Chapter 1

Theoretical Groundwork: The Monstrous Bodies and the Gothic Tradition ◐

Ferhat Ordu[1]

Abstract

The chapter assembles a theoretical framework used to analyse the monster in the Gothic literary tradition. It combines the basic scholarship to suggest that the monster is a multifaceted cultural representation but not a one-dimensional antagonist. The monster, whose body is a cultural text according to Cohen (1996), derives its power to disrupt order from its status as the abject as defined by Kristeva (1982). It also tracks the symbiotic development of this character as well as of the Gothic tradition, its externalized form as a spectre in haunted castles of the eighteenth century, its internalized form in the form of a psychological twin in the nineteenth century and its modern forms. The crucial aspect of this enquiry is the social and affective role of the monster: to patrol cultural boundaries, project latent desires and bring into being the historically particular anxieties, including scientific hubris, racial trauma. The chapter illustrates the use of Gothic conventions in supplying the narrative grammar to the long-lasting resonance of the monster by a close reading of canonical texts: *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and *Beloved*. The overall impact of these necessary views will be seen in the chapter not only making the key areas of the monster theory and Gothic studies clear, but also give a numerical authorised measure of the analyses that follow in this volume, thus, inviting the cameo movement of academic research into the folds of the human condition.

The chapter marks the slightest theoretical and historical facets which help to comprehend the monster as a leading cultural image in the Gothic literary tradition. To question the monster, its sociocultural roles, and its development throughout the eighteenth century to modern Gothic aesthetic works, the chapter provides a presentation analysis of the crucial texts in forming the discipline and the combination of efforts of the most influential

---

1   Karabuk University, Orcid: 0000-0003-2667-2529

1

scholars. By creating a coherent outline of the understanding of monstrous bodies, through the analysis of the most essential key concepts, including the abject, monster theory and the conventions of Gothic fiction, the book eventually attempts to use this rich base as a launching point as a sequence of more detailed examples in later chapters that will use these interpretive prisms to help disclose the darker sides of the human condition.

The Monster as a Cultural Hieroglyph

The monster is a paradoxical figure, the side of utmost otherness on the one hand and on the other hand an index of the self, of which it is essentially only a cultural product, which, as it were, serves as an intrinsic source of meaning. As Mittman and Hensel (2018) argue, by inverting and transgressing boundaries and norms and mores, monsters "perform important work for us as individuals and communities, policing our boundaries, defining our norms and mores through their inversions and transgressions" (p. x). In this way, monsters are not only scary images but can be seen as the inevitable tools of cultural self-identification. This part of the chapter queries the definitions and ontological position of the monster and assumes the fact that, since its etymology to its grotesque corporeality, the monster is a cultural hieroglyph, a symbolic structure that is to be read, just as Cohen claims that the monster "exists only to be read" (1996, p. 4). A critical examination of the monster as a demonstration, a cultural body, and an aesthetic transgression, we can begin to unpack the human anxieties and desires that give it such enduring vitality.

Definitions and Nature of the Monster

The main purpose of the monster is not to hide, but to reveal. It is demonstrative in nature, which is encoded in its very name. In accordance with the writings by Saint Augustine, Mittman, and Hensel (2018) pointed out that the word *monstrare* is a derivative of *monstrare* (to show) and *demonstrare* (to demonstrate) (p. x). This subjective word root makes the monster not the end but a medium of communication: it works as a signifier pointing to a didactic lesson. A physical manifestation of a social, moral, or cultural transgression, the monster serves as a warning. Its existence serves a pedagogical purpose by compelling a community to face its fears and, in doing so, define its values. In the words of Mittman and Hensel (2018), "Through their bodies, words, and deeds, monsters show us ourselves" (p. x).

To perform this demonstrative role, the monster needs a corporeal form, but this body goes beyond the biological limitations. Cohen (1996)

conclusively makes the argument that it is "a cultural body" (p. 4). The corporeal body is a discursively fabricated text, a symbolic territory on which collective anxieties are inscribed. Cohen (1996) continues to explain that "the monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy... giving them life and an uncanny independence" (p. 4). The fur, scales and slime are therefore representational expressions of the abstract culture pressures rather than arbitrary features. This means that when the monster is dissected the analyst ends up discovering self. This is confirmed by Mittman and Hensel (2018), who state that "Peel back the fur, the scales, the spikes, the slime, and beneath the monstrous hide, there we are, always and inevitably... inside every monster lurks a human being" (p. x). To suit, the body of the monster is thus a projection, an outreach, a "construct" that is intended to outwardly manifest the internal struggles in the society in which it is created (Cohen, 1996, p. 4).

