***Posthuman Gothic*, ed. by Anya Heise-von der Lippe**
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Anya Heise-von der Lippe's edited collection, *Posthuman Gothic*, offers 'a structured, dialogical contribution to the discussion of the posthuman gothic in different media, forms and critical contexts' (p. 10). In doing so, it brings posthumanism into a compelling and productive dialogue with the supernatural personae and monstrous motifs associated with the gothic and horror genres. Encompassing an Introduction and thirteen chapters, with the latter arranged in four parts – 'Organic', 'Undead', 'Evolving', 'Reimagined' – the text adopts a Derridean approach to the subject of monstrosity, derived from the Latin *monstrare* (to demonstrate), insofar as it considers what the posthuman Gothic can tell us about our cultural fears and existential anxieties.

The methodological framework for this approach is established in the general Introduction, which plots a neat path between posthumanist and gothic discourses that is accessible to gothic scholars unfamiliar with posthuman studies, or vice versa. The text adopts a two-pronged understanding of posthumanism, namely, 'critical posthumanism', which challenges the underpinnings of humanist philosophy, and 'ontological posthumanism', concerned with the ostensible stability of the existential limitations imposed by human mortality. Lippe identifies Victor Frankenstein's reanimated monster as an archetype of the commonality that exists between gothic fiction and this dualistic mode of posthumanism, noting the monster's status as 'a harbinger of category crisis – that is, of a state of epistemological and ontological unease, which challenges the basic paradigms we associate with being human' (p. 2). Indeed, this disruptive potential functions as the common denominator and primary catalyst in the analyses of narrative fiction, film, television, and video games that comprise the main body of this collection.

Each of the essays in Part I – 'Organic' – surveys the ways in which medical and genetic discourses have been deployed in speculative fiction to prompt a reconsideration of the animal/human dichotomy. To begin, Michael Sean Bolton sets the zombies in David Wong's *John Dies at the End* (2009) and *This Book is Full of Spiders* (2012) against the Ship-of-Theseus problem, thereby complicating the idea that zombification is an unnatural state that is foisted on the human subject. This is followed by Antonia Peroikou assessment of Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy (2003-13), which explores how the animal/human dichotomy is muddied by the prospect of technoscientific beings and the states of existential liminality that these nonhuman beings personify. For his part, Lars Schmeink looks at the

vampires in Francis Lawrence's film *I Am Legend* (2007), the *Blade* series (1998-2004), and the Spierig brothers' *Daybreakers* (2009), and explores the degree to which these figures dramatise cultural anxieties around racial and class politics.

In Part II – 'Undead' – the essays evaluate the ways in which the dynamics that underpin human/nonhuman relationships complicate the firmness of these seemingly binary states. Analysing the ellipses that punctuate the epistolary and omniscient narrative structure of Richard Matheson's novel *I Am Legend* (1954), Chris Koenig-Woodyard perceives a hermeneutic fissure, which allows the reader to envisage the posthuman utopia represented by the paranormal romance that the protagonist resists. Erica McCrystal brings the thought of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida to bear on *True Blood* (2008-14), arguing that 'Home' operates as the locus for a hospitality that paves the way for the ultimate act of human/nonhuman deconstruction – blood sharing. Moving from vampires to zombies, Maria Alberto looks at Dominic Mitchell's BBC-3 series *In the Flesh* (2013-14), and the ways in which the communal acts of 'language' and 'appearance' expose the performative status of the human/nonhuman dichotomy. To conclude this section, Maria Marino-Faza makes a strong case for the vampire figure being the ultimate embodiment of human/inhuman/posthuman liminality, and shows how *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-17) harnesses the potential of female monstrosity and the uncanny double to explore this liminal space.

Part III – 'Evolving' – moves away from the vampires and zombies that prominently feature in the initial chapters, taking a more wide-angled view of the posthuman Gothic, which continues the discussion of female identity that emerges in Marino-Faza's essay. Analysing the otherworldly lake in Jane Campion's *Top of the Lake* (2013), Amalya Ashman and Amy Taylor identify a point of critical resistance to cultural fears around primitivism and the reversion to animalistic impulses. They note that the lake offers the abused women in this TV series an opportunity to reconnect with nature and overcome the trauma of their respective pasts. Turning to *Portal* (2007) and *Portal 2* (2011), Dawn Stobbart points out that these video games deploy classic gothic motifs and techniques, such as female imprisonment and embedded narration, to construct an immersive experience that explores the shifting parameters of twenty-first-century patriarchy. For her part, Donna Mitchell draws on the work of Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, and Laura Mulvey to demonstrate that the man-made protagonist in Louise O'Neill's *Only Ever Yours* (2014) personifies the psychological burdens that are imposed on women by the performative demands of patriarchal culture.

The essays that comprise Part IV – 'Reimagined' – endeavour to broaden the discussions around what constitutes the 'Gothic' and the 'posthuman' in our contemporary cultural moment. First, Dennis Yeo categorises *The Truman Show* (dir. by Peter Weir, 1998) as a posthuman gothic film, insofar as it transcends generic classification and foretells a truly horrific 'reality' in which the protagonist languishes in a posthuman space between the corporeal and virtual worlds. Shifting our attention to Ellen Ripley in the *Alien* films (1979-2012), and representations of the Borg Collective in the *Star Trek* franchise (1966-present), Evan Hayles Gledhill uses the concept of 'transgression' to draw a number of important distinctions between the 'human-to-monster' and 'monster-to-human' narratives that play out in these texts. To conclude this section, and the book, Aspasia Stephanou adopts a Foucauldian lens to examine the posthuman narratives that frame the prospect of a techno-enhanced future in strictly nihilistic terms. Referring to Greg Bear's *Blood Music* (1985), Michael Crichton's *Prey* (2002), and the Japanese horror films, *Meatball Machine* (dir. by Yūdai Yamaguchi, 2006) and *Tokyo Police* (dir. by Yoshihiro Nishimura, 2008), Stephanou outlines a mode of 'inhumanism' that complicates the human/nonhuman dichotomy and with it the distinction between organic nature and inorganic technology.

If one were obliged to identify a weakness, it seems that *Posthuman Gothic* would benefit from a brief conclusion that considers the future of posthuman-gothic studies from the vantage points established in the collected essays. This is a minor point, however, that pales in comparison to the book's many strengths. For instance, the recurring allusions to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) lend cohesiveness to what is an erudite and multifaceted analysis of a complex subject that cuts across generic boundaries. This multi-generic structure is one of the book's greatest strengths, not simply because these essays traverse the terrains of narrative fiction, film, television, and video games, but because the central arguments are usually grounded in the relationship between textual form and content. It is equally impressive that this cross-generic structure is brought to bear on a multifarious range of subsidiary topics. Beyond the explicit focus on posthumanism and the Gothic, there is a great deal here for scholars and students with an interest in cultural materialism, feminist and masculinist studies, postmodernism, queer theory, and continental philosophy.

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