Ex-orbiting the Canon: Neo-Gothic and the Contemporary Reassessment of Monstrosity

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IN *CIVILIZATION and Its Discontents*, Freud's argument delves into the notion that despite man's purported attainment of a quasi-divine condition, despite enhancing his bodily potential through an array of prosthetic devices made possible by scientific and technological progress, civilization works ambivalently to endlessly postpone, while also perpetually inciting, man's urge to overcome the limits of corporeality and approximate the likeness of a god. Technology, Freud implies, is fraught with ambiguity because it paradoxically undermines, while fuelling, man's drive to exponentially increase the means of re-morphing himself within the framework of what cultural analysts today hail as the "posthuman" condition: "Man has become, so to speak, a god with artificial limbs. He is quite impressive when he dons all his auxiliary organs, but they have not become part of him and still give a good deal of trouble on occasion... Distant ages will bring new and probably unimaginable advances in this field of civilization and so enhance his god-like nature. But... modern man does not feel happy with his god-like nature."[1]

This diagnosis of man's uncanny relation with techno-scientific advancement, which constantly de-familiarizes and re-familiarizes us with the mutable boundaries or, say, interfaces between biology and technology, is quite relevant for the cultural anxieties humanity is facing on the cusp of the new millennium, on account of the impact exerted by biotechnology, biorobotics, genetic engineering, reproductive technologies or cybernetics. The *Transhumanist Declaration* adopted by the Oxford-based Humanity+ Organization in 2009 emphasizes, for instance, the necessity to address, in ethically responsible terms, the challenges brought by the technologically-assisted emergence of the "posthuman:" the human, it is implied, is but a provisional, intermediate stage in the evolution towards a trans- and, eventually, post-human enhancement of the species' intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities *via* the new technologies.[2] And yet, despite the confidence exhibited by the advocates of transhumanism in maximizing human potential through technology-assisted procedures, their manifesto betrays an undercurrent of fear and wariness directed at the abuses and misuses of science that is fully in tune with the pithy verdict whereby "[w]e live in Gothic times."[3]A distinctly apocalyptic entrenchment of Gothic as a dominant sensibility of contemporaneity is also espoused by Patrick McGrath

and Bradford Morrow, who notice that "[t]he prospect of apocalypse—through human science rather than divine intervention—has redefined the contemporary psyche."[4] Similarly, for Timothy Beal, today's is an "ever-expanding culture of horror,"[5] while for critics like Allan Lloyd Smith, New Gothic, which has turned from a marginal genre to one of the chief modes of the popular contemporary imaginary, conspicuously emphasizes the horrific side of the Radcliffean terror *versus* horror divide: "the literary declension of terror is an inevitable response to the atrocity exhibition of the twentieth century."[6]

Literary Gothic tends to be defined as an "instrumental genre, reemerging cyclically, at periods of cultural stress, to negotiate the anxieties that accompany social and epistemological transformations and crises:" in Western modernity, it is argued, turns of the century inevitably create such ominous uncertainties that can best be accommodated and resolved within narratives of monstrosity encrypting fears of decadence, millenarianism, apocalypse, revolution, annihilation.[7] Whether "Postmodern Gothic," "Neogothic" or "Aftergothic" can be seen as the most recent resurgence of Gothic or not, it is perhaps undeniable that figurations of Gothicism permeate, indeed, the culture of late modernity. As Botting and Townshend suggest, the prospect of genetically modified organisms triggers dystopian anxieties regarding the nefarious potential of science deployed towards uncontrollable, monstrous results. The artificial sublimity of virtual environments and computer-generated worlds, prosthetic devices, media networks and biotechnological enhancements signal the proximity of the moment when nostalgic reveries about the human will have been surpassed.[8] And still, while this may well outline the posthuman body as an avatar of "the *bad* body of Gothic—monstrous, mutilated, libidinal,"[9] a contingent, supplementary drive towards reconsidering the progressively thinner, fragile opposition between human and monster seems firmly under way. Figuring transitional states on a continuum towards a posthuman technological dimension, post-Frankensteinian monsters ambivalently connote both the promise and the nightmare of science. Whereas the monsters of traditional Gothic signaled disruptive excess, the gradual elision of the divide between the monstrous and the human in contemporaneity entails monstrosity becoming entrenched in the quotidian. Within the contemporary reappraisal of Gothic monstrosity, the "repressive" gives way to an "expressive" regime through which the monsters of yore, in effect othered and monstrified within diverse systems of power/knowledge, are granted a voice in which they utter forth their own narratives of identity.