This is why the very existence of a monster is a threat to order and categorizing. It is a transgressive form of its nature as it does not conform to natural and aesthetical standards. According to Botting (1996), the term monster has historically "applied in aesthetic judgements to works that were unnatural and deformed, that deviated either from the regularity attributed to life and nature or from the symmetry and proportion valued in any form of representation" (p. 26). By nature, the monster defies both the rules of harmonious form and the recognized classifications of the natural world. It is the in-between, the ambiguous, and the composite that defies simple classification. According to Cohen (1996), its enduring power stems from this resistance to fixed meaning. The monster, according to him, is a "glyph" that resides in "the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received" (p. 4). The monster can never be completely contained or eliminated because of its innate slippery nature, or "genetic uncertainty principle" (Cohen, 1996, p. 4). Because the cultural fears it represents are never entirely solved, it always manages to slip away.

Characteristics and Function in Culture

Monsters are not objects of passive nature but the objects of dynamism that challenge even the primordial constructs of human thinking. Their unusual feature is the natural violation of the conceptual boundaries that creates a complicated combination of desire and fear in the cultural milieus they are developed. The continuing difficulty that monsters create of the established order of society and the consistent demarcation of self and other lies in their end-in-themselves rejection of traditional classification into taxonomies. Monstrosities find inspiration in being in a categorical crisis.

They appear in the form of composite entities that fill the interstitial space between conventional ontologically fixated categories, and as such disrupts the very taxonomic apparatus with the help of which the reality is meant to be produced. As Cohen (1996) asserts, "The monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions" (p. 6). This quality of being "in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" is what Julia Kristeva (1982) identifies as the core of the abject (p. 4). The abject— what disturbs "identity, system, order"—is not defined by uncleanliness but by its refusal to "respect borders, positions, rules" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). The creature is either the zombie (dead and alive), the werewolf (human and animal), or the creature created by Frankenstein (living and made) and it is in this balance character where boundaries become unclear and fall apart. Kristeva (1982) notes this confrontation "with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of animal," highlighting the monster's role in destabilizing the hierarchy between human and beast (p. 12). Consequently, "the monster always escapes because it refuses easy categorization," systematically violating the "too precise laws of nature" and demanding a system that can accommodate "polyphony, mixed response… and resistance to integration" (Cohen, 1996, pp. 6-7). In the face of this ambiguity, "scientific inquiry and its ordered rationality crumble," rebuking any attempt at "boundary and enclosure" (Cohen, 1996, p. 7).

This ontological transgression triggers a culturally multifaceted reaction whose inclination to terror and attraction is impossible to separate. The monster is not just disgusting; it is also enticing. Kristeva (1982) encapsulates this duality by asserting, "The abject is edged with the sublime" (p. 11). It embodies a terrifying yet exalted liberation from the laws it transgresses. The abject, as something we don't want to be a part of, "beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). This explains the strange desire that comes with our fear: the subconscious pull toward the very taboos that the monster represents. This phenomenon is specifically referred to by Cohen (1996) as he states that the monster is frequently too sexual, perverse and erotic, a lawbreaker thus containing hidden urges that a society openly denies but of which it is secretly fascinated (p. 16). The ideological drive to exile or kill the monster is therefore, a direct answer to this perilous temptation, an effort to purge the community of its own forbidden impulses.

In its end, after all, the main cultural purpose of the monster is to render the abstract anxieties concrete and manageable, in the capacity of acting as the Other. Cohen (1996) defines the monster as "difference made flesh, come to dwell among us," a "dialectical Other" that incorporates the threatening "Outside" which actually originates from "Within" the culture

itself (p. 7). The monstrous body can be projected onto and constructed at any kind of cultural, political, racial, economic or sexual alterity. The culture can then face, negotiate, and try to strengthen its boundaries through the monster's story by giving a face to these vague fears, whether they are of racial difference, sexual deviance, or social upheaval. The monster is an important safety wall and a black mirror that helps society keep an eye on its rules by showing what they are not in a very dramatic way.

