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## 14 The Transatlantic Gothic

**Abstract:** The Gothic has been at the heart of transatlantic literary culture since the late eighteenth century. Marked by intermediality, commodification, and movement from the start, the Gothic circulates back and forth within Anglo-American networks of influence and counter-influence. A significant aspect of the power of the Gothic to endure and evolve has been its ability to engage with social and political issues in imaginative ways, staging political and ethical thought experiments about feminism, community, human nature, social crisis, the nature of civic attachment, and racial and class hierarchy. If the earliest Gothic was preoccupied by political subjectivity, more recent strains examine the ontological and ethical status of the human itself, with the trope of the zombie as one of the most potent figures to emerge in the contemporary Gothic toolbox.

**Key Terms:** Gothic, zombie, postcolonial, epistemology, capitalism

### 1 Introduction

As the current global surge of interest in all things Gothic has revealed, the Gothic is actually much more than a literary genre. It is an aesthetic or a mode that can invest almost any medium or aesthetic form: visual art, photography, video games, fashion, cinema, and a variety of literary forms including non-fiction. The Gothic is generally thought to have originated with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), but Walpole merely brought together a set of influences that were already permeating landscape architecture, poetry and aesthetic philosophy, and gave them a clear name and distinctly modern stamp – ironically, by pretending they were anachronistic. The first edition of his novel was published anonymously and purported to be a found manuscript – a “Gothick” story – from the eleventh century. When he revealed his ruse in the second edition of the novel, to the consternation of a literary public who had received the seemingly antiquated manuscript with favour, he inaugurated a longstanding Gothic engagement with anxieties about truth, authenticity, epistemology and the limitations of the modern subject's ability to judge. This concern with the limits and lapses of judgement within modernity lies at the heart of the Gothic aesthetic in its transatlantic development.

Although the British and American Gothic were studied as two separate strains throughout the 1980s and 1990s, with critics developing elaborate critical justifications for studying them in isolation, such a distinction was really little more than an

outgrowth of a longstanding habit of reading texts through a national lens. This habit had developed mainly for institutional and political reasons at a time when American Studies departments were establishing themselves in universities, and American literature was struggling to define itself as distinct from English literature. As a result, American texts which would now be unhesitatingly called ‘gothic’ were for many decades identified simply as ‘romances’ by Americanists (Soltysik Monnet 2005, 240). In fact, for decades, Americanists were loath to admit that American literature shared any connections with British literary culture at all. Thus, in the 1980s and 1990s, when the ‘American Gothic’ emerged as field, critics continued to drape it in exceptionalist garb and advanced various theses for why the British and American Gothic had developed in significantly different ways: Puritan history, the experience of the frontier, and most importantly, slavery and race. Although these are all important themes of the Gothic in North America, much selective attention and cherry picking has gone into constituting them as the defining features of an American Gothic genre unique unto itself.

### 2 The Transatlantic Turn

A more complete picture has begun to emerge in the last ten years as transnational, transatlantic and global approaches to the Gothic have developed. In 2005, Joel Pace edited a volume about Wordsworth's influence on American literary culture and devoted a chapter to his impact on American Gothic writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Kate Chopin, Washington Cable and Charles Chestnut. In 2008, two major studies of transatlantic literary culture including the Gothic were published: Laura Doyle's *Freedom's Empire: Race and the Rise of the Novel in Atlantic Modernity, 1640–1940*, which traced the literary transatlantic concern with race and racialism, and Bridgett Marshall's *The Transatlantic Gothic Novel and the Law, 1790–1860*, which argues that both British and American Gothic literature is profoundly shaped by anxieties about the limitations and confusions of positive law (and in particular, the system of laws that the American colonies inherited from England). In “Transatlantic Gothic,” a chapter in *Transatlantic Literary Studies 1660–1830*, Robert Miles argues that the Gothic allowed both British and American writers of the Romantic era to engage with the violence of colonial expansion. Finally, in 2013, Ellen Malenas Ledoux's *Social Reform in Gothic Writing* proposed that a transatlantic approach allows us to fully apprehend the power and impact of “Gothic writing as an agent of social change” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (2013, 6). This aspect of the Gothic – its political and cultural work – lies at the heart of its transatlantic circulation and impact.