The most significant transvaluation registered by the Gothic insofar as representations of monstrosity are concerned is that Gothic narratives either no longer resort to cleansing rites destined to destroy monsters as the bearers of haunting fears and self-shattering anxieties or question the legitimacy of purgation practices: "within postmodern Gothic we no longer attempt to identify the monster and fix the terms of his/her deformity, rather postmodern Gothic warns us to be suspicious of monster hunters, monster makers, and above all, discourses invested in purity and innocence."[10] In Angela Carter's account, "sub-literary" genres like Gothic tales or tales of terror, once relegated to the cultural margins, have started to contest the dominance allotted to their canonized counterparts and contemporary Gothicism retains a "singular moral function—that of provoking unease."[11] Indeed, alternative renditions of classical Gothic patterns (Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* scrutinizing the discursive constructedness of the monstrous mad woman in the attic from Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, or Emma Tennant's *Two Women of London*, 1989,

reworking the Jekyll-Hyde conundrum of the duplicitous self) evince a self-reflexive indebtedness to their Gothic precursors, while deliberately compromising the authority of their master texts and critiquing the ambivalent dynamics of the expulsion and assimilation, vilification and celebration of monstrified others.

In such narratives, the much-vaunted "posthuman condition" has become a shorthand metaphor for the relinquishment of what Elaine L. Graham calls the "ontological hygiene" that once held in place distinctions between the organic and technological, the natural and the artefactual, the human and the non-human.[12] Previous taxonomic attempts at subduing monstrosity's contaminating, contagious threat may have collapsed in a paratactic serialization and accommodation of teratical abnormality alongside humanity, and this provides ample scope for contemporary post-Frankensteinian figurations of otherness—in the works of writers like Angela Carter, Salman Rushdie, A. S. Byatt, Martin Amis, Marina Warner or Alasdair Gray—to project monsters as transitional states on a continuum towards a post-human bodily dimension, liminally and fluidly coalescing nature and technology, selfhood and otherness, maleness and femaleness into a portentous, yet also felicitous trope of humanity's future. Post-Frankensteinian monsters (such as the post-apocalyptic mutants of Einstein's legacy in Martin Amis' short stories and the monstrously birthed progeny from Gray's narrative) figure as transitional states on a continuum towards a post-human technological dimension, and in their transgenic, transgender, transgressive comingling of self and otherness, they exemplify a significant breakthrough registered by the new Gothic, which tends to project aberrant deviations from bodily norms—*via* pollution, boundary transgression, denaturalization, cross-generic hybridization—as means of redefining the human through the nonhuman, the subhuman or the abhuman.

In terms of the representational strategy adopted by these narratives of monsters, the main discursive paradigms of monstrosity (prodigy, *lusus naturae*, wonder, abnormality) may be parodically exhumed, jocularly invoked, forcefully overlapped, distended, reenergized, reversed or hybridized in carnivalesque manner. Furthermore, to these historically entrenched paradigms of interpreting monstrous bodies is added, in Frankenstein's footsteps, "cybernetic teratology," an umbrella term used by Rosi Braidotti to encompass both the deliberate making of new monsters via surgical or bio-genetic techniques and the unintended proliferation, in the post-nuclear age, of monstrous corporeal formations/deformations, given the "effects of toxicity and environmental pollution."[13]