Social and Epistemological Roles

In addition to causing immediate fright by their nature, monsters play an essential, albeit much or much too disturbing, task within the social and epistemological systems of the culture in which they are found. They operate as normative enforcers and conceptual challengers, as well as defining the sense of community, and pushing the boundaries of knowledge. Essentially, monsters, as Mittman and Hensel (2018) note, "monsters do perform important work for us as individuals and communities, policing our boundaries, defining our norms and mores through their inversions and transgressions" (p. x). This is one of the major social functions of this role of policing. The "monster of prohibition" as elaborated by Cohen (1996) "exists to demarcate the bonds that hold together that system of relations we call culture, to call horrid attention to the borders that cannot—must not—be crossed" (p. 13). The monster reinstates these social, sexual, or moral codes by deliberately violating them, providing a warning to us that something like this is detrimental since it "prevents mobility (intellectual, geographic, or sexual), delimiting the social spaces through which private bodies may move" (p. 12).

It is ironic that this same use as a symbol of taboo gives the monster its strength as a carrier of escapist fantasy. The monster represents the enticement of the taboo and transient freedom of social servitude. This two-fold aspect, as explained by Cohen (1996) is due to the fact that "the linking of monstrosity with the forbidden makes the monster all the more appealing as a temporary egress from constraint" (p. 17). Therefore, the very thing that is horrifying is also fascinating, giving a chance to explore safely the suppressed desires in a narrative way. Such a tense relationship is projected on the monster's own body. Thomson (2018) suggests that extraordinary bodies "function as magnets to which culture secures its anxieties, questions, and needs," (p. 91) becoming politicized entities upon which a society projects its meditations on "individual as well as national values, identity, and direction" (p. 92). The monstrous body is thus exploited, a tangible screen for the projection of intangible cultural concerns.

As a result, the monster plays an important epistemological function as a limit-case for knowledge in principle. The classification urges of science, philosophy, and other systems of logical inquiry are actively resisted by the monster's ambiguous and composite nature. According to Cohen (1996), "the monster resists capture in the epistemological nets of the erudite," resisting any one consistent interpretation (p. 49). Its presence continuously demonstrates that the world is more terrible and complex than our categories can account for, posing a challenge to organized mind. However, the monster also offers a special kind of information in this resistance. In any case, it is a reflection. In the words of Mittman and Hensel (2018), "Through their bodies, words, and deeds, monsters show us ourselves" (p. x). The monster exposes the innermost fears, unspoken desires, and frail roots of the society that gave rise to it. The monster's epistemological lesson is that comprehending it entails comprehending the human world that considers it to be so hideous.

Affective Response (Fear, Disgust, and Desire)

The perpetual power of the monster is not only a cognitive but also actually a very visceral kind, witnessing how unpredictable and even paradoxical the emotional reactions of people to it can be. The exposure to the monstrous creates a strong emotional threefold (fear, disgust, and a perverse and multifaceted lust). This complex affective environment which determines the reception of the audience and is the essence of the Gothic experience is important to the cultural functioning not just a product of the monster. Following Mittman and Hensel (2018), "it is not the inherent qualities of the being that make it monstrous but the response 'we'—characters within a narrative and readers/viewers of these narratives—have to it that renders the creature a monster" (p. xi). As a result, the monster is an affective construct, which should be analysed analytically that should begin with the emotions which it is supposed to trigger.

Fear and disgust are the most instant reactions; they are closely related but separate emotions. Fear is a response to a threat, a sense of threat that prompts self-defence. On the other hand, disgust is a more instinctive, visceral reaction. According to Carroll (2018), As Carroll (2018) emphasizes, "The monster in horror fiction, that is, is not only lethal but—and this is of utmost significance—also disgusting" (p. 30). The element of this disgust is a major part of the abject, a response to that which does not respect bodily integrity and the categorical limits, such as rot, decay, and ambiguous flesh. The example of the zombie though is not only feared due to its ability to kill but is also very disgusting to look at how it decomposes and its collapsing body is

likened to the collapse of the border between life and death. These reactions are not accidental but are carefully edited to the audience. According to Carroll (2018), "The emotional reactions of characters… provide a set of instructions or, rather, examples about the way in which the audience is to respond to the monsters in the fiction" (p. 29). It is the screams and the revulsion on the page or on the screen that bring the audience into proper affective response of the monstrous threat.

