on screen, complicating the dynamic between read and watched interpretations of trauma. The differences between textual and visual portrayals of trauma create an important distinction: written trauma, much like horror narratives, leaves the visualization of traumatic events up to the readers' imagination, effectively creating personalized

fear, whereas on-screen depictions of trauma present a set image, which takes away the work of the imagination for viewers. Despite their differences in the presentation of the story, both the

novel and the miniseries portray the horrors of suffering as supernatural and portray self-harm scars as ghosts of the protagonist's tragic past.

Camille Preaker, a journalist and native of mysterious Wind Gap, Missouri, endured the death of her younger sister, Marian, and an emotionally abusive relationship with her mother, Adora, which resulted in Camille's reliance on self-harm as a coping mechanism for her childhood trauma. Though she also grapples with sexual harassment and alcoholism, Camille's self-harm practices and how the resulting scarification haunts her body are most closely connected to the supernatural. Scars, particularly those of self-harm, evoke uncanny feelings in people examining the scarred individual's body. This discomfort arises from the jarring and confusing realization that no one truly knows and understands each other, despite the perceived closeness of a relationship, as well as the viewer's unfamiliarity with the trauma that led to the scarification. In her 2018 article "HBO's 'Sharp Objects' Is A Messy Depiction Of Self-Harm, But That's OK," freelance writer and recovered self-harmer Samantha Puc reviews the miniseries through the position of both an intrigued fan and an individual who is hyper-sensitive to the triggering subject matter:

Because I'm familiar with the steps that cutters take to hide their scars, I immediately recognized that Camille wears only jeans, boots, and long-sleeved shirts and sweaters in neutral, dark colors, even in the height of summer. But those less familiar with this tactic who haven't read the novel may not initially notice.

The "uncanny is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar" (Freud 2), so the shock factor accompanying visualizations or descriptions of scars generates a response akin to encountering the supernatural. For the scarred individual, self-harm makes the body itself uncanny. Self-harmers display their own version of a doppelgänger, a more socially acceptable, less damaged persona of themselves, which stirs uncanniness within and leads individuals to question the authenticity of each identity. Furthermore, the body is an integral component of the self, and marking the body disrupts the sense of familiarity between the self and the physical being. Thus, repeatedly viewing markings of pain and suffering on a familiar body awakens the uncanny, even if only the self-harmer sees their own scars.

In Camille's case, being truly seen and understood, horrific scars and all, is deeply powerful. Social stigmatization and the demonization of self-harm in the media strip the humanity from struggling individuals, leaving them to feel any combination of loneliness, shame, and fear, and causing self-harmers to hide their expressions of pain. Camille falls victim to this cultural haunting, and as a result of never feeling truly seen for her authentic self, uncanny feelings dominate her mind. The contrast between Camille's intimate sexual experiences demonstrates the differ-

ence between the social discomfort leading to secrecy in self-harm and actual empathy with the complicated emotions behind it: with Richard, Camille likes “it with [her] clothes on” (Flynn 172), whereas John “held up [her] arms, [her] legs, turned [her] on [her] back” and “read [her],” allowing Camille to feel truly accepted in her haunted body (Flynn 209). Publicizing a novel and TV show largely revolving around self-harm stirs uncanny feelings in readers and viewers alike, exemplifying the importance of a more empathetic societal understanding of self-harm.

Outside of mediatized representations, self-harm is generally hidden from public view. As such, these representations not only offer rare glimpses into a rather private suffering, they operate pedagogically; that is, they operate to inform the spectator’s understanding of self-harm in the absence of other kinds of encounters. Importantly, however, cultivating empathic understandings of self-harm from such occasions depends upon moving past dominant readings of self-harm that view it as a destructive behaviour with solely negative consequences to recognize instead that, for those who practise it, self-harm serves as a means of survival in the wake of trauma. (Fallier 12)