Indeed, this "post-nuclear sensibility"[14] may be one of the reasons why works like Martin Amis's *Einstein's Monsters,* Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains,* or Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* explore the contemporary imaginary of monstrosity suggesting that the teleological perfection/normalization of the human through scientific and technological advancement is chimerical and that, instead, we have already embarked upon our "posthuman future," welcoming the monstrous arrivant that Derrida talks about.[15] In particular, Martin Amis's *Einstein's Monsters* (1987) projects a post-apocalyptic world saturated with images of monstrosity which condense anxieties about the untenable ("unthinkable") prospect of humanity contemplating its own demise.[16] The Author's Note and his Introduction, entitled "Thinkability," clarify the titular referent of the short-story collection: Einstein's monsters are, indeed, nuclear weapons, the man-made means of performing the unthinkable, i.e. annihilating planetary life. At the same time, Einstein's monsters are also ourselves, the monstrous progenitors of such monstrous progeny: "We are Einstein's monsters, not fully human, not for now."[17]

Implicit in this assessment of scientific creation as monstrous begetting, which enmeshes procreator and procreated in a self-cancelling de-creational or un-creational dyad, is the intertextual reference to Frankenstein's monster, similarly produced out of a Promethean overreaching desire to advance science and usurp nature from its generational course. Frankenstein nominally grafts together the creature's and its creator's identities as, perhaps, "antithetical halves of a single being."[18] Einstein's monsters comprise both nuclear weapons and the infantile humanity which has irresponsibly toyed them into existence. While the "demoniacal corpse"[19] to which Frankenstein gave life was a hybrid body, a somatic conglomerate sutured from pieces scavenged in dissecting rooms and mortuaries, rendering his progeny a community of corpses, Einstein's legacy has produced a dissolving post-human social body, afflicted by epidemics like mutation, debilitation or the "time disease." Another epidemic plaguing mankind, alongside simulated life, pollution, or cancer, is the self-delusion of immortality, which allows the narrator of the short story entitled "The Immortals" to bitterly celebrate his surviving nuclear apocalypse in Tokyo 2045 amidst a dying community of the last, spectral, "dust people." Amis conducts, in effect, a post-Frankensteinian ethical interrogation of the teratogenic potential of science: if Frankenstein's bringing a monster to life entailed the death of his kin and close acquaintances, the birthing of bombs as babies may secure the extinction of the entire human species: "One is not referring here to the babies who will die but to the babies who will never be born, those that are queuing up in spectral rays until the end of time."[20]

The sole narrative framework under which humanity's future may still be contemplated as a possibility is that of the fairy tale. Amis projects such a dystopian future in "The Little Puppy That Could," which adopts a fairy-tale pattern, grafted on a tale of metamorphosis featuring the beastly groom motif : here, a little puppy—presumably the last innocent human—undergoes a rite of passage, of initiation into a manhood now long lost to a debilitated humanity. It also performs a heroic deed, salvaging the village community from the voracious depredation of a mutant gigantic dog which, in a post-apocalyptic state of affairs, devours the villagers, acting thus as the great "Natural Selector" who is worshipped and abhorred as an evil totemic deity. The dog features natural and artificial characteristics (it sports an excessively shiny, synthetic-looking coat like rayon or lurex); its monstrosity ensues not only from its dietary abnormality (it feeds exclusively on humans and its crimson saliva hosts, in symbiotic arrangement, venomous parasites), but also from corporeal excess: instead of a tail, it sports a talon-ending extra limb, displaying a farrago of crossovers between the canine, avian, and reptilian genera. The implication is that the dog stands for humanity gone awry and cannibalizing upon itself: an obvious literary precedent might be the self-imploding body politic divided between the feeble Eloi and the homophagous Morlocks in H. G. Well's *The Time Machine*. While the dog's body ritualistically incorporates otherness, bursting the notion of "autonomous selfhood" at the seams, its human victims exhibit a similar destabilization of the corporeal frontiers that might ensure the consistency and boundedness of the embodied self: genetically scarred, the villagers' freakish corporeality traverses the human and animal genera (there are beakmen and wingwomen, furred or shelled or slippery beings) or those between the genders, forfeiting humanity's chance at self-regeneration (women are flat-chested and men are emasculated) and entrapping all living creatures into a chaos of morphic mutability.