Nevertheless, revulsion does not hold the underlying position of the affection of the monster. The most interesting, even culturally valuable power of it is its ability to be repulsive and attractive at the same time. This duality is the core of Cohen's (1996) sixth thesis, "Fear of the Monster Is Really a Kind of Desire." He elaborates that "the monster is continually linked to forbidden practices," serving to normalize social codes, but it "also attracts." This creates a powerful psychological conflict: "the same creatures who terrify and interdict can evoke potent escapist fantasies; the linking of monstrosity with the forbidden makes the monster all the more appealing as a temporary egress from constraint" (Cohen, 1996, p. 52). The vampire, specifically, is not just a usurpation of the position of the predatory killing, he is an ideal of the temptation of immortality and the transgressive sexuality, and offers a utopia that releases him of the bounds of death and social ridicule. This repulsions-fascination contrast allows the monster to overcome the reductive dichotomy and as such explain his continued popularity in the cultural canon. As Cohen (1996) concludes, "We distrust and loathe the monster at the same time we envy its freedom, and perhaps its sublime despair" (p. 52). This envy demonstrates a unique human interest in the very boundaries that the monster goes so crazily out of his way to break.

The Gothic style is the ideal setting for this whole emotional complex, which includes the interaction of forbidden love, revulsion, and dread. By definition, the Gothic is an intense and extravagant genre intended to elicit powerful emotional reactions. "Gothic condenses the many perceived threats to these values, threats associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption," according to Botting (1996) (p. 2). It is the literary and cultural apparatus designed specifically to produce the emotional sensations connected to the monster. Additionally, visual transgression is used to generate this emotional impact. Botting (1996) notes that Gothic productions were historically deemed "aesthetically excessive" and "unnatural in their undermining of physical laws with marvellous beings and fantastic events" (p. 6). This excess is the artistic equivalent of the monster's own categorical excess, both of which

combine to submerge the audience in a state of heightened experience and overwhelming reasoning.

In the end, this emotional hurricane fulfils a significant ontological function. Cultural identities are created and maintained via the powerful emotions of fear, contempt, and want. According to Cohen (1996), the monster is "the abjected fragment that enables the formation of all kinds of identities—personal, national, cultural, economic, sexual, psychological" (p. 19). By identifying the "Them," our communal, visceral rejection of the monster serves to reinforce the "Us." It lives in a "marginal geography," which is "doubly dangerous: simultaneously 'exorbitant' and 'quite close'" (p. 20). These strong and sometimes aversive affective reactions that the monster experiences are an empirical confirmation of its immediate presence, as well as, a testimony to its capacity to be dangerous. After all, the monster is moulded directly instead of being viewed on an abstract level. It plays its major part by way of this visceral, emotive experience, this intense and disgusting synthesis of fear and desire that does not only form our epistemic consciousness, but above all influences our understanding of ourselves and our experience of the milieu that surrounds us.

Besides, monsters are not to be considered as the sole antagonists in narrative schemes but they may serve as complex reflections of ourselves on which we project our self. They can be fictionalised as cultural artefacts that were developed to express deep rooted communal worries and suppressed desires. Their etymology, which is based on Latin, *monstrare*, which means to make visible, best summarises their purpose; to make visible revealing aspects of the psychic dimension that should be identified. Essentially, monsters act as travelling talking limits. They consist of the things that make us unsettled, of the things that do not fit in the descriptions of human, animal, alive, or dead. It is here in this liminal space that their efficacy is manifested. They are disturbing and at the same time irresistible, our concern is usually mingled with a curious fascination with the freedom that their lawlessness represents. They live outside the guidelines that we are under. This interaction makes monsters and Gothic literature a logical combination. Gothic, in its fondness of drama and overindulgence, furnishes a most favourable situation where such creatures are able to haunt the popular fancy. In the end, all monsters, such as the ancient dragon or the modern zombie, present one basic lesson, that in order to understand the monster we must understand the society which bred it, and the hidden apprehensions and unspoken laws of which it is the outcome. Therefore, at least monsters are our mirrors as they show the fears related to our possible transformations.

Having worked out in full the theoretical framework which the monster was to have, in terms of definitions, characteristics and functions, the time has now come to place these abstract constructions in their appropriate literary-historical settings. The following part of this chapter accordingly will treat of specific texts of monsters which fill out the Gothic tradition, examining how canonical figures, including the brooding Byronic villain and the reanimated creature in Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), or the haunting *Count Dracula* in Bram Stoker and the spectral haunting of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), represent these theoretical propositions as historically specific to their time and place, through the dynamic and flexible figure of the monster.

