

Foreword

During the twentieth 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trend, which can be defined as the Neo-Gothic, should not be perceived as the simple “resurgence” of a genre apparently out of date, but rather as the “persistence” of Gothic throughout the twentieth century, reaching the third millennium with all its magnetic and enigmatic power. Gothic forms and models cyclically, obsessively and insistently recur throughout the twentieth and twenty-first 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 nineteenth and early twentieth century 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 eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, initiated by Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and ending with Charles Robert Maturin’s *The Albigenes* (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, the deconstruction and disintegration of modernity and contemporaneity.

This monographic number of *Caietele Echinox* tries to outline and explore this complex and heterogenic cultural stream in a transnational, transcultural and transmedia way. In the first section, Max Duperray provides a theoretical definition of this literary concept, whose boundaries are particularly uncertain and instable, showing the inner link between Post-modernism and Neo-Gothic, both connected and also akin to a new form of the “grotesque” close to the absurd, in tune with the age of Deconstruction. In Max Duperray’s view, Neo-Gothic is that particular art which finds itself in the creative tension between the fascination of an assumed past and the ironic gaze of one who finds himself endowed with critical power and self-knowledge, with that auto-reflexivity concerned about its effects. Florence Casulli focuses her attention on Edgar Allan Poe and Roald Dahl’s short-stories, exploring, through psychocriticism, the theme of the tortured

body as an externalization of the narrators' tortured minds. Valentina Sirangelo traces a mythocritical profile of one of the terrifying deities conceived by Howard Phillips Lovecraft, through the Moon Archetype, analyzing a Lovecraftian tale by the contemporary British writer Ramsey Campbell, *The Moon-Lens*. Patrycja Antoszek discusses the discourse of melancholia and the affective Gothicism in Shirley Jackson's *The Bird's Nest*, arguing that Jackson's Neo-Gothic narrative not only illustrates a melancholic subject's pathological attachment to the past, but is itself melancholic in its mourning of the loss of female inherent multiplicity. Barbara Miceli analyzes the daily domestic horror, the pathological narcissism and the mental disorder in a Joyce Carol Oates' novella, *Evil eye*. Dana Percec proposes a reading of Ian McEwan's most recent novel, *Nutshell*, which shows a return to the typical sexual and psychological Gothic that made McEwan's plots controversial, discussing how McEwan adapts an appropriation of Shakespeare's tragedy to contemporary readers' skeptically critical expectations. Rose-Anaïs Weeber focuses her attention on Guillermo del Toro's *Crimson Peak*, in which the director explores the themes and codes of a nineteenth century decadent Gothic romance, but deflects them in order to create his own conception of a ghost story.

The second section is dedicated to Gothic hybridizations and mutations, aiming to explore not only "borderline works" between Neo-Gothic and other genres, but also the metamorphosis of Gothic in new hybrid sub-genres (such as Neon-Gothic, Eco-Gothic, Global-Gothic, etc.). Laura Pavel discusses the Gothic-Absurd hybrid in Ionesco's plays as an amalgamation of aesthetic codes and categories, mixing the strange and the miraculous of surrealist extraction with the grotesque, the melodramatic pathetic with Neo-Gothic lugubriousness, and the postmodern sublime with playful and parodic triviality. Mircea-Marius Crișan and Lucian-Vasile Szabo explore the hybridizations between Gothic and Posthuman in several fictional works belonging to the canon of the Gothic, to Romanian fantastic literature and to contemporary *SF* literature, starting from the premise that the technological modification of the human body is one of the favourite themes in Neo-Gothic fiction. Alessandra Squeo, reflecting on the Neo-Gothic fascination with body manipulation and dissection, examines Frankenstein's afterlife through some recent transmutations of the archetype of the hybrid monster in Shelley Jackson's hypertextualist production, in which Posthuman thought intersects with Gothic textuality. Mihaela Ursa dissects Jane Austen's Neo-Gothic afterlife, providing an analysis of Seth Grahame-Smith's mash-up novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and Burr Steer's adaptation for screen of the latter and trying to give an interpretation of the cultural phenomenon of *zombie mania*. Doru Pop, using as a case study of the visuality of recent productions such as *Blade Runner 2049*, proposes for the first time a new concept, that of "phosphorescent modernity", which is manifested in the cinematic aesthetics dominated by neon lights, claiming that the constant revival of the Gothic has evolved into a version which can be defined as *Neon-Gothic*, identifiable as a sub-genre in several science fiction movies. Richard Kidder, focusing on the relation between the art of fiction and climate change, explores the degree to which novels as Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior* and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, might be considered representatives of that new subgenre known as the

Ecogothic, a hybrid type of Neo-Gothic. Carmen Borbély detects Post-Gothic traces in Ian McEwan's *Solar*, showing that, filtered through parody and pastiche, the Gothic mode is accommodated in Ian McEwan's narrative of climate catastrophe within the threefold casing of (post)domestic Gothic, Globalgothic and Ecogothic.