In post-nuclear conflagration times, in post-history that is, the planetary condition is one of protracted liminality, since not only the puppy/man, but all life forms are

monstrously suspended in a state of categorical disarray, caught, as it were, "betwixt and between:" in the absence of the "genetic policemen" who once managed to enforce species boundaries, the living world has forfeited its "essential oneness," as one of the characters remarks, and revels in the pollution of all generic limits, hybridization becoming frantic nature's creative principle of choice and producing bleeding, sanguinary plants, "multipedic hyenas" or "doubledecker superworms," "creatures that limped and flapped in strange crevices between the old kingdoms, half fauna half flora, half insect half reptile, half bird half fish... Many human beings, too, were mildly dismayed to find themselves traveling backward down their evolutionary flarepaths—or, worse, sideways, into some uncharted humiliation of webs and pouches, of trotters and beaks."[21]

Harbingers of the peril of non-differentiation, monsters border the demesnes of what Mary Douglas calls "interstitial" formlessness and what Victor Turner stipulates as the "liminal" chasm gorging up between fixed states.[22] In both these cultural anthropologists' works, monstrous anomaly and the reflexive operations it elicits are co-opted in the liminal interplay between the articulate and the inarticulate, or between form and formlessness, between ritual death and ritual rebirth. By ritualistically outwitting and defeating the monstrous hound, the "little puppy that could" assists the community to precipitate its exit from the liminal stage and relieve itself from its Turnerian "modes of affliction," retrieving or, perhaps, pursuing its own humanity. Thus, the puppy's transformation into a heroic man who scrutinizes, at the end of the narrative, the horizon by the side of his beloved female, Andromeda, generates an—admittedly—fabulous promise, consistent with the make-belief mode of the fairy tale, that all sense of hope may not be lost for mankind, that Einstein's monsters may eventually be subdued both within and without. Still, in this particular short story, monstrosity, which has traditionally been seen as the counterpart of man, the deviant element that needs to be eliminated so as to reinforce the anthropomorphic norm, remains incorporated at the very core of humanity: despite his metamorphosis, the hero's own residual bestial nature is undeniable, and his and Andromeda's presumably re-humanized progeny will populate the earth side by side, paratactically, that is, with the plethora of hybrids the uses and abuses of science have unleashed.

Glaswegian artist-novelist Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992) also rewrites the Shelleyan narrative of a monstrous birth with a double twist: this time it is a female progeny who is created by a Pygmalion-Frankenstein scientist and she is also granted the nurture that was denied to the Frankensteinian monster by its parent. The novel places the alleged surgical revivification of a nineteenth-century female suicide, Victoria Blessington (reborn as Bella Baxter), at the nexus of competing discourses on bio-technological generation. The narrative parodically accommodates a sundry assortment of verbal and graphic testimonies to the authenticity (or inauthenticity, for that matter) of a monstrous parturition: "in the final week of February 1881, at 18 Park Circus, Glasgow, a surgical genius used human remains to create a twenty-five-year-old woman."[23] While this birthing account forms the mainstay of Archibald Candless's quasi-autobiographical novel, the manufacturing of a human being from the body of a young woman and the brain of her unborn female fetus is severely denounced as a fabrication in the counter-authoritative, post-scripted letter addressed by the Bella McCandless M.D. to her surviving descendants.