The Gothic Tradition: Definitions and Characteristics

To get a full understanding of the habitat of the monster one must first of all draw the landline of the Gothic tradition as such. The Gothic signifies an expressive mode characterised by its impulses of crossing boundaries, its emotional depth, and obsession on the dark-sided matters of enlightenment and advancement. As Fred Botting (1996) asserts in his seminal work, "Gothic signifies a writing of excess" (p. 1). This excess serves as the main locomotive of the genre, driving it to the boundaries of reason, decency, and traditional aesthetic canons. The history of the term is complicated: William Hughes (2013) mentions that "Gothic is a complex cultural term, and its meanings have varied greatly across the 400 years of its persistence in the English language" (p. 1). Moreover, Hughes notes that "Historically a derogatory synonym for barbarism and vulgarity, the term was appropriated in the mid-18th century . . . as a suitable generic descriptor for an innovative form of literature: the Gothic novel" (p. 1). It is a serious appropriation, a repossession of one of the terms of abuse to designate a literature that tried deliberately to challenge the values of its own period. As Botting (2012) explains, "The word 'Gothic' assumes its powerful, if negative, significance: it condenses a variety of historical elements and meanings opposed to the categories valued in the eighteenth century" (p. 13). The Gothic is in a way the negative antithesis of the Enlightenment rationality that actualized what it attempted to supress.

The traits of the Gothic are the direct results of such antagonistic attitude. It is filled with peculiar characters in its storeys. According to Botting (1996), "Gothic focuses on the various styles and forms of the genre and analyses the cultural significance of its prevalent figures: the ghosts, monsters, vampires, doubles and horrors that are its definitive features" ("Gothic", para. 2). These figures inhabit worlds designed to evoke specific emotional states,

characterized by "Gothic atmospheres - gloomy and mysterious - [which] have repeatedly signalled the disturbing return of pasts upon presents and evoked emotions of terror and laughter" (Botting, 1996, p. 1). The obsession on the negative is the key point; Botting (1996) states that Gothic "remains fascinated by objects and practices that are constructed as negative, irrational, immoral and fantastic" (p. 2). The Gothic is essentially a discovery of great ambivalence. The definition provided by Botting (1996) is as follows: "[gothic is] an inscription neither of darkness nor of light, a delineation neither of reason and morality nor of superstition and corruption, neither good nor evil, but both at the same time" (p. 9). This ambivalence turns out to be strong in the emotional reactions it causes: "The emotional reactions which Gothic fiction is most closely linked to are also ambivalent: objects of terror and horror will not only arouse repugnance but also a very intense pleasure and excitement (Botting 1996, p. 9).

The gothic as a thematic working precedes as a cultural hoarder of anxiety. According to Botting (1996), "Gothic condenses the many perceived threats to... values, threats associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption" (p. 2). These threatening factors are not abstract; they are based on historical basis. According to Botting (1996), "Gothic narratives never escaped the concerns of their own times," and their location be it a castle or an old house became "the site where fears and anxieties returned in the present" in response to "political revolution, industrialisation, urbanisation, shifts in sexual and domestic organisation, and scientific discovery" (p. 3). The style applies a unified scheme of aesthetic principles to ensure that emotion is more valued than reason. In Gothic productions, Botting (1996) states, "imagination and emotional effects exceed reason. Passion, excitement and sensation transgress social proprieties and moral laws. Ambivalence and uncertainty obscure single meaning" (p. 3). This results in a style that is "aesthetically excessive," one that was historically considered "unnatural in [its] undermining of physical laws with marvellous beings and fantastic events" (Botting, 1996, pp. 6-7).

This transgressive excess is not merely thematic but also formal, relying on what become familiar conventions. "The genre's consistency relied on the settings, devices and events," Botting (1996) notes, pointing to the "desolate, alienating and full of menace" landscapes and the stock features that "provide the principal embodiments and evocations of cultural anxieties" (pp. 2, 45). Finally, these norms are united by one crucial and disruptive element the unstable threatening body. According to Kelly Hurley (1997),