In addition to these specific scholars and their work, new and more transnational approaches to the Gothic clustered around themes or cultural issues have assumed



prominence. For instance, Manchester University Press launched an “International Gothic” series recently, which has published volumes on topics such as ‘EcoGothic’ and ‘Globalgothic.’ While contributions to these volumes are more international than strictly transatlantic in scope, the cross-fertilizations of British, American, European and Caribbean Atlantic cultures remain at the core of this scholarship. In fact, much of the impetus for a ‘global Gothic’ perspective emerged from the rich soil of post-colonial Gothic studies, itself rooted in the complex overlaps between the violence, repressions and perversions of British colonial and American frontier experience. In addition to race and ecology, topics such as ‘War Gothic’ or ‘Gothic in the Age of Neo-liberalism’ tackle the complex imbrication of the Gothic as an aesthetic form with the history of modern warfare and capitalism. The former, for example, focuses on the fact that the Gothic emerged in the wake of the Seven Years War, the first truly global war, and developed against the backdrop of revolutionary wars in America, France and Britain, and has often developed in either direct or oblique engagement with the violence of Britain’s colonial wars, America’s Indian Wars, the Civil War, World War One, and more recently in direct response to the wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq (Hantke and Soltysik Monnet 2016). The Gothic’s concern with violated bodies and confused moral categories has made it a form that lends itself well to representing modern warfare.

Similarly, according to Monika Elbert and Bridgett Marshall, the Gothic is both haunted and propelled by a “troubled (and troubling) relationship to global capitalism” (Elbert and Marshall 2013, 5). From the start, the Gothic has interested itself in the way money dissolves human relations and values, incites villains to exploit, sequester or instrumentalize others, and exerts uncanny agency even while stripping humans of theirs. One of the International Gothic volumes at MUP thus examines the Gothic in the context of neoliberal economics, looking at how Gothic tropes and figures have emerged in recent years to engage with the social violence specific to the deregulation of markets and the commercialization of all aspects of life in the UK and the US (Blake and Soltysik Monnet 2016).

Approaches such as these have made it possible to revisit the critical consensus about the origins and cultural work of the Gothic outside of narrow national frameworks. Thus, it has been possible to complicate the assumption that British Gothic was concerned largely with shifting class structures while American Gothic was more concerned with slavery and frontier violence. A variation on this narrative maintained that the British Gothic was more concerned with society while the American was predominantly psychological (Roberts 2013, 28). Canards such as these have done little to help scholars understand the transnational reach of the Gothic aesthetic, but the new transatlantic paradigm is allowing a more complex picture of Atlantic literary culture to emerge. First, it must be recognized that America and England shared a literary culture in the eighteenth century, and that it makes little sense to trace the American Gothic to distinctly different origins than British. Moreover, these origins were transatlantic from the very start, as Leonard Tennenhouse and Nancy Armstrong

have argued in “The American Origins of the English Novel,” suggesting that the British novel was strongly influenced by the American captivity narrative, especially Mary Rowlandson’s, published in 1682. The central theme of a woman’s captivity and ordeal becomes not only the motor for much English realist fiction but the core trope of the Gothic as it develops in the hands of Walpole and then later Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis in the UK and Charles Brockden Brown and Isaac Mitchell in the US. In addition to feminist issues, the Gothic also engages with a wide range of questions concerning race, dehumanization and postcolonialism. In the following pages, I will sketch out some of the main features of this cultural work, ending with a sustained look at the development that has taken the most place in recent transatlantic Gothic culture: the zombie trope.