Candless alias Gray's post-Gothic narrative is innervated by creationist imagery: *poietic* and *corporeal*, the making of the novel and the making of Bella Baxter reverently acknowl-

edge, while undermining, the divine authority of an omnipotent God-author/God-creator figure: several chapters in the "Table of Contents" bear the word "Making" in their titles. Baxter's scalpel-and-needle *ars combinatoria* operates on an oxymoronic logic of conceit, yoking together symmetrical opposites and even forging an unnatural alliance between incompatible anatomical strata. Thus, in the two rabbits Baxter dissects and re-stitches together, forming black-and white, male-and-female hybrids, the prevalent areas of corporeal manipulation are skin surface and the genitalia, the traditional loci of monstrous deformity. Baxter's experimental mutations strike a similar note with Camille Dareste's embryological methods of teratogenic alterations through developmental arrest; the freakish rabbits are artificially engendered through surgical procedures uncannily similar to Frankenstein's own suturing of charnel-house human remains. What translates the "little beasts" from normal works of nature into freakish works of art is the mechanical precision of the surgical cut, the clearly delineated epidermal ridge detectible beneath the line neatly dividing black from white fur. This permutational art, whereby somatic wholes are sectioned into upper and lower halves, and then reassembled through an upside-down reversal technique, counters natural laws of biological evolution also because it can be restaged, overturned, carried on indefinitely. Baxter's first dabble at usurping nature's birthing prerogatives betrays his Faustian damnability, since the artefactual rabbits, Mopsy and Flopsy, appear, in the wake of their reciprocal grafting, to have lost their reproductive instincts. Their sex drive can easily be retrieved *via* Baxter's restitution of their properly formed bodies, through a similar enforcement of his quasi-divine powers of bestowing life after death. Possibilities loom large for Baxter; like Frankenstein, he envisages pursuing his "morbid science" and applying his regenerative techniques to the entire body politic, replacing "the diseased hearts of the rich" with "the healthy hearts of the poorer folk."[24]

Freud's cautionary remark, from his aforecited study, about man's emulation of the gods sounds an uncanny note in the Frankensteinian resurrection of Victoria *qua* Bella by Godwin Bysshe Baxter, the "monstrous doctor" whose vivisectionist experiments and empirical studies of procreation lead him to perfect the art of prosthetic surgery or the substitution of impaired body parts by artificial fixtures, which was initiated by Colin Baxter, his illustrious predecessor. Allowing otherness to move through bodies, Baxter, whose forenames play on Mary Shelley's burden of allegiance to William Godwin, her father, and Percy Bysshe Shelley, her husband, appears himself as the grotesque result of his own scientist-father's laboratory experiment in parthenogenesis.

Godwin Baxter framebreaks the ontological boundaries between Gray's After-Gothic narrative and its Shelleyan predecessor. The cultural history of *Frankenstein*, which merged both monster and its creator under the same titular appellative, is now literalized in the assumption that Baxter himself incorporates the same unstable assembly of organs that the Genevan natural scientist had patched together in his monstrous progeny. Baxter's body is hideously grotesque not only in its outward appearance but also in its failure to sustain organically the working of its innards and to maintain the cleanness of his body boundaries, admixing his own bodily wastes in the artificially concocted digestive juices he ingests.

As for Bella Baxter, her reconstructed identity through a topsy-turvy confusion of upper and lower, inside and outside (the transference of her womb contents to the cavity of her skull, in a matter-over-mind seditious upheaval orchestrated by Baxter), permits only a grotesque instantiation of what Huet calls the "order of monstrous similitude."[25]