It is important to note that the psychoanalysis and application of critical psychological theories to a fictional character coping with imagined trauma does not amount to the same significance as diagnosis for individuals suffering from real trauma. Furthermore, media implements representations of mental health struggles and self-harm as devices to create drama and add tension to a story. Sensationalization of self-harm in the media is a cultural haunting, hooking readers and viewers by exploiting the uncanniness of scars, the human craving for violence, and “flawed” characters as a means of catharsis. This dramatization of mental pain feeds an inaccurate and harmful perception of self-harm to the public, much like the negative perceptions surrounding ghosts and the supernatural. For struggling individuals and recovered self-harmers, visual depictions of self-harm are dangerous and can trigger more than a minor haunting, but rather cause relapses and throw people back into the horrors of previously lived trauma:

Given the inherent voyeurism in depicting trauma on screen, I worried that Camille’s struggles would be sensationalized once they got the HBO treatment. Far too often, the way television depicts trauma, unhealthy coping mechanisms, and mental health struggles is extremely insensitive, especially when the characters are women. (Puc)

Taking inspiration from the famed spectacle of ghost stories and horror movies, modern content

creators use trauma and self-harm as shocking character flaws, often without considering the detrimental and delegitimizing effects that poor portrayals of suffering have on those struggling with mental health. Uncanniness and the horrific representations of self-harm in the media haunt scarred individuals, further connecting self-harm to the supernatural.

While not directly associated with the horror genre, the negative social messaging surrounding self-harm haunts entertainment culture—for example, many supernatural beings exhibit some form of mental illness. Scars, like ghosts, act as physical manifestations of emotional and psychological trauma. Camille’s scars externalize the buried fear, sorrow, anger, and confusion plaguing her mind, and scarification gives her an outlet to express tumultuous emotions, even though it physically and emotionally damages her. Permanence is a key factor in positioning scars as ghosts, since the scar itself lingers on skin, preserving the traumatic events or emotions that drove individuals to brutalize themselves. Despite being a practice to achieve catharsis, self-harm scars serve as constant reminders and messengers from the past, haunting the body as long as they remain visible. Similar to how locations experience repeated hauntings, “the body collects” scars and becomes its own haunted home for the suffering individual (“Falling,” episode seven, 5:25-5:29). *Sharp Objects* depicts the social stigmas and fears surrounding scars, which reminisce taboos associated with ghosts, thus demonstrating how society and the media demonize mental health struggles and self-harm to exploit the uncanny discomfort of scars as hauntings.

### **Apparitions of Anguish: Scars and Ghosts**

Scars, like ghosts, have various positive and negative connotations, and can both haunt the body in comforting and vengeful ways. An understanding of the many functions and classifications of ghosts is necessary to pursue the scars as ghosts metaphor as it applies to the *Sharp Objects* novel and miniseries. Essentially, ghosts fall into three moral categories: good, neutral, and evil. While neutral ghosts are often thought of as docile spirits aimlessly wandering the mortal plane, good and evil ghosts have specific functions, namely to comfort or harm, respectively. Self-harm acts both as a coping mechanism and a destructive tendency, thus, the resulting scars could fall into either category. In her article “Twenty-First-Century American Ghosts: The After-Death Communication—Therapy and Revelation from beyond the Grave,” Susan Kwilecki defines After-Death Communications (ADCs) as “direct and spontaneous” forms of spiritual interaction (101). Self-harm scars act as communicators of emotion, similarly to Kwilecki’s definition of ADCs, and as she later asserts, ADCs appear as signs of “healing and revelation” for loved ones, connecting the healing nature of such ghosts with therapeutic coping and overcoming

trauma (Kwilecki 102). Many of Camille's own scars stem from the death of her younger sister, who appears frequently in brief flashbacks and hallucinations, and functions as an after-death communicator.

Alternatively, vengeful spirits are aggressive ghosts that seek retribution through haunting, and unlike ADCs, are a paranormal punishment for the living. In their research examining auditory hallucinations in patients diagnosed with schizophrenia, Paul Chadwick and Max Birchwood categorize vengeful spirits as powerful, authoritative voices. "Cognitive Therapy for Voices" posits that patients "may be terrified of the voice and comply with its command to harm" if it belongs to a vengeful spirit, however, patients may not experience these thoughts if the voice is "believed to be self-generated" (73). Birchwood and Chadwick's research implies that the desire to harm stems from a perceived spirit, countering the therapeutic construction of ghosts and scars and positioning self-harm as malicious. In *Sharp Objects*, Camille Preaker self-harms to cope with intense childhood trauma, but the cutting also aligns with her other self-destructive actions—binge drinking and forced isolation, for example. Adora Crellin, Camille's harsh, gas-lighting mother, believes that Camille self-harms "out of spite," further affirming the connection between self-punishment and the angry, hurtful actions of vengeful spirits ("Closer," episode five, 15:25).