### 3 Cultural Work

The early Gothic performs a range of cultural work that would have been equally important on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, as Michael McKeon has argued, the eighteenth century novel was a site for thinking through the new modern instabilities in epistemological and moral judgment. The Gothic was a key instrument for engaging with such issues. Cultural relativism was a development that followed in the wake of colonial exploration and encounters with cultures such as China and the Near East as well as from the general secularization of Anglo-American culture, and the Gothic lent itself well to the anxious examination of irreconcilable worldviews and paradigms. In William Beckford’s *Vathek* (1786) this question is explicitly linked to Orientalist themes while in texts such as Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* (1791) the focus is more on religious enthusiasm and knowledge. On both sides of the Atlantic, however, Gothic writers were also questioning liberal orthodoxies about the Lockean subject as self-transparent individual – suggesting that agency and subjectivity were far more complex and unpredictable than the dominant political philosophy claimed. William Godwin’s *Things as They Are, or The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) and Charles Brockden Brown’s novels such as *Wieland* (1798), *Edgar Huntley* (1799), or *Arthur Mervyn* (1799) are often examined together in this light (cf. Roberts 2015; Marshall 2008; Davidson 1986).

One of the historical developments that is linked to the emergence of the Gothic genre as a transatlantic aesthetic formation is what historian Karen Halttunen calls “the birth of horror” (Halttunen 1998, 33–59). Citing both secularization and the rise of Enlightenment ideas about human nature, Halttunen reports a striking shift in crime narratives of the mid to late eighteenth century. In the first half of the century, crime narratives paid less attention to the crime itself than to “the course of sinfulness that had preceded it and the religious conversion that followed” (1998, 17). The murderer was not seen as a moral alien but a “common sinner” not very different

from anyone else. As the religious framework that allowed such an interpretation was replaced by Enlightenment liberalism, which did not recognize radical human evil, crime narratives began to be characterized by both a new sense of *mystery* (failure to understand the meaning and motives of violent crime) and *horror* (an attention to the details of the crime and violated bodies as well as spectators' reactions to such sights) (Halttunen 1998, 3–4). Although Halttunen is concerned mainly with true crime narratives, broadsheets and execution sermons, the cultural factors that she describes as part of an emergent “Gothic imagination” also inform Gothic fiction, which has been fascinated with complex, inscrutable and often strangely attractive villains from Walpole's *Manfred* to Thomas Harris' Hannibal Lecter. From the Romantic hero-villain to the contemporary serial killer stretches a transatlantic preoccupation with the individual who refuses any moral community and whose motives defy liberal and rational explanation. Charles Brockden Brown's novels are peopled with such characters, as is London's Dungeon Museum, a Gothic amusement park dedicated to the sense of mystery and horror aroused in equal measure by the modern murderer.

Besides a fascination with the modern criminal, the Transatlantic Gothic has demonstrated an abiding concern with the victim of injustice and in this way participated in the larger cultural movement toward the reform of social institutions that got underway at the end of the eighteenth century. On the one hand, this reform trend focused on concrete institutions such as prisons, asylums, hospitals, convents and monasteries, and on the other hand it also addressed more ideological ones such as aristocracy, arranged marriages, patriarchy and the Church. Furthermore, one of the striking characteristics of the Gothic novel as it developed on both sides of the Atlantic was the focus on female characters, both as victims and as intrepid heroines. Even in Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, much of the power of the text stemmed from the independent attitudes and actions of the two heroines, Matilda and Isabella, and this is a tradition that Ann Radcliffe developed into a veritable franchise. The American writer Charles Brockden Brown was also an early feminist, inspired by both William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, and his heroine in *Wieland* is not only the principle narrator but a courageous and resourceful young woman who survives her misadventures.

