

## The ecoготhic as a catalyst of climate emergency: the impact of monstrosity

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Ecogothic appeared for the first time in 2013 with the publication of the homonymous volume edited by Andrew Smith and William Hughes. The introduction points out that their volume is “the first to explore the Gothic theories of ecocriticism” (1). In this collection, ecogothic reveals as a new mode, a theoretical approach which can be used to analyze written and visual texts. The different chapters focus on classic gothic texts such as Ann Radcliffe’s or Matthew Lewis’ but also contemporary ones like Margaret Atwood’s *The MaddAdam Trilogy*. This is because they trace the origins of ecologically concerned Gothic to Romanticism, thus rejecting its appearance due to the current environmental climate emergency.

Smith and Hughes also discuss the differences with ecohorror which the editors consider a new literary genre deriving from classic gothic texts but engaging with the effect of mainly natural disasters on Earth, with a focus on apocalyptic narratives and films showing what humanity can no longer control. As Simon Estok affirms in *The Ecophobia Hypothesis* (2018) human beings are currently unable to control their own life much less their surroundings (10). The monster we have created with our capitalist and neoliberalist practices threatens to engulf us, finally displacing our anthropocentrism, signaling the triumph of nature in ecogothic narratives.

When connected with postcolonialism, the ecogothic deals with the alter-human, represented mostly in terms of monstrosity from an Anthropocentric perspective, as liminal creatures inhabiting a threatening third space such as forests, oceans, swamps, haunted houses or devastated landscapes. Elizabeth Parker in *The Forest and the Ecogothic* (2019) introduces the forest as a haunted place that provides shelter but also as a frightening site, such as in folk tales and she discusses how nature is used to provoke fear. In the same vein, current studies on blue humanities such as Serpil Opperman’s provide a new setting for the ecogothic.

The negotiation of the relationship between humans and other living creatures such as animals or plants has also received the attention of ecogothic criticism. The idea of “the Other” embodies chaos, the opposite of the order and control that defines the construction of the domesticated world as we have inherited it from a Humanist tradition. Thus, representations of women, queer or minoritized cultures as a monstrosity, as the abject, belong fully to the realm of the ecogothic thorough material feminisms which deal with the consideration and transformation of bodies by paying attention to the porosity and viscosity of matter addressed in Alaimo, Haraway and Braidotti’s theories.

Current ecogothic fiction also focuses on the terror writers feel when they observe the lack of conscience and awareness humanity shows on climate emergency and the certainty that the world as we know it today is going to disappear at a near future, as apocalyptic narratives such as *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy have been announcing. Simon Estok in *Ecophobia* states that: “We become agitated but remain passive “spectators to future ruin” rather than active witnesses” (49).

Thus, in order to show how the Humanities can contribute to change this passivity recorded by Estok, we encourage the submission of articles dealing with all aspects of the ecogothic, applying

it to literature or artistic manifestations on ecohorror and folk horror. The proposals may be inscribed but not limited to the following subjects:

The ecogothic in postcolonialism

The ecogothic and the posthuman

The ecogothic and the cybergothic

Queer ecogothic

Material feminisms and the ecogothic

Deadline for proposals: abstracts should be sent by December 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 to [Imelda.martin@unileon.es](mailto:Imelda.martin@unileon.es)

Acceptance will be mailed by December 15<sup>th</sup> 2023

Articles are due by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2024

#### References

Estok, S. *The Ecophobia Hypothesis*. Routledge, 2018

Parker, E. *The Forest and the Ecogothic. The Deep Dark Woods in the Popular Imagination*. Palgrave Gothic, 2019.

Smith, A. and William Hughes. *Ecogothic*. Manchester University Press, 2013