"The Gothic body is a not-quite-human subject, characterized by its morphic variability, continually in danger of becoming not-itself, becoming other" (pp. 3-4). This organ, the body of the monster, is the final place of Gothic profligacy and stress, which serves as a physical signifier of everything that crosses the lines of humanity, nature and conceivability. With the theoretical bases of the concept of monstrosity and the fundamental aesthetics/thematic conventions of the Gothic mode in place, what follows then is a historical tracing of the lineage of the tradition. The following section will map the path of the Gothic as it consolidated itself formally during the eighteenth century, as it vastly altered during the nineteenth and twentieth century, and into its countless incarnations during the modern age. This diachronic review is critical to comprehending how the character of the monster, along with the instruments of terror and horror, has been continually re-invented relative to the cultural, political and scientific paradigm changes. This diachronic approach is thus essential to the contextualisation of particular monstrosity manifestations as acute at various specific times, as seen in the spectres of the early novel through to the psychological hauntings of modernity and the virtual hauntings of the present day.

Historical Development: From External Spectres to Internal Shadows

The Gothic tradition need not be understood as a static construct but a fluid mode that has been radically reformed since its genesis, continually reconceiving its monster figures to reflect the fears of each subsequent era. As charted by Botting (1996), its trajectory runs "from its sources in the eighteenth century through to modernist and postmodernist representations" ("Gothic", para. 2), a trajectory in which the focal point of the horrors undergoes a considerable shift from the outside, supernatural threats to the inside, the psychological abyss. Its genesis occurred from a varied body of literary sources, Botting (1996) noting that the earliest tradition draws upon "medieval romances/super-natural, Faustian and fairy tales, Renaissance drama/sentimental, picaresque and confessional narratives and the ruins/tombs/nighttime speculations that captivated Graveyard poets" (p. 14). This diverse amalgam took shape in a recognizable form around a time that is commonly accepted as its most central epoch, a timeline Botting (1996) reports lasting "from Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) to Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820)" (p. 15).

During the formative period of the eighteenth century, the Gothic genre operated within a relatively defined moral and narrative framework. As Botting (1996) articulates, the emphasis was "on expelling and objectifying

threatening figures of darkness and evil, casting them out and restoring proper limits: villains are punished; heroines well married" (p. 10). This framework facilitated the containment of transgressive elements, with the "excesses and ambivalence associated with Gothic figures" functioning as "distinct signs of transgression" that were ultimately eradicated to reinforce societal order (Botting, 1996, p. 6). The haunted castle, the oppressive aristocrat, and the ghostly apparition were external entities that could be confronted and, at least within the narrative, overcome.

The nineteenth century, however, experienced a radical shift in the Gothic imagination brought about by the intellectual and political upheaval characteristic of the period. Building on Botting (1996), in this period "the security and stability of social, political and aesthetic formations are much more uncertain," a situation further compounded by the French Revolution that questioned all the social hierarchies (p. 10). The Gothic images of the past—"Gothic castles, villains and ghosts"—had become "cliched and formulaic," having lost the potency to induce genuine fear. This decline in threats from the outside led to a decisive shift that Botting (1996) pinpoints as the "internalisation of Gothic forms" (p. 11). The new Gothic themes "appeared as the darker corollary to Romantic ideals of individuality," further becoming "part of an internalised world of guilt, anxiety, despair, a world of individual transgression interrogating the uncertain bounds of imaginative freedom and human knowledge" (Botting, 1996, p. 10). This internalization constituted a decisive shift in the emotive registers of the genre: "Terror became secondary to horror, the sublime ceded to the uncanny" (Botting, 1996, p. 11). Fear of things that may be (terror) gave way to loathing of things (horror), and the terrifying powers that came from the outside (the sublime) gave way to the familiar and repressed that intrudes from the inside (the uncanny).

The redefined Gothic tradition continued through the Victorian era; yet, according to Hughes (2013), this later era "spans the Victorian era through to the 19th-century fin de siècle, but is perceptibly far less distinct a genre than its innovative predecessor" (p. 47). It is in this time when the monster indeed invaded within, the doppelganger, the split personality and the degenerate body, a reflection of the new anxieties of the human psyche, sexuality and evolution. This evolutionary pattern: the outward projection of the spectres of the eighteenth century to the inward projection of the shadows of the nineteenth century, attests to the extreme plasticity of Gothic and preconditions the very particular monstrous texts that shall be addressed in the next part, each the creation of its own historical circumstance in this larger pattern of evolution.