A darker strain of the Gothic has focused on the ordeals of married women under the constraints of patriarchal families, cruel husbands and the legal system of coverture (which made a woman a legal non-entity upon marriage). The early Gothic is full of such characters, but a particularly striking example is Matthew Lewis' 1803 Covent Garden melodrama *The Captive*, which featured a woman's descent into madness after being imprisoned in a private lunatic asylum by her husband. A year later, the American writer Isaac Mitchell published *The Asylum* as a serialized novel in a Poughkeepsie weekly, a story also featuring an incarcerated young woman that went on to become the most popular Gothic novel in America in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The narrative focuses on two young lovers – Alonzo and Melissa – separated by the young woman's “unfeeling father,” as the subtitle has it, who puts material concerns before his daughter's happiness. He also imprisons her in a small

Gothic castle in upstate New York against the backdrop of the Revolutionary War and later regrets his tyrannical actions when he believes she has died from the strain of the confinement. The castle is being used by Loyalist smugglers who stage a series of terrifying Gothic spectacles to scare Melissa away from their hiding place, including a ball of fire, a face with blood-red eyes, and a hand that grabs her during the night. Melissa's extraordinary presence of mind during most of these ordeals, based on her pragmatic conviction that these must be tricks played upon her by her family in order to scare her into a more tractable attitude, locate her at the heart of the tradition of strong Gothic heroines who face nocturnal misadventures with courage and resourcefulness.

Yet, for all the plucky women who survive their Gothic misadventures, there are many more who succumb to the trials inflicted upon them by their fathers, kidnappers or husbands. These include the nameless narrator of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's widely-read and taught *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), which recalls Lewis' melodrama of 1803 in that it too features a single woman's voice as she descends into madness from confinement imposed by her husband. The theme would reappear in the 1940s with the film *Gaslight* (1944) and later again with *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) as well as Margaret Atwood's dystopian fiction *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). In all these texts, the specifically Gothic insight that the home and domestic sphere are the sites of terror and constraint instead of safety for women in Anglo-American culture lies at the heart of the narrative.

## 4 Capitalist Gothic

Another issue that comes into focus more distinctly through a transatlantic perspective is the literary magazine culture that sustained and nourished the Gothic throughout the nineteenth century and was instrumental in popularizing and disseminating works by Gothicists such as Isaac Mitchell, Edgar Allan Poe, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry James (not Henry James). The career of Edgar Poe, for example, is singularly bound up with the phenomenon of the literary magazine and is one of the reasons why Poe is remembered as a short story writer rather than a poet. Working for money and paid by the word, Poe channelled his talents into what he considered the lesser but more lucrative form of short fiction. No magazine has had a more significant impact on the Gothic on both sides of the Atlantic than the Edinburgh *Blackwood's Magazine*, which was “read and discussed by everyone from Byron and Wordsworth to John Wilson Croker and the Duke of Wellington, and influenced, among others, Poe, Hawthorne, Browning, Dickens and Charlotte and Emily Brontë” (Morrison and Baldick 1995, ix). Poe's diptych “How to Write a Blackwood Article” and “A Predicament” offers a brilliant satirical glimpse into this literary culture and the instabilities of taste, class and literary value that the commercialization of literature was creating,



with the Gothic at the very heart of these anxieties. The first piece is ostensibly a non-fictional account of the advice the narrator, an ambitious working-class woman writer, receives from the editor of *Blackwood*, a Scottish journal well-known for its extreme Tory politics as well as its sensational short fiction (very much in the Poe vein). The second piece, also located in Edinburgh, is meant to represent the result of this young woman's attempt to follow the advice she has received, seeking out an extreme personal misadventure and narrating a detailed account of it while making malapropisms and generally butchering the advice through her cultural ignorance. The two pieces satirize the pretensions of the *Blackwood* editor as much as the low-class lapses of taste and culture on the part of the female writer. The fact that *Psyche Zenobia* has a black slave with her creates an odd conflation of British and American geographical and cultural space, and brings the most intransigent antebellum American political issue – slavery – into the centre of British political and philosophical thought. The young woman ends up with her head cut off by the minute-hand of a large clock, a parody of the scenarios, such as live burial – one of Poe's own favourite topics – that filled the pages of the magazine. Like all of Poe's work, the two pieces are so densely over-packed with irony that the reader can scarcely tell what or who is being satirized more than anything else. What is clear is that the certainties of artistic taste are set into ironic dialogue with ignorance and kitsch in such a way that neither side emerges untainted by the other. This too is a perennial topic that haunts the Gothic – its uncomfortable profitability, always threatening to corrupt its aesthetic credibility – from Walpole's selling of tickets to his Gothic villa Strawberry Hill to the rampant marketization of the Gothic in contemporary culture with franchises such as the *Harry Potter* or *Twilight* series.

