

CALL FOR PAPERS

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Neo-Gothic Hybridizations of the Imaginary

Coordinator: Giovanni Magliocco

During the 20th century and the early years of the third millennium Gothic has increased and constantly renewed its popularity in several cultural fields – literature, art and media. This spectacular cultural trend, which can be defined as the Neo-Gothic, should not be perceived as the simple “resurgence” of a genre apparently out of date, but rather as the “persistence” of Gothic throughout the 20th century, reaching the third millennium with all its magnetic and enigmatic power. Gothic forms and models cyclically, obsessively and insistently recur throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, haunting the Imaginary and its deepest recesses. As regards the Gothic tradition, this Neo-Gothic stream that strongly pervades modernity, postmodernity and contemporaneity seems to be deeply rooted in the “Decadent” Gothic of the late 19th and early 20th century (Bram Stoker, Robert Louis Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, H. G. Wells), often focusing on themes such as physical and psychical degeneration, mental alienation, trauma and fragmented identities, fear of the inhuman, of the Other(ness) and of the unknown, a sense of catastrophe and apocalypse. From a theoretical point of view, the Neo-Gothic seems to be more ambiguous, instable and flexible than the original Gothic of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, initiated by Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and ending with Charles Robert Maturin’s *The Albigenses* (1824). Indeed, critics refer to the category of the Neo-Gothic in attempting to characterize works that are often different from each other and sometimes even considerably distanced from the original Gothic. Besides this greater ambiguity, flexibility and instability, the Neo-Gothic shows –compared to the original Gothic – a deeper inner complexity as well, encapsulating elements from different literary (as well as sub-literary and para-literary) traditions and genres. For this reason, the Neo-Gothic does not materialize a clear and unitary image: its ambiguity and fragmentariness seem to translate and symbolize the chaos and disintegration of modernity and contemporaneity.

The call envisages papers focusing on authors from all cultural and linguistic traditions belonging both to the former half of the 20th century (such as, but not limited to, Arthur Machen, William Hope Hodgson, H. P. Lovecraft, Algernon Blackwood, Ambrose Bierce, Robert W. Chambers, Montague Rhodes James, Walter de la Mare, Franz Kafka, Gustav Meyrink, Karl Hans Strobl, Hanns Heinz Ewers, Alfred Kubin, Stefan Grabinski, Jean Ray

and others) and to the latter half of the 20th century, until the first decades of the third millennium (as authors like Mervyn Peake, Thomas Owen, Shirley Jackson, Joyce Carol Oates, Angela Carter, William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, J. G. Ballard, Iain Banks, Richard Matheson, Patrick McGrath, Stephen King, Anne Rice, Clive Barker, Ramsey Campbell, Paul Straub, Francis Berthelot, Thomas Ligotti and others). We seek to explore and define the Neo-Gothic in a transnational and trans-media context, through three specific levels of research:

Theory

Can we define the Neo-Gothic? Can we outline its poetics and its esthetics? Can we establish its cultural roots? What kind of relationship can emerge between the Neo-Gothic and the original Gothic of the late 18th and early 19th century? And between the Neo-Gothic and the Decadent Gothic of the late 19th and early 20th century? What is the relevance of Neo-Gothic elements throughout the 20th and 21th literary movements and tendencies (such as Modernism, the Avant-garde, Dadaism, Surrealism, Expressionism, Postmodernism, Hypermodernism)? What is its cultural connotation, its actual state and its real presence in modern and contemporary literary debates? Following the suggestions given by David Punter in his seminal critical work on the Gothic (*The Literature of Terror. A History of Gothic Fictions From 1765 to Present Day*,/1996) three are the elements of “the terrifying” that could be inquired and analyzed in order to chart a theory of the Neo-Gothic: the concept of paranoia, which constantly appears in modern and postmodern gothic fictions, the notion and the fear of the barbaric, which in the original Gothic represented the fear of the past, while in the Neo-Gothic rather embodies the fear of the present and of the future, of the Inhuman and of the Post-human, the nature of taboos and the representation of transgression, especially concerning eroticism and sexuality.

Imaginary

In spite of its ambiguity, instability and fragmentariness, which are typical of a “borderline” cultural and literary stream, can we outline a cartography of the Neo-Gothic Imaginary? How do the myths, themes and motifs of 20th-century Gothic migrate and morph into new forms? How are they modified and altered throughout time? Can we identify specific and original constellations of myths and themes developed by Neo-Gothic Imaginary? In order to explore the Neo-Gothic Imaginary, a wide range of themes and topics could be examined, such as (but not limited to): tortured minds / tortured bodies, mental alienation, trauma and paranoia, fragmented identities and the Double Self, hallucinations and narcosis, dreams and nightmares, physical mutilations and deformity, monstrous and disabled bodies, death and decay, the Body Horror and the corpse, persecutions, sexual violence and crimes, fears and anxieties, the Other as source of horror, the Grotesque, the Kitsch and the Camp, popular culture and folklore: traditional legends / urban legends, medievalism, the Inhuman, the Unnatural, the Uncanny, the Irrational, the Supernatural and the Fantastic: Magic and Alchemy, Spiritualism and Occultism, perturbing geographies and haunted places (from castles to postmodern cities), parallel worlds, parallel realities and disturbing dark lands (para-realities, infra-realities...), the doppelganger and the shadow, demonology, strange deities from a terrifying beyond, metamorphosis and mutations, lycanthropy and zoomorphic

transmutations, the afterlife, thanatological apparitions and the undead: ghosts, revenants, zombies, vampires, angels.

Hybridizations

On a third level of research, we welcome papers on authors who cannot be considered part of the Neo-Gothic stream but who have incorporated Neo-Gothic elements in their works. We also welcome papers exploring “borderline works” between Neo-Gothic and other genres, such as: fantasy (dark fantasy), weird, SF (apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction, dystopia, cyberpunk/cybergothic, steampunk), thriller and others.

We look forward to receiving your contributions in French, English, or Italian, together with a short bio note, until January 31, 2018.

The full paper has to be styled according to the *Echinox Journal* style sheet.

(<http://phantasma.lett.ubbcluj.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Feuille-de-style.pdf>).

Contacts: giovanni.magliocco@uniba.it, corinbraga@yahoo.com