



Call for Papers

REDEN (Revista Española de Estudios Norteamericanos)

Special thematic dossier | 50+ Shades of Gothic

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This call for papers is connected to the international conference series [50+ Shades of Gothic: The Gothic Across Genre and Media in US Popular Culture](#), organized by the PopMeC Association for US Popular Culture Studies.

Defining the Gothic has proven to be a difficult and elusive task for scholars, possibly as this literary current often pervades cross-genre narratives and media, embracing many topics related to the very essence of human nature. Indeed, the nature of whatever it may mean to be human seems to be at the core of William Veeder's definition the Gothic as a healing mechanism found in societies that "inflict terrible wounds upon themselves," especially in order "to help heal the damage caused by our embrace of modernity" (1998: 21). This wide definition of the Gothic acknowledges the pervasiveness of the genre and its ramifications when it comes to reacting—"healing and transforming" (1998: 21)—to the perils of societal structures and thus confronting the manifold disruptions of social and moral codes, as well as the actual and imagined fears intrinsic to the cyclical crises our societies face. The advent of modernity represented a major concern in the post-revolutionary United States. Inspired by the literary genre that emerged in 18th century England and its subsequent evolutions, Gothic fiction became a suitable means for exploring the newfound anxieties relating to the specific configurations of the colonial societies and their challenges as new communities. Drawing on European gothic tropes and arguably starting with Charles Brockden Brown's tales, American Gothic fiction has been popular throughout the centuries up to the present day. Furthermore, many popular culture products engage—in more or less overt ways—with gothic elements in the attempt to confront myriads of conflicts, anxieties, and epochal concerns that have marked our societies.

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The struggle between dictated social conventions and the repressed, multifaceted self—liable to fragmented identity and ambiguity—has been central to Gothic narratives. Hidden moral, social, and scientific aspirations emerge, often accompanied by the tension toward a liberation of repressed desires and the fear of the consequences of such liberation. Moreover, the creation of taboos and moral codes set hierarchical boundaries for society to theoretically function without disruption. Gothic characters and dynamics blur such boundaries, thus facing social and psychological dilemmas peculiar to contemporary contexts, and struggling against uncertainty, mistaken self-conceptions and perceptions of reality, contradictory behaviors, feelings of guilt, and exasperation. Terror might lie in altered psychological states, be intrinsic to an incomprehensible or unacceptable alien outsider, or haunt the places where a character would naturally feel safe.

Gothic modes have also been characterized by the notions of disturbance and indulgence, or by a peculiar sense of irony and self-consciousness. An underlying presence of the supernatural and the unspeakable quality of many anxieties facilitate revelations that often remain implicit to a complex narrative structure. Gothic narratives are populated by devil figures and dreamlike sequences that blur the line between the conscious and the unconscious. The conflicts permeated by gothic modes tackle the unresolved battle between good and evil, the tension between the body and the psyche, the passage from childhood to adulthood, and the transgression of social and moral codes. The gothic panoply includes spatial tropes (isolated places, Medieval monasteries, caves, graveyards, ruins, family houses, etc.); claustrophobic urban settings or overwhelming wilderness; scientific experiments that challenge divinity and defy the boundaries of knowledge; allegorical non-human entities; anxieties toward the future and technocratic realities; and ambivalent stances toward the past that oscillate between fear and attraction, and are fueled by the instability of memories.

In recent years, many popular culture artifacts outside of the usual terrain of horror and the Gothic have exploited Gothic modes to reveal the terrors of everyday life. Sophisticated narratives have employed gothic modes to take on disruption, questioning reality, as well as challenging the boundaries of conformity and raising issues related to xenophobia, death, social anxieties, alienation, displacement, and self-consciousness. Because of the versatility and diversity of gothic modes and their—more or less subtle—exploitation across media and popular culture products, we call for contributions fitting the conference series' thematic lines.



REDEN accepts proposals of articles (6-7000 words approx. including references and endnotes) about any aspect related to the call. Please, send your full article to popmec.gothic@gmail.com, attaching your text, inclusive of a short bio (100-120 words), name, affiliation, and email contact in a single file (.doc, .docx, .odt). Please, cite sources using the MLA manual of style, 8th edition.

Deadline for submission: July 25, 2021.