The last section is dedicated to the "peripheral" configurations of the Neo-Gothic. In a global, transnational and transcultural perspective, more and more important and necessary in relation to Gothic studies, the Neo-Gothic could be easily detected and investigated also in "peripheral" cultural areas, where, without a real Gothic tradition, all the intersections and cultural influences seem to manifest themselves in a much more fruitful and innovative way, participating in a real "regeneration" and "resemanticization" of the Gothic. In this section we propose papers that explore Neo-Gothic in a wide range of cultural and linguistic traditions: Australian, French-Canadian, Japanese, Italian and Romanian. Gerry Turcotte examines Australian science fiction writer Marianne de Pierres' Parrish Plessis novels, in particular her first work *Nylon Angel*, analyzing the way voodoo, postcolonial theory, Indigenous spirituality and Caribbean culture are brought together to discuss contemporary and future race politics down under. Ana-Maria Parasca, reading Kate Morton's popular romances, identifies in this form of "domesticated" Gothic a prolific landscape for exploring the legacies of the past and its burdens on the present. Gisèle Vanhese exploring the occult link between Neo-Gothic and Amerindian spirituality in a Julian Mahikan's dark thriller, *Le Mutilateur*, demonstrates that in this work emerges a tendency towards the hybridization of the Gothic heritage and the Amerindian folklore and traditions, which seems to deeply characterize the epoch of globalization. Katarzyna Ancuta outlines gothic themes and conventions in contemporary Japanese crime fiction, discussing novels of Otsuichi, Natsuo Kirino, and Fuminori Nakamura as examples of Japanese crime gothic and focusing on the Japanese conceptualization of monstrosity and aestheticization of violence in the context of Japanese aesthetics of impermanence and imperfection. Luisa Valmarin examines gothic traces in Arturo Graf's poetry, providing a comparison between the Italian poet and the Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu. Catherine de Wrangel proposes an alternative reading of Tommaso Landolfi's novel *Racconto d'autunno*, showing that the choice to use Gothic conventions within his writing is not a coincidence, being rather adapted to the expression of landolfian philosophical and political speculation. Fabio Camilletti analyzes the genesis and development of Melissa's legend in Italian culture, as a variant of the ubiquitous urban legend of the "Phantom Hitch-hiker", showing that Melissa corresponds to a turn of the screw in the hypermodern relationship between Gothic fiction and popular culture.

The last four papers are all dedicated to Romanian literature and examine the occult presence of gothic traces in Romanian Oneirism and Postmodernism. Ruxandra Cesereanu proposes, for the first time, an alternative reading of Leonid Dimov's oneiric poetry, demonstrating that in his carnivalesque and baroque works, based on deep anxieties and concerned about death, love, knowledge and creation, the Romanian poet represents a kind of mysteries and initiations into para-worlds, lucidly undertaken through Neo-Gothic devices. Corin Braga analyzes Vintilă Ivănceanu's oneiric work and, focusing

on the “epic” poem *Vulcaloborgul și frumoasa Beleponjă*, shows that medieval imaginary is here revisited through the lens of a postmodern Neo-Gothic style producing a universe in which reality is constantly undercut by delirious and hallucinatory insertions, gothic narratives, dark fairy tales and absurd literature. Marius Popa, reading Mircea Cărtărescu’s last novel *Solenoid*, reviews Neo-Gothic as a recurrent element of his imaginary, visible in the abundance of the decor, in the monumentality of the narrative architecture and in the revival of the medieval sphere. Giovanni Magliocco, examining Gothic-Post-modernism in Dora Pavel’s fiction, in particular in her third novel *Pudră*, explores all the mutations, the reconfigurations and the Post-modern destructurement of some Gothic themes and motifs and demonstrates that the works of the Romanian writer incorporate Gothic features sometimes explicitly, sometimes unconsciously and in a more encrypted way. All the studies included in this volume of *Caietele Echinox* seem to witness and testify, above all, that by instantiating itself, at any time, in an eternally suspended “borderline” and liminal zone, Neo-Gothic materializes in its paradoxical ambiguity, in its fragmented heterogeneity and pervasive somber alienation not only a product of deep, internal anxieties, but also of a dark, chaotic and profoundly disturbing historical time.

Giovanni Magliocco