Bella's monstrosity derives from the disparity between her sumptuous beauty and her mental patchiness, in an instantiation of monstrous heterogeneity, of the compositeness reminiscent of mythological monsters and their disparate anatomies. Bella is also monstrous in that anatomically she is half-mother, half-daughter: by having her physiological make-up completely perturbed, Bella will embark on a psychological development where her newly implanted brain will nonetheless preserve traces of her corporeal constitution as a sexed, female individual. It is the case, perhaps, of a reinforcement, *via* an ambivalent Gothic strategy of anxiety inflation and deflation, of the *fin-de-siècle* destabilizing figure of emancipated womanhood. At the same time, Bella's horrific remaking speaks large about contemporary anxieties related to the dismantling and demolishment of the human subject, whose bodily boundaries are violated, shattering the corporeal foundations of identity.[26] On the one hand, her "bodily ambiguation" is resonant with the much-clamored postmodern fragmentation of human identity as well as with its refiguration of bodily forms in ways that that embrace pluralism, comingling and confusion. On the other hand, the monstrosity displayed as spectacle in the body-horror scene where Bella's body is surgically made to accommodate the brain of her unborn baby may assist one to envision post-human identity materializing somehow in the domain of the abjected outsidedness of corporeal normativity. Baxter's reconstructive surgery of Bella entwines a technological refashioning of her body and a morphing of her psychological cast under the clinician's gaze. Bella's corporeal identity is dependent upon her internalization of the image of her fractured and re-aggregated body, which is literally re-inscribed by the hands of her maker and then immersed in a network of surveillance and confession corresponding to her accelerated psychic growth process under Baxter's guardianship.

Lodged in the context of nineteenth-century scientific debates on evolutionism as a series of contiguous, gradual changes or as leaps marked by big catastrophic events, this narrative of displaced maternal origins is a parodic reinstantiation of the Shelleyan myth, as well as a story of fractured descent, coalescing contemporary anxieties related to denatured technologies of reproduction. Like in the Shelleyan master narrative, in Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things*, monstrosity pertains not so much to the misbegotten creature, but to its monstrous begetter, for all his likeness to a god.

In traditional Gothic narratives, representations of monstrosity hover between two tendencies: a "spectralizing" propensity in the so-called terror-Gothic (disembodied ghosts, veiled portraits or specters)[27] or a "corporealizing" inclination, primarily sanctioned by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, where the body becomes a surface for the inscription of monstrosity. As seen in the two works analyzed here, within contemporary Gothic, a similar ambivalent drive towards either the spectralization or the corporealization of monstrosity makes itself felt.[28] Given, on the one hand, a fading belief in the counterfeit nature of representation, monstrosity may become understood, in Frankensteinian manner, as a manufacturable, mechanically reproducible simulacrum in an era of sheer simulation, in which hyperreal projections of monstrous images determine the actual re-positionings of monsters within our social practices. On the other hand, however, Gothic monstrosity still retains its potential to incarnate a range of terrors and predicaments that demand abjection, and it is within postmodernism's self-reflexive debunking of the ideological groundings of monstrifying otherness that its revisionist allegiance to the Gothic resides.