Closely linked to issues of class and taste are more general issues of capitalism, banking and money. These concerns circulated throughout the Victorian Gothic, subtly or not so subtly haunting texts about governesses, dispossessed heirs, orphans and foundlings, as well as the new urban and sensational gothic that led to what has recently been called Naturalist Gothic. This critical lens focuses on the many late nineteenth century texts that retooled the Gothic to interrogate the social ills of quickly expanding urban centers. In the United States, one of the most popular of such writers was George Lippard, with his *The Quaker City, or Monks of Monk Hall* (1845), while in the UK the writer most associated with this kind of focus would be Charles Dickens (↗24 Dickens in America – America in Dickens). One mid-century text in particular stands out as a striking example of a Transatlantic Gothic critique of the new global economy as it creates or exacerbates significant gaps between haves and have-nots. Herman Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors" and "A Tartarus of Maids" first appeared in *Harper's Magazine* in 1855 but they would be as timely now as ever. The two sketches portray two very different worlds, separated by class, gender and an ocean, but intimately and invisibly connected by power relations and economic systems. One is a cozy London club of bachelor lawyers constantly eating and drinking, enjoying the profits they accrue by serving the business and banking sectors in

their legal capacity, drawing up contracts, deeds, bills of sale and other documents. The other world is a chilly New England paper mill, where pale frozen girls ruin their lungs and health toiling at repetitive tasks under alienating conditions to produce the paper used by the lawyers in London. They are all "maids" because the mill won't hire married women who have families to care for and would be harder to sequester in the remote mountain location of the mill. The story is heavily permeated by Gothic tropes of the uncanny and spectral, as the girls are scarcely more than ghosts, resembling the sheets of paper they produce more than anything human, and the entire mill is compared to a mechanized underworld. The specifics of the two tales are rooted in the mid-nineteenth century (using paper as the commodity that links these two sites of the transatlantic economy) but the dynamics are the same as those of the new global economy found in Free Trade Zones around the world where underpaid female workers produce electronic goods such as computers, televisions and cell phones.

## 5 Gothic Figures of Race

Another major issue at stake in the Transatlantic Gothic is race, with its subtopics of colonialism and slavery (↗20 The Slave Narrative and ↗29 Dialectics of Slavery and Servitude in Irish-Caribbean Literature). That race would be important to the Gothic of the United States is not surprising, but what is interesting is the purchase of a Gothic figure that was created by an Englishwoman on the debates and public imagination of slavery in the United States: Frankenstein's monster. And yet the novel itself – written by Mary Shelley in the summer of June 1816, scarcely a decade after the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1808 – is already permeated by the conceit of slavery and specifically the terrifying reversal of power between the master and creature. If Victor blindly makes his creature in the hope of spawning a race of superbeings who would owe him a father's gratitude, he soon finds himself literally the creature's slave, unable to control his creation or save his loved ones from its vengeful violence. The word 'slave' is used explicitly throughout the narrative, usually by Victor to refer to himself but also at least once by the creature in addressing Victor: "Slave, I have reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension [...] You are my creator, but I am your master, – obey!" (Shelley 2000 [1818], 146). This is a scenario, Elizabeth Young has demonstrated, that struck a powerful chord in the United States, as political cartoons and public discourse adopted the image of the slave as a kind of Frankenstein's monster, abject but capable of unforeseen violence and revolt – and naturally desiring a reversal of the master-slave relationship. A highly ambivalent trope, the Black Frankenstein was a racist conceit (identifying African Americans with monsters) but one that tacitly acknowledged the violence inherent in the master-slave relationship, a violence that was vehemently denied by