Anatomies of Terror: Gothic Conventions in *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and *Beloved*

The iconic monster texts are the strongest expression of the theoretical and historical parameters of the tradition of the Gothic. Clearly, the evolution of the Gothic conventions and the flexibility of these principles can be seen through the prism of analysing such works as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. The works-although separated by time and context, all share similarity in that the fundamental preoccupations inherent in the genre, including fragmented narratives, transgressive bodies and the spectral reemergence of the past-are restructured to meet the concerns of their respective periods. The analysis will follow the way all these novels use widely-known Gothic tropes; the spectral and the double, the rotting castle and the haunted house to unleash deep-seated cultural anxieties.

The major change that occurred in the Gothic tradition is forcefully introduced through the first book of Mary Shelley, which is titled *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus*. The novel shifts the location of terror out of external settings and into the nature of the human body itself. As Jack Halberstam (1995) argues, "While the Gothic Romances of the 1790s associated horror with locale, Frankenstein's monster makes flesh itself Gothic… Shelley… maps out a new geography of terror and finds fear to be a by-product of embodiment rather than a trick played upon the mind" (p. 28). The Creature, famously described by H.P. Lovecraft (2000) as being "moulded from charnel fragments" and possessing "a hideously loathsome form" (p. 35), becomes the ultimate abject being, a "composite" that horrifies because he disturbs the boundaries between life and death, human and artificial. This internalization of horror is further complicated by the novel's structure of doubling. As Cavallaro (2002) notes, the "multi-facetedness of Shelley's novel is underscored by what Fred Botting describes as 'patterns of doubling and reversal'" (p. 117), weaving a "tortuous, fragmented narrative" (Botting, 1996, p. 2) that implicates both creator and creature in a shared monstrosity. Halberstam (1995) concludes that *Frankenstein* "not only gives form to the dialectic of monstrosity itself… it also demands a rethinking of the entire Gothic genre in terms of who rather than what is the object of terror" (p. 28).

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* represents a later Victorian synthesis of Gothic conventions, projecting anxieties about racial purity, reverse colonization, and rampant capitalism onto a monstrous, aristocratic body. The Count is a figure who embodies what Botting (1996) identifies as the genre's "spectres,

monsters, demons, [and] evil aristocrats" (p. 2). His transgression is geographic and cultural, as he "dwells in a horrible castle in the Carpathians; but finally migrates to England with the design of populating the country with fellow vampires" (Lovecraft, 2000, p. 56). This migration updates the Gothic landscape, with the decaying Carpathian castle giving way to the modern city, which, as Botting (1996) suggests, combines "the natural and architectural components of Gothic grandeur and wildness, its dark, labyrinthine streets suggesting the violence and menace of Gothic castle and forest" (p. 2). Dracula himself is a composite of threats. Halberstam (1995) reads him as "a composite of otherness" and "gold brought to life and animated within monopoly capitalism" (p. 103), while Punter (2013) sees him as "the logical culmination of the Victorian and Gothic hero… for whom the price of immortality is the death of the soul" (p. 22). The novel's fragmented narrative, composed of journals and letters, is a formal convention that, as Halberstam (1995) points out, presents "a body of work to which, it is important to note, only certain characters contribute" (p. 90), linking narrative control to the policing of knowledge and power against the monstrous threat.

In the late twentieth century, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* performs a radical reclamation and revision of the Gothic, using its conventions to articulate the unspeakable trauma of slavery. The novel transposes the Gothic's haunted castle into the site of the "old house" at 124 Bluestone Road, which is, as Fred Botting (1996) describes, "the scene for a narrative that moves between the past and the present to uncover… the external and internal effects of racial oppression" (p. 161). The ghost, Beloved, is not a supernatural specter in the traditional sense but, as Cavallaro (2002) notes, a manifestation of what is "unspeakable," a figure that "problematizes the retrieval of lost or missing subjects" (p. 71). This spectral presence makes visible the "seething presence" of a history that ideology seeks to render invisible (Cavallaro, 2002, p. 71). Morrison utilizes the Gothic's central affective dynamic, but recalibrates it; the terror and horror here are not born of imagination or the grotesque alone but from the real, historical horror of systemic violence and its enduring psychological scars. The novel, as Cavallaro (2002) states, "foregrounds the ideological dimension of spectrality with reference to the legacy of slavery and racial oppression" (p. 71), proving the Gothic's enduring power to give form to the most profound and repressed anxieties of a culture, making the past a palpable, and monstrous, presence in the present.