In addition to benevolent and malevolent spirits, ghosts function as supernatural messengers. These apparitions haunt people to convey information and meaning, be it an important memory or an expression of strong emotions. Like after-death communications, messenger ghosts return from death to commune with the living, however, their messages are more associated with an expression of pain than comfort. These ghosts with unfinished business seek recognition of suffering and remain in the mortal world as a form of punishment, both of which factor into motivations for self-harm. Marilee Strong studies the impactful messages of self-harm in *A Bright Red Scream: Self-Mutilation and the Language of Pain*. One of Strong's interviewees not only wrote "reams of morbid poetry" and a "first and final suicide letter" to share her message of internal suffering, but she also externalized that message by "carv[ing] words and pictures into her arms and legs" (Strong 5). The linguistic component of the interviewee's pain is parallel to Camille's own self-harm, which appears as words and phrases scarred across the majority of her body:

I am a cutter, you see. Also a snipper, a slicer, a carver, a jabber. I am a very special case. I have a purpose. My skin, you see, screams. It's covered with words—cook, cupcake, kitty, curls— as if a knife-wielding first-grader learned to write on my flesh. I sometimes, but only sometimes, laugh. Getting out of the bath and seeing, out

of the corner of my eye, down the side of a leg: babydoll. Pull on a sweater and, in a flash of my wrist: harmful. (Flynn 60)

Self-harm is a language of pain—quite literally for Camille and Strong’s interviewee—and the resulting scars lingering on the individual’s skin serve as ghostly reminders of the past. Scars, like ghosts, act as messengers of residual trauma, haunting the body by preserving elements of suffering, and in the case of these two women, depicting causes or direct connections to trauma. Flynn’s novel presents literal words and first-person narration to brutally describe Camille’s scars, and “instead of voiceover, [the show] uses its own visual language involving flashbacks and hallucinations to clue the viewer into what’s really going on inside Camille’s head” (Puc). This television adaptation focuses on the visual language of scars to convey Camille’s emotions, which helps readers understand her dark personality and haunted past. Viewers may not initially realize that Camille self-harms, making the ultimate reveal at the end of “Vanish,” episode one, more shocking and uncanny.

Ultimately, recognizing humanity in self-harm and the supernatural is the most important consideration when positioning scars as ghosts. Both scars and ghosts are rooted in uncanny emotions and can both repulse and intrigue people, but the humanity of individuals struggling with self-harm is often stripped away, like the past lives of ghosts, and forgotten in the shocking fascination with self-harm. Though visualizing scars may cause discomfort, the person bearing such scars deserves empathy for surviving the hauntings of their past. *Sharp Objects* captures this understanding, endearing the audience with Camille’s strength and passion to remind viewers that she is more than just her ghosts. Vallée preserves and emphasizes Camille’s inherent value so that viewers “still care for her because there’s something about her that is so human; her humanity is deeply moving” (Vallée 3:57-4:02).

### **Femme Fairytale vs Trauma Trope: Women, Self-Harm, and the Supernatural**

Patriarchal society marginalizes women as a form of oppression, stripping away female agency and value, and perpetuating the cultural haunting of sexism. Through *Sharp Objects*, Flynn draws attention to the jarring psychological and sociocultural connections linking women to self-violence and the supernatural, which appear not only in the dramatization of mental health struggles, but as modern adaptations to centuries-old tropes. The scarred words across Camille’s body are “often feminine in a Dick and Jane, pink vs. puppy dog tails sort of way,” which immediately associates femininity with self-violence, a connection present in centuries of literature (Flynn