Notes

1. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2002), 29.
2. http://humanityplus.org/philosophy/transhumanist-declaration/, accessed September 14, 2012.
3. Angela Carter, *Fireworks. Nine Profane Pieces* (London: Quartet, 1974), 122.
4. Patrick McGrath & Bradford Morrow, eds., *The New Gothic: A Collection of Contemporary Gothic Fiction* (London: Random House, 1991), xiv.
5. Timothy K. Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 4.
6. Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith (eds.), *Modern Gothic. A Reader* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), 5.
7. Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body. Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5. See, for instance, Justin Edwards and Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet, eds., *The Gothic in Contemporary Literature and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2012), which examines the myriad contemporary Gothic facets as a cultural response to the age terror(ism), or Catherine Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic*, which talks about the contemporary revival and viral redistribution of Gothic narratives across the entire mass culture (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 8–12.
8. Fred Botting & Dale Townshend, eds., *Gothic: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies. Volume IV. Twentieth-Century Gothic: Our Monsters, Our Pets* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 4.
9. Terry Eagleton, *Figures of Dissent: Critical Essays on Fish, Spivak, Zizek and Others* (London and New York: Verso, 2003), 21.
10. Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows. Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 21.
11. Angela Carter, *Fireworks*, 122. In its contemporary instantiations, the New Gothic is programmatically multi-generic and records significant mutations and permutations of the stock Gothic catalogue of narrative and thematic ingredients, in an era of rapid technological acceleration and genetic experimentation. Postmodern Gothic resents purity of forms, preferring in its stead generic fragmentation and a multi-layered incorporation of parody, pastiche and citation into so-called "portmanteau" narratives, marked by excessive generic hybridity, sliding between high and low, bathos and hyperbole, abjection and sublimity. For instance, novels such as those written by Salman Rushdie or Angela Carter incorporate Gothic elements within magical realism, a narrative kind that eschews a problematization of the supernatural, barring the reader from even taking rational solutions into account. Unlike traditional Gothic, which restores and reconfirms the dominant order of things, explaining the supernatural away and dispelling the specters of unreason, the Gothic grafted within postmodernist fiction seems to refuse the re-enforcement of order and systemic coherence. For the generic characteristics of Neo-Gothic fiction, see the extensive analyses provided by Theo D'haen, "Postmodern Gothic," in *Exhibited by Candlelight. Sources and Developments in the Gothic Tradition*, ed. Valeria Tinkler-Villani and Peter Davidson (Amsterdam & Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1995), 283–294; Neil Cornwell, *The Literary Fantastic: From Gothic to Postmodernism* (London, 1990); Jerrold E. Hogle, "The Gothic at Our Turn of the Century: Our Culture of Simulation and the Return of the Body," in *The Gothic*, ed. Fred Botting (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), 154; Ian Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre, and Cultural Conflict 1764–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 36; Fred Botting, "Aftergothic: Consumption, Machines, and Black Holes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 277–298.
12. Elaine L. Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human. Monsters, Aliens and Others in Popular Culture* (Manchester University Press, 2002), 11.
13. Rosi Braidotti, "Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt: On Teratology and Embodied Difference," in *Feminist Theory and the Body. A Reader*, eds. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (New York: Routledge, 1999), 292.

14. Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses. Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 186.
15. Jacques Derrida, *Points: Interviews, 1974–1994*, trans. Peggy Kamuf et al., ed. Elizabeth Weber (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 386–387.
16. See Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, 186.
17. Martin Amis, *Einstein's Monsters* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987), ix.
18. Harold Bloom, "Introduction," in *Mary Shelley. Modern Critical Views,* ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985), 1–2.
19. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (Wordsworth Classics, 1999), 46.
20. Amis, *Einstein's Monsters,* 10–11.
21. Amis, *Einstein's Monsters,* 95.
22. Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966); Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols. Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1967).
23. Alasdair Gray, *Poor Things. Episodes from the Early Life of Archibald McCandless M.D. Scottish Public Health Officer* (London: Penguin, 1992), ix.
24. Alasdair Gray, *Poor Things*, 23.
25. Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 79.
26. See Hurley, *The Gothic Body*, 205. For an analysis of the grotesque in Gray's novel, see Cristie March, "Bella and the Beast (and a Few Dragons, Too); Alasdair Gray and the Social Resistance of the Grotesque," *Critique* 43/4 (2002): 323–346.
27. See Terry Castle, "The Spectralization of the Other in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*," in *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature*, eds. Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (London: Methuen, 1987), 231–53.
28. For an overview of "spectralization" with a bearing on Romanian literature, see Stefan Borbely, "The Diffuse Romanian Identity on the Internet," *Transylvanian Review* 19; 2 (2010), 131–138.

Abstract

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This paper examines the Gothicism saturating the postmodern imaginary and the reinstantiation of the Gothic as a literary mode; it also outlines a genealogy of monstrous corporeality in contemporary British fiction, and, in particular, in Martin Amis's *Einstein's Monsters* (1987) and Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992) with a view to answering the question whether Post-Gothic monstrosity maintains its capacity to incarnate a host of anxieties that demand abjection, or whether approaches to monstrosity have significantly altered towards embracing its promises as the future of humanity.

Keywords

Gothicism, the new Gothic, monstrosity, the posthuman condition, Martin Amis, Alasdair Gray.