Conclusion

In this chapter the multifaceted theoretical and historical framework

has been developed in a bid to explain the complex association that existed between the Gothic tradition and the monster. The ultimate aim of it has been to conglomerate the core works of Cohen, Kristeva, Botting, and Halberstam with the help of an in-depth descriptive investigation of those critical writings that form the canon of monster theory and Gothic studies. It is based on this synthesis that the chapter shows how the monster is more of a deep cultural construct than a mere narrative tool a hieroglyphic text that, according to Cohen (1996), is there "to be read" (p. 4). The word is demonstratively attached to its etymology, which was based on *monstrare* (to show) and it underlines its potential in policing boundaries and in defining the self through the spectre of the Other. Thus, the monster is a complex of social fears and desires. The chapter goes on to suggest, that monstrosity is a central process, through which cultures describe, negotiate, and control their most profound anxieties. This is achieved through the definition of the monster, its characteristics which are based on abjection and category crisis, as well as its general social and affective actions.

In addition, this discussion will place these theoretical elements in the context of the dynamic development of the Gothic tradition itself. Since its inception in the eighteenth century in the enthusiasm of the tourist for the ruins of the feudal past, and external of the city, the Gothic has terminated up to now as a mode that is both resilient and flexible. It is a "writing of excess", as Botting (1996) defines it as (p.1), its conventions, the haunted space, the fractured narrative, the double and the switching between terror and horror, are the basic grammar of the monster appearance. Discoveries of major texts including *Frankenstein, Dracula* and *Beloved* reveal this flexibility in action where the same gothic lexicon can be used to address the terrors of scientific ambitions, imperial and sexual neurosis and the longstanding wound of past atrocities.

The chapter performs two roles in providing this groundwork. First, it aims at shedding light on the contemporary state of the critical discourse, and stimulating an additional study thus establishing an updated stable base on which all the further investigations of the monsters and of the Gothic can be sustained. All of the theoretical frameworks discussed in this chapter, including abjection and monster culture, provide fruitful possibilities to analyse the constantly growing body of monstrous portrayals in media and times. Second, and more proximate, this unified framework is the vital element the basis of the case studies which are to follow in this book. The definitions, historical paths and theoretical paradigms developed in this chapters will be used in the coming chapters with direct applications to concrete and limited effects on a given text. With the identification of

what the monster is and the functioning of the Gothic tradition now in place, this book project turns to a more specific and detailed analysis of how those forces are brought together in specific times of culture and specific monstrous bodies to illustrate the continuing ability of the monster to extract the lines of the human condition.

References

Botting, F. (1996). *Gothic*. Routledge.

Botting, F. (2012). Gothic: A New Introduction. In D. Punter (Ed.), *A New Companion to the Gothic* (pp. 13-24). Wiley-Blackwell.

Carroll, N. (2018). The nature of horror. In A. S. Mittman & M. Hensel (Eds.), *Classic readings on monster theory* (pp. 27-36). Arc Humanities Press.

Cavallaro, D. (2002). *The Gothic vision: Three centuries of horror, terror and fear*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Cohen, J. J. (1996). Monster culture (seven theses). In J. J. Cohen (Ed.), *Monster theory: Reading culture* (pp. 3–25). University of Minnesota Press.

Gordon, A. F. (2002). *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination*. University of Minnesota Press.

Halberstam, J. (1995). *Skin shows: Gothic horror and the technology of monsters*. Duke University Press.

Hughes, W. (2013). *Historical dictionary of Gothic literature*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Hurley, K. (1997). *The Gothic body: Sexuality, materialism, and degeneration at the fin de siècle*. Cambridge University Press.

Kristeva, J. (1982). *Powers of horror: An essay on abjection* (L. S. Roudiez, Trans.). Columbia University Press.

Lovecraft, H. P. (2000). *The annotated supernatural horror in literature*. Hippocampus Press.

Miles, R. (2012). Ann Radcliffe and the aesthetics of terror. In D. Punter (Ed.), *A new companion to the Gothic* (pp. 85-96). Wiley-Blackwell.

Mittman, A. S., & Hensel, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Classic readings on monster theory*. Arc Humanities Press.

Punter, D. (2013). *The literature of terror: A history of Gothic fictions from 1765 to the present day*. Routledge.

Thomson, R. G. (2018). From wonder to error—A genealogy of freak discourse in modernity. In A. S. Mittman & M. Hensel (Eds.), *Classic readings on monster theory* (pp. 89-98). Arc Humanities Press.