60). In his essay, “The Uncanny,” Freud elaborates on the concept of doubling and doppelgängers, drawing from Otto Rank’s research on doubling as exemplified by “reflections in mirrors, with shadows, [and] guardian spirits” (Freud 9). Freud fails to address the biologically female practice of doubling through pregnancy and birth, and his conception of the double’s function establishes women as uncanny by association, since reproduction is essentially “preservation against extinction” (Freud 9). To further darken the psychological perception of women, Freud theorized that people with the ability to double are omens of death, further solidifying the links between women and self-harm, as well as self-harm and ghosts. In *Sharp Objects*, trauma is rooted in the familial connections of women, meaning that Adora’s own doubling in giving birth to Camille, Marianne, and Amma connects the women to uncanniness, which explains how each of them embodies elements of the supernatural through mental illness or death.

Society, as well as *Sharp Objects*, associates teenage girls with self-harm, which is attributed to the uncanny perception of women and of scars. Not only do girls and young women grow up amidst the haunting effects of gendered oppression, but they also endure marginalization and othering if their mental and emotional states are deemed too weak, or stereotypically feminine. In her article, “Resistant Rituals: Self-Mutilation and the Female Adolescent Body in Fairy Tales and Young Adult Fiction,” Cheryl Cowdy associates femininity and youth with violence toward the self.

‘Cutting’ in particular is an activity that is generally associated with troubled female adolescents. In psychiatric discourse, it has conventionally been treated as pathologically destructive behaviour. (Cowdy 42)

In the *Sharp Objects* miniseries, Camille befriends a fellow self-harmer at a rehab center, and the younger girl describes cutting as “something you grow out of” (“Fix,” episode three, 14:53). Camille’s scars and self-destruction, however, continue to haunt her body, reappearing in triggering times of trauma and depression. In the novel, Flynn connects horror and physical suffering with teenage girls, particularly through the continued fixation on the pornographic hunting shed, a shack where “pink flesh dangled from strings,” “the first floor was rusted with blood,” and “the walls were covered with photographs of naked women” (Flynn 14-5). Teenage Camille, along with Amma, Anne, and Natalie, visited the grotesque cabin, connecting young women with horrific depictions of trauma, a significant theme for both the novel and the miniseries.

Literature and film frequently subject women to violence to give male characters a reason to fight or to drive the plot of the story forward, as seen in *Sharp Objects*. This trope especially appears in the horror genre, where women either die to catalyze the male protagonist’s character arc or appear as ghosts themselves. *Sharp Objects* focuses on female stories—the inciting

incident involves the death of a little girl, and dead little girls continue to push the plot forward thereafter, frequently reappearing in flashbacks reminiscent of ghosts. Gillian Flynn and Marti Noxon's involvement in writing for the show gives the story more female agency, which subverts this patriarchal storytelling trope.

Centering a story on women's trauma without exploiting it for the betterment of men is desperately needed in media, and for the most part, *Sharp Objects* is careful not to exploit trauma for the sake of sensationalizing character development (Puc).

In a male-dominated society, the "dying women" trope is so ubiquitous that it has become ingrained in our storytelling culture and remained so for centuries. In her 2018 article "*Sharp Objects* and Damaged Women," *New York Review of Books* editor Liza Batkin argues that "Gillian Flynn's mission to create disturbed or disturbing female characters is certainly less innovative than it felt to the author twelve years ago"—the span of years between publication of the novel and the miniseries release. Nonetheless, Flynn's own interpretation of the story is rooted in horror and femininity:

In an interview for *Entertainment Weekly*, she explained that, to her, "*Sharp Objects* was a character study hidden inside of a mystery"; but for *Rolling Stone*, she described the show as "largely a feminist fairy tale"—a genre not particularly well-known for its searing psychological portraits. (Batkin)

In terms of female-centric storytelling, fairytales provide the most widespread representation of women as otherworldly, and according to Batkin's analysis, vapid. Though culturally significant, these fairytales have haunted women both with attachments to physical suffering and societal notions of expected femininity. Socioculturally, women are rooted in self violence and the paranormal through fairy tales. Society conditions girls with stories of magic and mystery, both of which revolve around unfamiliarity and only differ from the uncanny by a positive connotation. Cowdy analyzes Grimm fairy tales, narratives of magical horror, as well as the values they teach to young women, exposing the dark, uncanny undertones of stories believed to be frivolous and feminine.