many defenders of slavery who attempted to characterize it as a kind of family relationship, with the master standing *in loco parentis* to the slave.

At least three distinct but related strains of the Transatlantic Gothic can be traced to this charged and ambivalent constellation of race and monstrosity: Imperial Gothic, Postcolonial and Caribbean Gothic, and the zombie. The first is a critical term originally coined by Patrick Bratlinger to describe a racist type of Gothic linked to British colonialism and recently extended to the American context by Johan Höglund. Unlike most of the other Gothic texts discussed earlier, which are often linked in some way or another to a reformist spirit, the Imperial Gothic is a distinctly conservative and even reactionary strain, embracing a highly racialized representation of monstrosity or evil and often advocating a militarized response. In Britain, a high-profile example of this strain would be Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), which casts its villain as a dark South-Eastern European Other whose predations on British people and property are both primitive and cunning. An American equivalent can be found in H. P. Lovecraft's paranoid fictions of evil cosmic beings that are worshipped by native populations around the globe in terrifying and barbaric ceremonies, as in "Call of Cthulhu" (1926). These are monsters that permit no ambivalence in readers about their utterly alien nature and designs which are indifferent or inimical to human life. They are so different from humans that no communication or contact is imaginable except through domination or death. In the story just mentioned, the narrator follows a trail of clues that includes many people driven insane or killed before discovering that abhorrent alien beings have constructed a non-Euclidean "nightmare corpse-city" island in a remote part of the Atlantic Ocean (Lovecraft 2011, 165). Although the monsters in Lovecraft's work are generally far too powerful to be successfully thwarted by military means, in many other Imperial Gothic texts this is precisely the kind of response that is needed. The point is that, unlike most Gothic monsters who oscillate morally between arousing pity and fear, the monsters of the Imperial Gothic can only be dangerous adversaries.

In contrast, the Postcolonial/Caribbean Gothic has emerged in dialectical agon with the Imperial Gothic and its racialized monsters. Frequently written by authors from former colonies such as Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana or Trinidad and Tobago, the Gothic literature of this region is quintessentially transatlantic and intensely engaged with cultural forms emanating from the US and the UK as well as local sources. In direct refutation of the racist paradigms produced by the Imperialist Gothic, the Postcolonial Gothic uses horror and haunting as tools for revisiting the violence of the imperial and colonial past, and often seeks ways to imagine moving beyond the determining structures of such powerful trauma. One such text that is exemplary in many ways of the transatlantic scope of the Caribbean Gothic is Fred D'Aguiar's *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997), which is based on the historical Zong massacre in which over a hundred Africans were thrown overboard from a slaver for the sake of collecting insurance. Historical accounts mention one sole survivor climbing back on the ship. D'Aguiar's novel imagines the event from this survivor's point of view, a literate

woman called Mintah, and the point of view of a white cook on the ship who finds her after she has climbed back aboard. Like many Gothic texts with a political and social conscience, *Feeding the Ghosts* blends historical fact with Gothic devices such as ghosts and haunting in order to remind readers of the way the past endures into the present and demands to be remembered and worked through.