Taking "Cinderella" and "The Little Mermaid" as representative texts in children's culture, I argue that self-mutilation functions as an act of self-sacrifice to romantic hetero-normative narratives, expressing the violent demands patriarchal culture can require of the young woman as she takes her place in the competitive market of marriage... [Modern depictions of self-harm push for the understanding of] violence

and for agency in self-mutilative acts, graphically communicating young women's resistance to the symbolic demands revealed in the fairy tales. These contemporary representations of self-mutilation continue the critical work of the fairy tales, transferring the locus of pathology from the expressive female adolescent body to the diseased communal social body. (44–45)

As presented in fairy tales, the dichotomy of supernatural womanhood and perfect femininity is a clear theme throughout *Sharp Objects*. Flynn's use of fairy tale tropes further establishes women as otherworldly and horrific, a connection that haunts her characters as well as the women consuming her story. The miniseries visually juxtaposes Camille, the embodiment of ghostly trauma, and her half-sister Amma, exemplifying picturesque innocence by day, and teenage rebellion by night. Camille covers her scars to hide her personal haunting, and her wardrobe of long sleeves and dark colors establishes her as an edgy, un-feminine woman, whereas Amma, either clad in childish dresses and bows, or crop tops and short-shorts, represents both ends on the spectrum of feminine presentation. Contrasting these characters establishes women as either supernatural and unwomanly, or hyper-feminine, which furthers the cultural haunting of negative stereotypes surrounding women. *Sharp Objects* blurs this dichotomy with its revelation that Amma murdered the two girls in Wind Gap, subverting the preconceived notion of stereotypical femininity's docile and innocent nature and implying that women are supernaturally much more powerful and rooted in the horrors of original fairy tales than expected. The miniseries asserts that violent female narratives do not need to be solved or caused by men, challenging the societal belief that paranormal women are weaker than their male counterparts and that "women don't kill like that, that violent. Until they do" ("Cherry," episode six, 20:11-20:14).

### **Horrific Harm: Read vs. Watched Suffering**

Written and televised media provide unique opportunities to portray emotion in different ways, but the distinction becomes serious when handling triggering subject matter. Though this distinction is not directly attached to ghosts or scars, the presentation of horror and self-harm drastically alters how an audience consumes trauma, and further examination of read vs. watched trauma and its effects on readers and viewers is essential for understanding hauntings of the body. Hidden self-harm translates to the screen uniquely because of its visceral, yet secretive, nature. The limited visibility of Camille's scars plays on the horror factor of ghosts, providing a jump scare for the audience upon the first appearance. Maggie Turp's classifications for more dramatic versus less visible self-harm put Camille's case in an interesting middle ground; her self-harm,

while drastic and jarring in its nature, remains completely hidden to almost everyone she encounters, as well as the readers and viewers. According to her research in *Hidden Self-Harm: Narratives from Psychotherapy*, Turp theorizes that “high visibility manifestations of self-harm are those most often highlighted in literature, both popular and professional” (9). Though Camille herself is “a text to decipher” and “her body is covered with words that she has cut into herself,” the palimpsest translates differently on screen than on the page. The miniseries layers shots like the scars collected on her body, filling each frame with visual metaphors of literal *sharp objects*—knives and mirror glass—and “each episode in the series is named after a scar on her body” (Batkin). These tactics set apart the TV show and the novel, creating a new assemblage of discomfort, fear, and uncanny emotions brought upon by Camille’s scars.

Throughout the miniseries, Camille experiences constant flashbacks of her deceased sister, visually displayed through fast, jarring cuts and dramatic depictions of Camille’s own fearful thoughts. The jump “cuts” reflect the theme of cutting and self-harm in *Sharp Objects*, and the use of flashbacks is reminiscent of a ghost continually haunting Camille with the horrors of her past. Additionally, visualizing self-harm scars impacts people in a significantly different way than when reading descriptions of scars. The triggering images of Camille’s body covered in scars unsettles viewers and enhances the uncanny, haunted aspects of self-inflicted scars. The visual depiction allows viewers to see the blood and gore described on the novel’s pages, which amplifies uncanny feelings. From the parallelisms of Adora cutting her hand on a rosebush thorn and Camille carving lines into her skin in episode three, “Fix,” to the symbolism of Camille’s childhood room being painted red, the visuals intensify this already tense story.