## 6 Zombie Gothic

The third Gothic strain that emerges from the marriage of race and monstrosity is based on the uncanny figure of the zombie, a figure particularly well suited for revealing the transatlantic dynamics of the Gothic in literary and visual culture. A creature born of what Paul Gilroy calls "the Black Atlantic" (1993 The Black Atlantic), the zombie enters world popular culture in the 1930s, when the first Hollywood zombie films marked the end of the 15-year American military occupation of Haiti, but its heritage stretches back through the history of slavery in the New World. The first text to speak of zombies to a wide audience was William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1929), which adopted a distinctly ambivalent attitude towards native religious practices but which presented zombies as pitiful victims of some shaman's dark arts. The first zombie film, *White Zombie* (1932), is interesting insofar as it links zombification to slavery by portraying zombies as workers in a sugar mill run by a Creole villain played by Bela Lugosi. Lugosi's character is also responsible for the zombification of all the victims in the film.

A zombie film that followed closely on the heels of the first, *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943) adopts a transatlantic approach by making Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) its primary intertext, a move that deftly evokes the entire British colonial project in the West Indies. A Hammer zombie film from 1966, *Plague of the Zombies*, was largely eclipsed by George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* two years later, but the British production presciently anticipated our current association of zombies with contagion. Set in a Cornish village, the film tells the story of an English squire who has learned zombification in Haiti and now practices it on his neighbours, who seem to fall victim to a mysterious epidemic. Although Romero's *Living Dead* trilogy established the conventions for zombie films for three decades, some of the most important contributions and innovations to this genre lately have not been U.S.-based. Perhaps it is because the zombie is a highly adaptable figure freighted with metaphorical potential – mindless but meaningful in a range of ways – that it has resonated so powerfully with British and North American audiences.

The most dramatic innovation to the zombie trope in recent years has been the fast or rabid zombie. Just as the zombie genre was shuffling quietly into its grave, a jolt of speed and rage reanimated it and made it far more terrifying than before. Two films in particular can be credited with introducing this device: the British-German-French



collaboration *Resident Evil* (2002) and the British *28 Days Later* (2002). The latter film has had a particularly great impact not only because of its rabid predators but also its post-apocalyptic urban setting. In fact, both films were released in the shadow of the recent attacks on the World Trade Center and *28 Days Later* self-consciously models its deserted London on post-9/11 New York. One of the first things the main protagonist sees after waking up from a coma and wandering out of a deserted hospital into the empty London streets is a poster board where people have put up notices searching for lost loved ones, exactly as New Yorkers did in the weeks after the attacks. Although the contagion in *28 Days Later* is a strain of rabies and not technically reanimation of the dead, the film was quickly absorbed into the zombie canon when Zack Snyder's remake of Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* in 2004 used fast angry zombie modelled on Boyle's. The fast zombie became so popular an innovation that when Marc Forster adapted Max Brooks' novel *World War Z* (2006) into a film for Brad Pitt's Plan B Entertainment production company, he altered Brooks' originally slow zombie to the new faster and angrier type. Other innovations to the zombie phenomenon that have developed along thoroughly transatlantic vectors include zombie fiction, zombie satire, and the sympathetic zombie. By zombie fiction I refer to the surprisingly large groundswell of novels about zombies, some of which are even narrated by zombie protagonists, such as S. G. Browne's *Breathers* (2009) or Isaac Marion's *Warm Bodies* (2010), which was made into a commercially successful film in 2013. These novels are written by both American and British authors and range from frightening to comic and sometimes even sentimental. The zombie novel is unusual in that it grew out of a film genre rather than the other way around, but one of the ironies of the digital age is that internet publishing has stimulated a great deal of prose writing among genre fans. Some of this writing is action-oriented and military-themed, such as the *Arisen* series by British authors Glynn James and Michael Fuchs. This post-apocalyptic narrative imagines a world in which the British Isles are the last bastion of humanity after the entire globe has become infected with zombies. Survival of the species now depends on the skills of a small group of elite fighters who travel into infected Europe to find clues for a vaccine. However, many zombie novels are surprisingly literary and ambitious. For example, there is the gripping novel by Max Brooks, *World War Z* (2006), mentioned earlier, which is modelled on Studs Turkel's *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (1984), and which tells its story of a global zombie outbreak just barely survived by humanity through a set of narrators from all over the world, starting in China. There is also the freak publishing success of the 2009 literary parody by American Seth Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, which uses Austen's characters and settings but locates them in an alternative universe where zombies roam the countryside and London is a walled fortress.