The *Sharp Objects* miniseries also has the advantage of casting powerful actresses in the lead roles, allowing viewers to give well-known faces to self-harm. Amy Adams’ portrayal of Camille breathes life into the written character and her intimate flaws and struggles. The beloved actress personalizes self-harm and scars for audiences, evoking the complicated emotions people experience when a loved one, or even an acquaintance, is visibly in pain. Flynn herself believes Amy Adams perfectly balances Camille’s air of mysterious beauty and her dark strength.

She has this angelic outer-coating in a way. She has this angelic voice, and she’s, um, you know, so lovely to look at. But she has what I call grit. She does what she says she’s going to do, she has this inner-strength and toughness. She has this spine of steel, and that’s who Camille is. (Flynn, “Gillian” 0:50-1:16)

The culmination of each of these filmic features points to the more serious consideration that visually graphic content is often more triggering than written depictions of horror and self-harm. A clear indicator of this difference is apparent in that the *Sharp Objects* series includes a public-service announcement reading: “If you or someone you know struggles with self-harm of substance abuse, please seek help by contacting the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration,” with provided phone numbers at the end of each episode, whereas the novel features no such acknowledgement of the real hauntings people face. Similarly, the HBO *Sharp Objects* page uses a resources tab listing organizations and services that help individuals cope with self-harm, substance abuse, and sexual violence, proving the real-world severity of themes throughout the story. For many people, reading the novel and watching the series evoke drastically different reactions.

Watching this series, especially as a recovered cutter, is hard. Initially, I was revolted by [the end of “Vanish,” episode one]. However, after some reflection, I conceded that this moment is as close to the matter-of-fact declaration Camille makes about being a cutter in the novel... I can’t say that *Sharp Objects* portrays these issues responsibly, because there are some jarring directorial decisions that left me having to pause and catch my breath, even having read the novel just months ago. But I can say that the series is very focused on portraying the complexities of recovery, not just for Camille but for everyone in Wind Gap. (Puc)

### **Seance of Significance: The Cultural Impact of Haunted Bodies**

In addition to providing a gripping tale of murder, familial drama, and feminism, the *Sharp Objects* novel and television miniseries bring a widely ignored, yet vitally relevant, issue to the forefront of entertainment. Through connecting scars to the supernatural, Flynn made the complex and taboo topic of self-harm more digestible for readers by presenting the subject as a mystery-horror, a genre in great demand for modern readers and TV watchers. Mediatized hauntings not only provide adrenaline-pumping entertainment, but also an escape from reality and a cultural catharsis—both of which are motivations for self-harm. A more empathetic analysis of trauma and self-harm in the media helps readers and viewers understand the importance of respect and care for haunted individuals, using Camille as an example of how humanity is masked by pain, but can emerge with proper love and compassion, much like how ghosts are released into the beyond after communicating their messages of unfinished business.

It is often easier to designate scars as frightening manifestations of trauma and avoid interacting with, or even looking at, scarred individuals out of discomfort, but much like ghosts, scars tell stories that must be heard and understood before they fade. Though the depiction of scars as ghosts creates an intriguing extended metaphor and draws in readers and viewers with the uncanny promise of horror and human suffering, the positioning of self-harm as a haunting is both poetically accurate and socially destructive. If society and the media continue to dramatize self-harm and paint mental health struggles in a grim, supernatural light, then we can never fully accept those who have suffered and embrace them with compassion. As is the trope in many ghost stories, acceptance and empathy help spirits pass on to achieve peace, which requires a change in depictions of scars in the media. Flynn's *Sharp Objects* portrayal of self-harm and scars as ghosts is not perfect, but the representation and social discussion it prompted are steps on the right path. Though we feel haunted by our scars, the understanding and acceptance of those around us lightens the load, so that one day, we might be able to free our spirits.

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