Satire is another major trend in the zombie narrative and one in which transatlantic vectors of influence and inspiration have been vital. Although Romero's trilogy is itself considered satirical, British and Canadian filmmakers have now taken the lead in making satirical zombie films that manage to be both scary and witty at the

same time. *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) is probably the most famous example, though the Canadian film *Fido* (2006) – satirizing American suburbia – has also had a significant impact on the genre. *Shaun of the Dead* not only brilliantly mixes the uncanniness of real zombie cinema with hilarious comedy, its satirical take on the genre also offers a lot of insight into what audiences on both sides of the pond find appealing in the zombie as contemporary monster. One of the most memorable scenes of the film allows us to momentarily take a typical adult male underachiever (played by Simon Pegg) shuffling into his living room in the morning as a zombie, suggesting that zombies resonate for British and North American audiences because their mindlessness and unfocused hunger remind them of themselves. *Fido* takes an even more biting approach to its satire, imagining a world in which zombie have been pacified with electronic collars and transformed into an army of slaves tending to the needs to suburban Americans. The film not only suggests that white well-to-do Americans would be eager to once more have a domestic slave population, but also that contemporary suburbia is potentially a far darker place than it seems, more of a police state than a paradise.

Finally, the sympathetic zombie, which has emerged in recent years in conjunction with both satire and zombie fiction, achieves its most poignant form in the British TV series, *In the Flesh* (2013–2014), which features medically-treated zombies trying to assimilate back into society. Superficially resembling the struggles of vampires to mainstream in *True Blood*, *In the Flesh* is less about sex than the American series and more about reflecting thoughtfully on community, neoliberalism, and the power of pharmaceutical companies to shape social and political agendas. The series focuses on a teenager, Kieran Walker (Luke Newberry), who had killed himself when his best friend and lover had been forced to enlist in the army by his homophobic father and was sent to Iraq. During the zombie epidemic known as “the Rising,” Kieran had raged his home town, the fictional Roarton in Lancashire, along with other zombies, but had eventually been captured, medicated, and is being sent home to his parents when the first season begins. Tensions in the world of the series arise from Roarton being the stronghold of a local militia that had arisen to deal with the zombie outbreak in the face of an inadequate government response, and now the town remains largely hostile to the assimilation scheme. Kieran's own sister is a member of the local militia and quite sceptical about Kieran's return and still angry that he killed himself to begin with. Kieran's return home is so fraught with danger and mixed emotions that the series' audience cannot help but sympathize with the young zombie protagonist, who also happens to be tormented by remorse for his killings during his ‘untreated’ state as well as suffering from the usual anguish of gay teenagers in small towns. Although the medication he receives to treat his condition allows him to become almost human again, the procedure is painful and the pharmaceutical company is presented as having a hidden agenda – linked to profit, politics and unethical experimentation that resembles torture more than anything else – behind its façade of helping people lead ‘normal’ lives.

As can be seen from these last examples, the Gothic genre continues to stage thought experiments in ethics and political philosophy, imaginatively engaging with social and technological innovations and other cultural issues. Once studied in national isolation, now increasingly broached through international and thematic approaches, the transatlantic paradigm has become the most productive and significant framing of the Gothic aesthetic because Britain and North America have been by far the most important participants in the development of the Gothic. Much more than a genre, the Gothic is a transatlantic aesthetic mode that is woven into the very warp and woof of the Atlantic cultural economy, from the earliest texts about slavery, crime and reform, to the latest narratives about biomedical experimentation and global apocalypse.

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## Part IV Transatlantic Media Cultures